

## WHY BAPTISTS BELIEVE WHAT BAPTISTS BELIEVE, PART 23

### **HOW TO PRAY**

We are going to look at the model prayer. I introduced it earlier, Matthew 6:9. The disciples asked Jesus how to pray and Jesus responded by teaching them to pray. A lot of times people make the mistake of thinking that this is how they are supposed to pray. Many denominations have gotten into the practice of just quoting this prayer (religious liturgy) without really thinking about its original purpose, which was, to teach us the pattern of prayer. Here is the entire model prayer beginning in Matthew Chapter 6 and verse 9...

“Pray then like this: ‘Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen]’”

(Matthew 6:9-13) The last part is in brackets because it was not in the earliest writings. Some translations leave this part out altogether. The important thing is that we understand Jesus’s pattern for prayer.

*[Question 16]* In this passage, Jesus gives us the basic pattern for prayer. It consists of what three main elements?

The first element is to **Worship** God – We begin by praising and adoring God. We bless Him for who He is and for all He has done, His many blessings. We praise Him for what He has done in our lives. We praise Him for 10,000 reasons and more!

The second element is **Submit** to His will – This goes back to Jesus’ prayer to the Father I mentioned earlier in Matthew 26:39, “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You (God the Father) will.” We

need to seek His will, confess our sins as needed, and acknowledge that we desire His will and not our own. “This is what I want, but not my but Your will to be done.”

The third element is **Petition** for needs – This should only be part of our prayer. If something is really burdening your heart, then that particular need may dominate your prayer. This is certainly important. I’m not saying it’s not. With that being said I have observed that often our prayers are heavy on petition and light on worship and submission. Generally speaking, there ought to be a balance of all three elements in our prayer life.

The whole point of the Lord’s prayer is to show us those three elements. It’s the pattern of prayer that Jesus is trying to show us. You can quote it if you want. It’s a good prayer to memorize because it helps you to remember.

Our prayer life should always include thanking God for answered prayers and for His many blessings. Every Thanksgiving I mail out a list of all the answered prayers that came from our class’s prayer list during the course of the year. It is important that we remember God’s answers to our prayers and thank Him for them. No, God doesn’t always answer our prayers the way we want; but He DOES answer them.

*[Question 17]* “Through Him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge His name” (Hebrews 13:15). Through Him – through Jesus, because of WHO He is and WHAT He did, we offer a sacrifice of praise.

How often should we give thanks, praise God? **Continually!**

*[Question 18]* “Giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:20).

What should we be thankful for? **Everything!**

*[Question 19]* “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

Why should we give thanks in everything? **Because this is God’s will.** It’s what GOD wants US to do.

### **POWER IN PRAYER**

Here we have a very interesting story in Acts Chapter 12 about Peter. What has happened is that Peter has been thrown into prison. His brothers and sisters in Christ are praying fervently for him. God responds to their prayer. He sends an angel who walks Peter out of his prison cell, past the guards, through iron gates that open on their own; he walks through and goes out into the city street, and then the angel disappears. God miraculously rescues Peter! Peter then makes his way to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark. Notice what happens...

“And when he [Peter] knocked at the door of the gateway, a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer. Recognizing Peter's voice, in her joy she did not open the gate but ran in and reported that Peter was standing at the gate. They said to her, ‘You are out of your mind.’ But she kept insisting that it was so, and they kept saying, ‘It is his angel!’ But Peter continued knocking, and when they opened, they saw him and were amazed” (Acts 12:13-16).

*[Question 20]* What was their response to God freeing Peter? At first, they didn’t believe it – **unbelief**. Then later, when they saw Peter, they expressed **surprise** and were amazed.

Are you ever like that when God answers your prayer? You can’t believe it or are surprised by it. Why is that? Didn’t you believe God could or that He would do it? Part of praying is having a confident expectation. I’m not talking about presumption, but a positive expectation. God WILL answer your prayer and often He

does it in a miraculous way. Sometimes people die. They don't get well. But notice how often they ARE healed!

*[Question 21]* What is it that makes a person powerful in prayer? There are several qualities that God wants to see in us. Let's look at a few

“And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6).

**P.** Have faith in God

“Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain” (1 Corinthians 15:58).

**O.** Do God's work

“Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working” (James 5:16).

**W.** Righteous living

“And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18).

**E.** Be filled with the Holy Spirit

“Again, I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in Heaven” (Matthew 18:19).

**R.** Pray with other believers

Notice that the letters spell out POWER! Yes, there was a method to my madness.

*[Question 22]* “You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions” (James 4:3).

So then, what is a reason that we might NOT receive what we ask for? Praying with **wrong motives** – out of selfishness or an impure heart. We cannot fool God. He knows our hearts and motives. He knows what we are thinking. He sees what we do in private. There are no secrets with God so we might as well be completely honest with Him – good, bad or indifferent.

The results of prayer – The pages of the Bible, both Old Testament and New Testament are filled with examples of people who prayed and got results. *[Question 23]* gives us just a few examples.

Who prayed for bitter water to become sweet? (Exodus 15)  
**Moses.** That happened out in the wilderness.

Who prayed for God’s enemies to be killed? (Judges 16)  
**Samson.** We are told that Samson pulled the pillars of the temple down and killed more in his death than he did during his entire life.

Who prayed for a barren woman to give birth? (1 Samuel 1)  
**Hannah.** She was praying for herself. She gave birth to a son, Samuel.

Who prayed for a dead woman to come back to life? (Acts 9)  
**Peter**

Who prayed for a man to be healed of fever and dysentery? (Acts 28) **Paul** while they were on the island of Malta after the shipwreck.

Who prayed that it not to rain for over three years? (James 5)  
**Elijah.** James was using Elijah as his example of a righteous person whose prayer was answered.

So then, last but certainly not least [*Question 24*] asks... How long should we pray for someone or something? (References: Luke 18:1-8, Matthew 15:21-28, Matthew 26:38-46, 2 Samuel 12:16-23)

Answer: We persist in prayer **until God answers it.**

Sometimes the answer is “Yes.” God answers the prayer the way we wanted. Sometimes the answer is “No.” God answers the prayer even if it was not what WE wanted. Sometimes the answer is “wait.” God answers the prayer even if it was not in our timeframe. But there is another real-life possibility. What if we don’t know the answer? God may answer the prayer, but we may not be aware of what the answer is. Well, how long do we pray about that?

Let me give you a real-life example from our class. We have a class prayer list. We pray specifically for people’s salvation, health needs, life decisions and many other things. The prayer requests are generally for our class members and for people they know. But there are some on our list that we never hear about what happens to them. We don’t get updates. Perhaps the people who made the request leave our class. We have no way of knowing what the end result of that prayer request is. So, how long do we continue to pray for them? Sometimes we pray for the comfort of families who have recently lost loved ones. How long do we pray for them? Practical matters are involved here. At some point, when enough time goes by, God the Holy Spirit gives us a peace and the assurance that He has been working His will in those individual’s lives. We will probably never know this side of heaven specifically what happens with these people, but we trust God’s providence. That’s when we can go ahead and take them off our prayer list and praise God for what He’s been doing in their lives.