

Lesson Fourteen

In all of our lessons so far, we have seen how God communicates with us through his word. In this lesson we will see how we can speak to him. We will study one of the greatest blessings that God has given his children—prayer.

What is prayer?

God says:	From this we know:
<p><i>Psalm 19:14</i> “May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.”</p>	Prayer is the believer talking to the true God.
<p><i>Psalm 10:17</i> “You hear, O LORD, the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry.”</p>	Only prayers addressed to the true God are heard. Prayers to false gods are not heard.
<p><i>Isaiah 46:6, 7</i> “Some pour out gold from their bags and weigh out silver on the scales; they hire a goldsmith to make it into a god, and they bow down and worship it. They lift it to their shoulders and carry it; they set it up in its place, and there it stands. From that spot it cannot move. Though one cries out to it, it does not answer; it cannot save him from his troubles.”</p>	We are not to pray to the saints who are in heaven or to angels, because prayer is a form of worship.
<p><i>Revelation 22:8-9</i> “I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. But he said to me, ‘Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers the prophets and of all who keep the words of this book. Worship God!’”</p>	

Now that we know what prayer is, we can ask some important questions about it.

Why should we pray?

God says:	From this we know:
<i>Psalm 50:15</i> "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me."	We pray because God has invited us to bring to him all our needs.
<i>Matthew 7:7-8</i> "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened."	We pray because God has promised to hear and answer our prayers.
<i>Psalm 107:1</i> "Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever."	We pray to thank God for his goodness.

When should we pray?

God says:	From this we know:
<i>Psalm 50:15</i> "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me."	We should pray any time we are in need, but we can also pray at any other time as well.
<i>1 Thessalonians 5:17</i> "Pray continually."	
<i>Daniel 6:10</i> "Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before."	We should make prayer part of our daily routine.
<i>Acts 10:2</i> "He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly."	

How should we pray?

God says:	From this we know:
<p><i>Nehemiah 2:4</i> “The king said to me, ‘What is it you want?’ Then I prayed to the God of heaven, and I answered the king, ‘If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my fathers are buried so that I can rebuild it.’”</p> <p><i>Psalm 66:17</i> “I cried out to him with my mouth; his praise was on my tongue.”</p>	We should feel free to pray silently... ...or aloud, depending on the situation.
<p><i>Matthew 6:5</i> “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen.”</p> <p><i>Matthew 18:19</i> “Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.”</p>	We should feel free to pray alone... ...or with fellow believers.
<p><i>John 16:23</i> “I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.”</p>	We should pray confidently to God as our Father because we are coming to him through Jesus.
<p><i>James 1:6-7</i> “But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord.”</p>	We should pray trusting that God has the power to do anything.
<p><i>Matthew 6:5-8</i> “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your</p>	We should pray sincerely, not to show how religious we are. We should also pray simply, not trying to impress God with our prayer.

God says:**From this we know:**

Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him."

1 John 5:14 "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us."

Luke 22:42 "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."

We should pray according to God's will.

When we are praying for things that God has promised, like forgiveness, we know we are praying for things God wants us to have. When we are praying for things that God has not promised—health, prosperity, etc.—it is important to add “if you are willing”, because God knows better than we do what is best for us.

What should we pray for?**God says:****From this we know:**

Philippians 4:6 "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."

1 Peter 5:7 "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."

We should pray to God about all of our needs and all of our problems.

Luke 11:13 "If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

We should pray for the Holy Spirit to preserve and strengthen our faith.

Colossians 4:3 "And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains."

We should pray that God would give believers (including ourselves) opportunities to share the Gospel.

God says:	From this we know:
<i>2 Corinthians 1:10b, 11</i> “On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.”	We should pray on behalf of others (intercession).
<i>Ephesians 1:16, 17</i> “I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.”	
<i>Psalm 63:2-5</i> “I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands. My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you.”	We should pray to praise God.
<i>Psalm 32:5</i> “Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD’-- and you forgave the guilt of my sin.”	We should pray for assurance that God has forgiven our sins.

One of the greatest blessings of prayer is that God promises to help us pray, even when we do not know what to pray for. “In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.” (*Romans 8:26*).

We often assume that if we did not get what we asked for in prayer, that God has not answered our prayer. This is a mistake.

How does God answer prayer?

God says:	From this we know:
<i>1 John 5:14</i> “This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.”	God can say “Yes.”

God says:	From this we know:
<p><i>2 Corinthians 12:8-9</i> “Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.”</p>	<p>God can say “No, I've got a better way.”</p>
<p><i>John 2:4</i> “Dear woman, why do you involve me?” Jesus replied. ‘My time has not yet come.’”</p>	<p>God can say “Not yet.”</p>
<p><i>Ephesians 3:20</i> “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine...”</p>	<p>God can say “Yes and more!”</p>

We have seen that there are many different reasons for prayers, and so there are many types of prayers. The word “ACTS” can be used as a way to remember some of the different types of prayer:

A

Adoration (praise)

C

Confession (of sin)

T

Thanksgiving (for blessings received)

S

Supplication (asking God to help us or others)

Take a few moments and see if you can find these kinds of prayer in the model prayer that Jesus taught his disciples:

“This, then, is how you should pray:

'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'”

– *Matthew 6:9-13*

All Bible passages are from the New International Version.