

Introductory Questions Pertaining to Biblical Prayer	pp. 1-7
1. Defining Biblical Prayer	pp. 2-3
2. Reasons Why Biblical Prayer is Difficult and Neglected	pp. 4-7
a. Ignorance	p. 4
b. Our Old Nature	p. 4
c. Satan	pp. 4-5
d. No Glamour	pp. 5-6
e. Lack of Spiritual Depth	p. 6
f. Lack of Ease	pp. 6-7
g. The Demand of an Obedient and Holy Life	p. 7
Nine Theological Prayer Assumptions Pertaining to God	pp. 8-12
1. The Personality of God	p. 8
2. The Immensity of God	p. 8
3. The Immanence of God	p. 8
4. The Infinity of God	p. 8
5. The Omnipresence of God	p. 8
6. The Omnipotence of God	p. 9
7. The Omniscience of God	p. 9
8. The Mobility of God	p. 10
9. The Sovereignty of God	pp. 10-12
The Importance of Prayer	pp. 13-21
1. To Godly Men	p. 14
2. To the Word of God	pp. 15-21
a. In the Old Testament	pp. 15-17
b. In the New Testament	pp. 18-21
Various Types of Prayer in the Bible	pp. 22-32
1. The Prayer for Salvation	pp. 22-23
2. The Prayer of Entreaty	p. 24
3. General Prayer	p. 25

4. The Prayer of Intercession	pp. 26-27
5. The Prayer of Thanksgiving	pp. 27-28
6. The Prayer of Petition or Request	pp. 28-29
7. The Prayer of Confession	pp. 29-31
8. The Prayer for Destruction or Vindication	p. 32
Seven Prerequisites to Be Met in Moving God Through Prayer	pp. 32-43
1. Obedience to the Scriptures	p. 32
2. Examining Motives	p. 33
3. Examining Relationships	pp. 33-34
4. Dealing with Sin	pp. 34-35
5. Judging Pharisaism	p. 35
6. Examining the Marriage	pp. 35-37
7. Examining Faith	pp. 37-43
a. Faith is Not Determined by Circumstances	p. 39
b. Faith is Not Determined by Asking God for a Sign	pp. 39-40
c. Faith is Not Determined by Our Feelings	pp. 40-41
d. Faith is Based on God's Word	pp. 41-43
Changes One May Expect Through Biblical Prayer	pp. 43-54
1. Our Relationship with God	p. 43
2. To Ourselves	p. 44
3. The World or Any Situation	pp. 44-47
4. Personal Circumstances	pp. 47-52
a. Biblical Illustrations	pp. 48-52
b. Theological Considerations	pp. 53-54
The Topic of Fasting	pp. 55-62
1. Fasting for New Testament Believers	p. 55
2. Reasons for Fasting in the Old Testament	pp. 56-57
3. Reasons for Fasting in the New Testament	pp. 57-60
Examining Evidence of Fasting in the Early Church	p. 60
The Grace Age Perspective of Fasting	pp. 61-62

Biblical Postures People Used When Praying	p. 63
How Prayer Relates to the Holy Spirit	pp. 64-69
1. Restraint	p. 64
2. Conviction	p. 64
3. Regeneration	p. 64
4. Indwelling	p. 65
5. Baptism	p. 65
6. Sealing	p. 65
7. Filling	p. 66
8. Specific Bible Passages Directed at the Believer	pp. 66-69
How Prayer Relates to the Members of the Godhead	pp. 69-74
1. God the Father	p. 69
2. God the Father through God the Son	pp. 70-71
3. Communication between God the Father and God the Son	pp. 72-73
4. Communication between God the Father and God the Spirit	pp. 73-74

THE DOCTRINE OF BIBLICAL PRAYER

Dr. Ivan French, in preparing a systematic study of prayer said: “Somewhere along its historical journey, the church of Jesus Christ has been deceived into substituting plans, programs, organization for the power of God obtained in answer to prayer. It is far past time for Christians and assemblies to set themselves to discover what the Bible says about praying and then do it!” (Ivan French, *Principles and Practice of Prayer*, p. 7).

G. Campbell Morgan, the British minister who did much of his preaching in the United States, noticed a great impoverishment and a great paralysis in the Church in the 1920s. In an attempt to resolve the crisis, he wrote these words: “I feel that it is of the utmost importance that the whole Church should know the secret of prevailing prayer, not only as a theory, but in practice” (G. Campbell Morgan, *The Practice of Prayer*, p. 13).

Sammy Tippit, an evangelist who especially focuses his ministry on preaching the Gospel in Europe and Eastern bloc countries, writes: “The church must recapture her distinctive. She is not built upon manipulation and money. She is built upon the might of God. If the church is to be light in this perverse generation, she must humble herself and pray. She must understand that victory comes from her knees” (Sammy Tippit, *The Prayer Factor*, p. 18).

Peter Deyneka said: “There are many Christians who depend much on experience, education, works, effort, action and programs, yet leave out the most important thing in the Christian life - prayer” (Peter Deyneka, *Much Prayer Much Power*, p. 13).

Many churches today have numbers, money and prestige, but what most lack is spiritual power. It is a fact that **most churches are praying less, not more.** For the past one hundred years, key men of God have been wisely observing and communicating the fact that one of the greatest needs in the church today is the need of more prayer. However, few take the warning seriously. However, any church that is truly striving to be Biblical and spiritual, will place a high priority on prayer. We may be certain that no church and no individual will ever demonstrate the ultimate power of God until there is a consistent commitment to pray. The heartbeat of every N.T. believer should be “teach me to pray in the way the Bible wants me to pray.”

This Biblical study of “The Doctrine of Prayer” is designed to be foundational, not final. The object of this series is to produce a good Biblical understanding of prayer so we may grow deeper and deeper in both our understanding of God’s Word and in our communion with God. This study is not designed to produce an artificiality, a formality or scholasticity when it comes to prayer. However, **the sad truth is most Christians do pray, but most do not actually make prayer a subject of serious Biblical study.** I am deeply indebted to many wise, godly, spiritual men who have put in print their discoveries and challenges concerning prayer. For the most part, this study will assimilate and systematize their years of wisdom, devotion and scholarship. From a personal and pastoral perspective, I consider myself to be one who is learning and lacking in this area. I am far short of where I want to be in my own prayer life. This study should instruct and challenge us all. If we will make Biblical prayer a high priority of our individual lives and our church life, God’s presence and power will be seen and sensed in new ways and dimensions.

BIBLICAL PRAYER (2)

QUESTION #1 – What is Biblical Prayer?

The truth is most churches, most theological institutions and even most Christians have never attempted to answer this important question. Now carefully notice the wording of this first question - “**What is Biblical Prayer?**” This is a very important question to answer because there is a vast difference between prayer that is typical and prayer that is Biblical. In other words we are not asking what is any kind of prayer, we are asking what is prayer as defined and described in the Bible.

Prayer is something found in all religions. Every religious group acknowledges some “god” and has some form of prayer to that “god.” Samuel Chadwick writes: “All religions pray. God and prayer are inseparable. Belief in God and belief in prayer are elemental and intuitive. The ideas may be crude and cruel in primitive and pagan people, but they belong to the universal intuitions of the human race” (Samuel Chadwick, *God Listens*, p. 5).

Even when we search through the Bible, we find pagans praying to their “gods.” For example, **I Kings 18:24** says, “Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD, and the God who answers by fire, He is God.” And all the people answered and said, “That is a good idea.” In **Acts 17:23** we read, “For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, ‘TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.’ What therefore you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.”

There is no question that there is a major difference between prayer and prayer that is Biblical. This, then, becomes the necessary reason to ask the question - “What is Biblical Prayer?” It is not just a matter of what is prayer, it is a matter of what is prayer as prescribed and defined by the Word of God.

When we look to define Biblical prayer, we look at some definitions which have been given of prayer:

Webster defines prayer as a humble communication of thought or speech to God (*The New Lexicon Webster's Dictionary*, p. 788).

Rev. B. H. Spalink, a Reformed minister, gives this simple definition: “Prayer is speaking with God” (B. H. Spalink, *The Incense of Prayer*, p. 7).

Dr. Thomas Constable, of Dallas Seminary, defines prayer this way: “Prayer is any thought, feeling or expression made to God” (*Essays in Honor of J. Dwight Pentecost*, p. 100).

The *Westminster Dictionary of the Bible* defines prayer this way: “Prayer is communion with God” (P. 490). The Westminster Catechism says prayer “is the offering up of our desires to God for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and a thankful acknowledgment of his mercies.” (Timothy Dwight, *Dwight's Theology*, Vol.4, p.531)

BIBLICAL PRAYER (3)

The *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* defines prayer this way: “Prayer is to communicate to God so He can communicate with us” (p. 866).

The *Dictionary of the History of the Christian Church* defines prayer this way: “Prayer is conversation with God which arises out of communion with Him” (p. 796).

Each one of these definitions is worthy of consideration, however, each is very general. It is true that putting into a combination of words an accurate definition of prayer, which is so sacred and spiritual, is a very difficult, if not impossible, assignment. There will probably never be a definition that can truly capture prayer with all of its aspiring and inspiring ramifications. However, it is our conviction that Biblical prayer may be defined much more specifically and precisely in view of what God has revealed.

Based on what God has revealed in His Word, we are legitimate to define prayer this way: **Biblical prayer is communication with the God of the Bible, which is offered in conformity to God’s own prescribed prerequisites for prayer, which He has clearly set forth in His Word.**

As we shall see, the prescribed prerequisites necessary to prayer include our beliefs, our attitudes, our actions and our words. It is one thing to pray, but it is another thing to pray Biblically in a way that has been actually prescribed by God.

As we consider this definition, there are six assumptions we make:

- (Assumption #1) - In order for real communication with God to take place, certain prerequisites must be met (i.e. **Micah 3:4**).
- (Assumption #2) - Not all prayer is Biblical. Most prayer is nonbiblical.
- (Assumption #3) - Not all prayer is answerable. Only prayer that conforms to God’s Word.
- (Assumption #4) - Not all people who pray are Biblically praying.
- (Assumption #5) - All believers have a tremendous potential for prayer.
- (Assumption #6) - Not all believers do Biblically pray.

Clearly, the more we understand about prayer and the prescribed prerequisites that God has given concerning prayer, the more accurate and powerful our prayer lives can be and the more we are able to see direct answers to our prayers.

Hopefully this study will generate at least four responses:

- (Response #1) - Motivate us to pray Biblically. Biblical prayer can bring powerful answers.
- (Response #2) - Motivate us to pray intelligently. More Biblical knowledge equals more Biblical prayer.
- (Response #3) - Motivate us to pray fervently. Fervent because we know prayer life is right.
- (Response #4) - Motivate us to pray regularly. Realizing true regular prayer equals regular results.

BIBLICAL PRAYER (4)

QUESTION #2 – Why is Biblical prayer so neglected and so difficult?

Any honest believer will quickly admit that prayer is one of the most difficult disciplines of the spiritual life to maintain on a constant basis. When trying to discover the why of this - there are several Biblical reasons why prayer is so difficult:

(Reason #1) - Because of ignorance .

The truth is we are ignorant when it comes to the subject of prayer. Even Christ's closest disciples recognized their own ignorance in this area and asked the Lord to "teach us to pray" (**Luke 11:1**).

Although we may recite a few verses pertaining to prayer, the truth is we know very little about prayer. For the most part, this field of Biblical study is neglected, and compared to other Biblical subjects, there aren't many sound doctrinal studies written. As with other areas of study, a lack of knowledge produces a lack of interest and fervency, and ultimately a lack of power that comes from praying in accordance with the will of God.

It is a sad but true reality that many are able to discuss all of the minor details of various plans and programs. Many are able to suggest what types of activities belong in the church and are even able to determine the size of the room needed for each activity. But when it comes to demonstrating a powerful prayer life that is knowledgeable of prayer and that can intelligently pray, very few will be found.

I am personally convinced that one of the reasons we neglect to see the mighty hand of God accomplishing major things is because we are ignorant about prayer and ignorant of how to pray. The more we carefully study the Word of God on this subject, the more powerful we can become in prayer.

(Reason #2) - Because of our old nature .

Our old nature is carnal, fleshly and weak. We have a nature that easily gives up when it comes to prayer (**Luke 18:1-8**). If you purpose to prayer, you will find yourself in war with yourself. We have an old nature that is constantly warring against the Spirit's prompting to pray and there can be no question that Paul, himself, faced this struggle in his own flesh (**Romans 7:18-22**). A Biblical key to becoming a powerful person, is through prayer, and there is no doubt that our old, unruly, undisciplined nature is at constant war with the idea of being disciplined in prayer.

(Reason #3) - Because of Satan .

We are in a hostile warfare against Satan (**Ephesians 6:11-12; I Peter 5:8**). Satan clearly knows the significance of prayer and he will do whatever he can to stop it. He is totally aware of the power that comes through prayer and he will use every means possible to prevent it.

BIBLICAL PRAYER (5)

Satan is totally aware of the power that comes through prayer and he will use every thing he can and any one he can in order to keep us from praying. Dr. O. Hallesby, in writing on the subject of prayer in the early 1900s, said:

“If prayer is, as we have seen, the central function of the new life of faith, the very heartbeat of our life in God, it is obvious that our prayer life must become the target against which Satan directs his best and most numerous darts. . . .He understands better than we do what prayer means to ourselves and to others. That is why his chief attack is directed against our prayer life. If he can in one way or another weaken it, his prospects of stealing our life in God without us even noticing it are of the very best” (p. 87).

It is no mere coincidence that when it comes time to have prayer sessions with God, it often appears as though everything has entered into a conspiracy to prevent it. Purpose to spend quality time in prayer with God and you will quickly discover that people, pets and the phone will quickly wage war with your prayer time. It is not difficult to observe that there is a diabolical, veiled hand plotting and seeking to hinder one’s prayer life. Woe to any of us who are not familiar with the tactics of Satan, for our prayer lives will be very shallow.

Every believer must recognize that Satan is out to stifle the prayer life. We must recognize that Satan will do everything he can to keep us from regularly praying. The alternatives are often good, designed to keep one from tapping into God’s best. We must forever be on guard of our prayer lives for we have an enemy who is trying to eliminate it. Satan knows the power that exists when God’s people pray and he will do whatever he can to keep God’s people from praying.

(Reason #4) - Because of no glamour .

There is no glamour in prayer. The truth is, things we specifically pray for, more than likely, we will see others get credit for. For example, many people have come to faith in Jesus Christ at a church service or at a revival service. Often, when such a thing occurs, the evangelist or the minister, or the church receives the praise and there is a sense in which it is right to acknowledge and remember this. But very often, behind the scenes of the salvation of a soul, is some man or woman who persistently prayed for that person for days, for months and in some cases for years. Only God saw the burden and the tears of the faithful prayer warrior. Prayer is not a flashy, glamorous, showy ministry. It is a powerful ministry that at times only God sees.

Frankly, I think this is one reason why prayer is so neglected. The church seems to exalt, promote and maximize other ministries because they are so visible. Many churches award program accomplishments, memory verse accomplishments or contest accomplishments. But how many churches honor and award faithful people who pray? Wise is the church that recognizes the value of the praying people. Even though there isn’t much glamour that comes to one who is a prayer warrior, there is tremendous power that comes through the prayer warrior.