

UNDERSTANDING TYPES OF BIBLICAL PRAYER

“Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.” (1 Timothy 2:1-2)

“Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart” (Luke 18:1)

Prayer in the Hebrew Bible is an evolving means of interacting with God, most frequently through a spontaneous, individual, unorganized form of petitioning and/or thanking. In simplistic terms, prayer is an art of communicating with God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

According to Luke 18:1, Jesus instructs that we always ought to pray and Paul’s letter to Timothy confirms the same. It is crucial that all believers in Jesus Christ pray daily and frequently.

There are nine types of biblical prayer and we will go through these briefly to give us an understanding of each and their application. It is important to note that these types of prayers are usually dependent on each other.

▪ **Prayer of Supplication**

Supplication is a request. And if the request is made to God, it becomes a prayer. Supplication is defined as a form of a prayer, a call for help from God. The term bears a spirit of reverence and devotion with it, a solemn prayer to a higher power.

The Hebrew and Greek words most often translated “supplication” in the Bible mean literally “a request or petition,” so a prayer of supplication is asking God for something. Unlike the prayer of petition, which is praying on behalf of others, the prayer of supplication is generally a request for the person praying.

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God” (Philippians 4:6)

“I love the Lord because He has heard my voice and my supplications. Because He has inclined His ear to me, therefore I will call upon Him as long as I live.” (Psalm 116:1-2)

▪ **Prayer of Intercession**

Intercession is prayer that pleads with God for your needs and the needs of others. But it is also much more than that. Intercession involves taking hold of God's will and refusing to let go until His will comes to pass.

Intercession is warfare -- the key to God's battle plan for our lives. But the battleground is not of this earth. The Bible says, *“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12).*

Intercessory prayer takes place in this spiritual world where the battles for our own lives, our families, our friends, and our nation are won or lost.

This kind of prayer is the key to seeing breakthroughs in your life and in the lives of those around you. Jesus gave a great model for intercession in the story of the persistent friend. Here we see a friend who knocks on his neighbour's door at midnight to ask for three loaves of bread. The neighbour does not want to get up, but Jesus said, *“because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs” (Luke 11:8).*

Then Jesus said, "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened." (**Luke 11:10**). Those words mean keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking. In God's time, your persistence in intercessory prayer will reap a spiritual harvest in your life and the lives of those around you!

"So, I sought for a man among them who would make a wall and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one." (**Ezekiel 22:30**)

- **Prayer of Faith**

The "prayer of faith," mentioned in James 5, is a method of prayers where believers pray over someone who is sick and needs healing (the focus of this article)—and, also, to pray in all circumstances. This prayer of faith, however, encourages believers to exercise trust in God. Healing may come in a physical healing, or it may result in a peace felt by the believers and the sick person.

"Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven." (**James 5:13-15**)

- **Corporate Prayer**

Corporate prayer is the term used to describe praying together with other people—in small groups or in larger bodies of people. It is an important part of the church and in Acts 2:42, we learn that the early church prayed together: *"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers."*

Corporate prayer can be a positive experience in many ways.

- ✓ **Encouragement** – praying with others can bring encouragement to the members of the group. There may be those in the group who are struggling with trials and temptations. As they are upheld in prayer, the Holy Spirit brings them encouragement and reassurance of His promises.
- ✓ **Unity of purpose** – Corporate prayer can knit a group together in a bond of fellowship and praise. People are edified and unified in common faith. As people pray together, they build love and concern for others and display their dependence on God.
- ✓ **Worship** – Corporate prayer brings intimate communion with the Saviour.
- ✓ **Repentance** – As people pray, the Holy Spirit brings conviction and draws His children to repentance.

"Again, I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." (**Matthew 18:19-20**)

These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers. (**Acts 1:14**)

- **Praying in the spirit or praying in tongues**

Praying in the Spirit is experiencing the Spirit of life bringing prayer to life. Praying in the Spirit means that the Spirit empowers the prayer and carries it to the Father in the name of Jesus. The prayer has a

living quality characterized by warmth and freedom and a sense of exchange. We realize that we are in God's presence speaking to God. The Spirit illuminates your heart and grants a freedom of utterance and liberty of expression.

Sometimes, praying in the Spirit is not praying in tongues or in your prayer-language but it is mostly so.

“praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints” (Ephesians 6:18)

“But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit” (Jude 1:20)

“For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.” (1 Corinthians 14:2)

Likewise, the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. (Romans 8:26)

▪ Prayer of thanksgiving

Prayers of giving thanks are indeed important as we all have reasons to be thankful. In fact, we are reminded *“in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”* (1 Thessalonians 5:18). We can be thankful for who God is and for the opportunity He gives us to turn to Him in all situations, good and bad. God is always there for us. Our sincere prayers let Him know that we are thankful for that. Prayers of thanksgiving should be a continuous part of our everyday lives.

Prayers of thanksgiving are proclaimed throughout the Bible. In 1 Chronicles 16:7-36, we are shown through David's song an excellent example of four elements included in true thanksgiving:

- ✓ Remembering what God has done for us.
- ✓ Telling other about it.
- ✓ Showing God's glory to others.
- ✓ Offering gifts of ourselves, our time, and our resources.

“Praise the Lord! Praise God in His sanctuary; Praise Him in His mighty firmament! Praise Him for His mighty acts; Praise Him according to His excellent greatness! Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet; Praise Him with the lute and harp! Praise Him with the timbrel and dance; Praise Him with stringed instruments and flutes! Praise Him with loud cymbals; Praise Him with clashing cymbals! Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!” (Psalm 150)

▪ Prayer of confession and repentance

Whenever we identify sin in our lives, we need to confess it and receive God's forgiveness. *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:9). Confession involves honesty. We are honest with ourselves and with God. We freely admit what we have done. We do not excuse it or blame others for it. We do not call it less than it is. We also do not merely confess our sin in broad strokes as in *“Forgive me of all my sins.”* We need to be specific about the sins we have committed, both those of commission and omission. In Psalm 32, David wrote, *“I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,” and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah” (v.5)*

One beautiful psalm of confession and repentance is David's psalm where he confesses his sin to the Lord. We can learn much from David about confession from this and other psalms. He wrote Psalm 51

after the prophet, Nathan, confronted him for his sin with Bathsheba. The psalm is a lament, where David cried out to the Lord for forgiveness. He felt conviction for his sin, so much so, it felt to him like that of broken bones (Psalm 51:8).

David identified that his sin with Bathsheba was ultimately a sin against God (v. 4). He turned to the only One who could provide salvation. *“Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.... Hide Your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities.... Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, the God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.”* (vv. 7,9,14). He confessed his sin and sought the Lord’s forgiveness.

“He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.” (Proverbs 28:13)

“Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” (James 5:16)

▪ Prayer of dedication or consecration

When we consecrate our lives for God's use, to go anywhere and do anything He wants us to do, we pray this kind of prayer. In a prayer of consecration and dedication we pray, "If it be Thy will."

"Coming out, He went to the Mount of Olives, as He was accustomed, and His disciples also followed Him. When He came to the place, He said to them, “Pray that you may not enter into temptation.” And He was withdrawn from them about a stone’s throw, and He knelt down and prayed, saying, “Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.”” (Luke 22:39-42)

In the Garden of Gethsemane Christ prayed the prayer of submission, consecration, and dedication "...if thou be willing...nevertheless not my will..." He wanted to do what the Father wanted Him to do. It was not a prayer of petition. It was not a prayer to get something or to change something.

Consecration involves complete, voluntary, surrender to the Lord. In a prayer of consecration, you are saying to Him: "Here I am God, I give myself to You. Unto You, O Lord, do I bring my entire life. I lay it on Your altar. Do what You want to do with me. Speak through me today. Touch people through me today. Place me in a position to meet all divine appointments today. Make a difference in my world through me today. You have everything about me available to You for You to utilize according to Your plans and purposes."

When we consecrate something, we set it apart for God's use. Therefore, when we consecrate our lives, we turn our backs on our fleshly desires, worldly values, carnal thinking, undisciplined living, bad habits, and on everything else that does not agree with God's Word. We intentionally put distance between ourselves and ungodly things so that we are prepared and available for God to use us.

“He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.”” (Matthew 26:39)

“Then Samson called to the Lord, saying, “O Lord God, remember me, I pray! Strengthen me, I pray, just this once, O God, that I may with one blow take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes!”” (Judges 16:28)

▪ Prayer of imprecation

First, let us define imprecatory prayer. To imprecate means “to invoke evil upon or curse” one’s enemies. King David, the psalmist most associated with imprecatory verses such as Psalm 55:15, 69:28, and 109:8, often used phrases like, *“may their path be dark and slippery, with the angel of the LORD pursuing them”*

(Psalm 35:6) and “O God, break the teeth in their mouths; tear out the fangs of the young lions, O LORD!” *(Psalm 58:6)*.

I do not believe that was ever God’s heart. And we see that in the gospels when Jesus rebuked the disciples...

“And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, “Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?” But He turned and rebuked them, and said, “You do not know what manner of spirit you are of.” **(Luke 9:54-55)**

James puts it in logical thinking:

“But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus, no spring yields both salt water and fresh.” **(James 3:8-12)**

Jesus who is the perfect image of the Father instructs us:

“But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore, you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.” **(Matthew 5:44-48)**