



Truth Matters

A Publication Discussing Matters Related To Truth Because Truth Matters

How to Pray Series

How to Pray for Your own Soul

Do you ever think about what you are praying?

Sometimes I wonder if Christians ever think about what they say in their prayers - that the way they pray indicates their view of how God works.

For thoughtful people, how you pray is governed by how you believe God acts.

So, for example, if you believe God changes people's souls so that they make new and right choices, then you will ask God to make those soul-changes through evangelism and nurture.

But not everybody is thoughtful about the way they pray. They don't think about what view of God is behind their praying.

So what I suggest is that we learn to pray the way the Bible prays. If we do that, then our prayers will probably be good prayers, and in the process we will also learn about how God works.

Looking at a few "prayer verses" we can learn how to pray for our own souls and those of others in accordance with the way God works.¹

1. The first thing my soul needs is an *inclination* to God and his Word. Without that, nothing else will happen of any value in my life. I must want to know God and read his Word and draw near to him. Where does that "want to" come from? It comes from God. So Psalm 119:36 teaches us to pray, "Incline my heart to Your testimonies and not to dishonest gain."
2. Next, I need to have the *eyes of my heart opened* so that when my inclination leads me to the

Word, I see what is really there and not just my own ideas. Who opens the eyes of the heart? God does. So Psalm 119:18 teaches us to pray, "Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things from your law."

3. Then I need my heart to be enlightened with these wonders. I need to perceive glory in them and not just interesting facts. Who enlightens the heart? God does. So Ephesians 1:18 teaches us to pray "that the eyes of your heart might be enlightened."
4. Then I am concerned that my heart is badly fragmented and that parts of it might remain in the dark while other parts are enlightened. So I long for my heart to be united for God. Where does that wholeness and unity come from? From God. So Psalm 86:11 teaches us to pray, "O Lord, I will walk in Your truth; unite my heart to fear Your name."
5. What I really want from all this engagement with the Word of God and the work of His Spirit in answer to my prayers is that my heart be satisfied with God and not with the world. Where does that satisfaction come from? It comes from God. So Psalm 90:14 teaches us to pray, "Satisfy us in the morning with thy steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days."
6. But I don't want my happiness to be fragile and weak, but to be strong and durable in the face of the worst adversities. I desire to be strong in joy, and persevering during the dark seasons. Where does that durability and strength come from? It comes

from God. So Ephesians 3:16 teaches us to pray, "That God would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man."

7. I do not want my strength in Christ to simply be fruitful for me, but for others. Clearly, "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). So I want to produce good deeds and works of love for others, so that the glory of God will be seen in my life, and others will taste and see that the Lord is good. Who produces these good deeds of love? God does. So Colossians 1:10 teaches us to pray, "That we will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord . . . bearing fruit in every good work."
8. Finally, lest the ultimate aim of it all be missed, I pray every day - "Hallowed be Thy name" (Matthew 6:9). Lord, cause your name to be known and feared and loved and cherished and admired and praised and trusted because of my life and ministry.

And all these things I pray "in Jesus' name," because God gives these things only on the basis of Jesus' death. He died for me and removed the wrath of God so that the Father might freely give me all things (Romans 8:32).

Lord, teach me to pray, from beginning to end, in a biblical way with a biblical view of how you act in my soul and in your world. Show us yourself and how you work so that we might pray as we ought. And teach us to pray as we ought so that we might see how you work.

¹This list is taken from "Fresh Words" article written by John Piper, pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, MN. www.desiringgod.org/topics/prayer (accessed May 4, 2005).