

**GREAT DOCTRINES OF THE BIBLE**  
**(Special English Edition)**

Prepared by William S.H. Piper, D.D.  
For Rogma International, Inc.

Copyright 1989 by Rogma International, Inc. All rights reserved.

---

**PRAYER**

Its Nature, Purpose, and Power

**INTRODUCTION**

It is impossible to overstate the value of prayer in a Christian's life. Prayer is the key that unlocks the door to all of the believer's riches in heaven. Prayer causes God to work in our souls. Prayer sets the power of the Holy Spirit free. This power makes the Bible a burning fire in our bones. This power of the Holy Spirit causes us to realize the presence of Christ. This power of the Holy Spirit makes Christ as real as the beating of our hearts. Prayer humbles a person's spirit. Prayer opens our eyes to the truth. Prayer causes us to be able to see the will of God. Prayer makes us able to do the will of God. Prayer strengthens our decision to live for God. Through prayer we roll all our worries upon the Lord. Through prayer we find grace to fight the continual battle against sin and Satan. We are afraid to guess everything a believer loses when he fails to pray. It is my heart's desire that you will continue to practice prayer in your life. I trust that you will learn the great purpose and power of prayer for yourself.

**IMPORTANCE OF THIS LESSON**

- God has decided to respond to the prayer of faith (Mark 11:24), therefore it is very sinful not to pray (1 Samuel 12:23).
- Learning HOW to pray is of the greatest importance, because prayer loosens the power of God.
- Through prayer we know that Christ is a real person.
- Prayer changes situations.
- Prayer causes the Christian to be able to live the Christian life.
- The great importance of this lesson is to teach you what prayer really is.
- It is important to know:
  - The purpose of prayer in the Christian's life.
  - The great power of prayer.
- It is important to learn the special instructions as to how to pray in order that God will answer.
- It is the goal of this lesson to guide you to a life of regular prayer that produces results. This sort of life of prayer will open to you fountains of spiritual blessings.

---

**THE LESSON**

**I. WE ARE COMMANDED TO PRAY**

It is not for a Christian to decide whether he wants to pray or not. We are **COMMANDED** to pray! We are weak in the flesh, therefore it is easy to forget about prayer. God knows that prayer is important for the believer. The believer cannot be strong and grow in his Christian life without prayer. Therefore God commands us to pray.

**A. Old Testament Illustrations**

1. Isaiah 55:6, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near."
2. 2 Chronicles 7:14, The Lord said to Solomon, "If my people...pray...then will I hear from heaven...."
3. In 1 Samuel 12:23, Samuel says that if he stopped praying for Saul, then he would sin against the Lord..
4. Psalm 55:17, David said, " Evening, and morning, and at noon will I pray, and cry aloud...."

**B. New Testament Illustrations**

1. The Lord Jesus said in Luke 18:1 that His followers should always pray and never lose hope. Also read Matthew 7:7; 26:41 and John 16:24.

2. The Apostle Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 5:17, that the believers should never stop praying. In Ephesians 6:18 Paul said that the believers should pray in the Spirit at all times. They should pray with all kinds of prayers and ask for everything they need. (Note also Romans 12:12; 15:30; Philippians 4:6-7; 1 Timothy 2:1; Colossians 4:2.)
3. The Apostle James said in James 4:2, that the believers did not get things they wanted because they did not ask God. (Also James 1:5 and 5:16-17).

## II. THE SIN OF FAILING TO PRAY

- A. Failure to pray is a sin of disobedience. The Christian who does not pray is a disobedient Christian because he does not listen to the command of the Lord. The Christian who does not pray fails to give his soul the spiritual food it needs.
- B. Failure to pray is a sin directly against God (1 Samuel 12:23). God chooses to answer the prayer of faith. When we fail to pray we tie His hands and hinder His power.
- C. Failure to pray is a sin against the church (Ephesians 6:18). Here we read that we should always pray for all believers. When believers fail to pray for other believers God will not show His grace and power in that church.
- D. Failure to pray is a sin against our fellow human beings. In 1 Timothy 2:1 we are told to pray for ALL MEN. Nobody can measure, for example, the blessing of God on a country because God's people pray for that country and its leaders every day. May God help us to pray daily for "all who are in authority."
- E. Failure to pray is a sin against yourself. James 4:2 says that we do not get the things we desire because we don't ask God. It is difficult to describe all the things a believer loses because he fails to pray. It is safe to say that defeat in the battle against sin and failures in the Christian life happen because believers forget about prayer.
- F. Failure to pray is a sin of unbelief. Mark 11:23-24 says if we have no doubts in our minds and believe that the things we pray for will happen, then God will do it for us. Faith causes us to pray. Doubt causes us not to pray. Faith makes God real. Doubt questions His ability and power. Faith causes you to have a better spiritual life. Doubt causes us to be spiritually poor. Doubt takes away the blessings for a happy spiritual life.

## III. THE NATURE OF PRAYER

Most of the following thoughts come from my own life. These thoughts come from what I have seen and what I have practiced through many years in the service of the Lord.

- A. Prayer is talking to the Lord. This prayer may be out loud with words or in the heart without spoken words. It is a point of contact between the believer and God.
- B. Prayer begins with speaking but then it becomes seeing. Prayer is a time when we talk to God. Prayer is a time when we tell God the things that are on our hearts. As we pray, we begin to understand God more clearly than at any other time in our lives. Prayer helps us to understand how wonderful God is.
- C. Prayer is the cry from this earth for the blessing of heaven. Psalm 65:2 says that everyone will come to Him, the One who hears prayer. God is not deaf to the needs and cries of believers on earth who are asking for Him to do something.
- D. When the believer prays God shows Himself. Prayer is a time when we open our hearts for Him to look at our deepest needs. God shows Himself during prayer. During prayer God shows His grace, His wisdom, and His power more than at any other time.
- E. Prayer is like a little child who keeps on asking what he wants. He does not want to take "no" for an answer.
- F. Prayer causes the Word of God to be a fire within us. Prayer is the key that unlocks the door to all the things God has for the believer. Prayer turns on the light of truth. Prayer causes the gates of heaven to open and the rivers of God's blessings to flow to the believer.
- G. Prayer is like a street with traffic going two ways. We talk to God, and we also listen and wait.

#### IV. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF PRAYER

When the believer talks to God he can express himself in five ways which we can call: *ADORATION*, *SUPPLICATION*, *INTERCESSION*, *THANKSGIVING*, and *ASKING* (Philippians 4:6-7; Ephesians 6:19; 1 Timothy 2:1).

- A. **ADORATION (Worship)** – It is worship and praise in which the believer talks out loud and declares his love for God.
1. Psalm 100:4 tells us to come into His city with songs of thanks and into His temple with songs of praise
  2. Hebrews 13:15 says that through Jesus we never stop offering our sacrifice of praise to God.
- B. **SUPPLICATION (Request)**– The Greek word is “*deesis*” and means that a person needs something. These requests are always addressed to God. The dictionary says it means “To humbly beg.” It has the idea of gentleness and seriousness of our prayer.
- C. **INTERCESSION** – (Hebrews 7:25; 1 Timothy 2:1). This is a term that is used in the courts of law. It means to plead in court for or against another person. Romans 11:2 says that the Scriptures tell about Elijah praying to God against the people of Israel. This word means to stand before God and talk to him on behalf of other people. In Romans 8:27 we learn that the Holy Spirit talks to God for us. We have a wonderful privilege – we can talk to God on behalf of others (Hebrews 7:25).
- D. **THANKSGIVING** - 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18 says that we should never stop praying. We should give thanks to God in everything that happens.  
Philippians 4:6 says that we should not worry about anything. We should pray and ask God for everything we need. When we pray we should always give thanks. When we pray it is always necessary to give thanks to God.
- E. **ASKING** – Prayer is asking God for something. When God answers our prayer we receive something. (Note the how many times the New Testament uses the word “*asking*.”)
1. Matthew 7:7-8 tells us that every one who asks will receive.
  2. Matthew 18:19 - This verse says that when two people on earth agree about something, then you can pray for it. And your father in heaven will do the thing you ask for.
  3. Matthew 21:22 - Here we read that if you believe, when you pray, you will receive all the things you ask for.
  4. Luke 11:13 –Jesus says that the Father in heaven will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him.
  5. John 14:13-14 - Jesus comforts his followers and says that if they ask for anything in His name, He will do it for them. Again He says that if they ask for anything in His name, He will do it. John 15:7 - Jesus tells them that if they obey His teaching, they can ask for anything they want and He will give it to them.
  6. John 16:24--Jesus says to them that before now they have not asked for anything in His name. He tells them that in order that their joy may be full, they should ask and they will receive.
  7. James 1:5-6--James tells the believers that if any of them need wisdom they should ask God. When they ask God they must believe. They must not doubt God.
  8. James 4:2-3 – James tells them that they don’t get things they want because they do not ask. And when they ask, they do not receive because they ask for the wrong reason.
  9. 1 John 5:14 – John says that if we ask anything that is in agreement with His will, He hears us.
- ◆ *We can add many more verses, but these verses show the importance of asking.*

#### V. HOW TO GET ANSWERS TO YOUR PRAYERS

What is the secret of getting answers to prayer? One of the disciples said to Jesus after they heard Him, “Lord, teach us to pray...” (Luke 11:1). It would be good for all of us to make this same request.

The Bible shows us eleven ways in which to pray and get results.

- A. **PRAY and REMAIN in Christ** – John 15:7 tells us that God will answer our prayers when we continue in Christ and follow His teaching. Live in Christ and let His Word live in you.
- B. **PRAY and OBEY** – In 1 John 3:22 God answers our prayer when we keep His commandments and when we do that which is pleases Him.

- C. **PRAY with great PITY**– Hebrews 5:7 – Christ prayed with loud cries and tears. It would be good for God to give us tears in order that we may weep as Christ wept.
- D. **PRAY with PERSEVERANCE** – Luke 11:5-8 – In this parable the friend received the bread he needed because “*he continued to ask.*” He knocked on the door without stopping. He refused to take ‘NO’ for an answer. He prayed firmly with the idea to keep praying until God answered.
- E. **PRAY CONTINUALLY**– 1 Thessalonians 5:17; Ephesians 6:18; Luke 18:1 – God will answer the continual prayer that is the cry of the heart for the blessings of God.
- F. **PRAY IN THE NAME OF JESUS** – John 14:13-14 – Many, many times God tells us to pray. We should pray in Jesus’ name. Oh what power is in that blessed name.
- G. **PRAY IN FAITH** – Mark 11:24; Matthew 21:22; James 1:6 – We receive from God that for which we BELIEVE Him. We cannot move mountains when doubt fills the heart. BELIEVE when you pray.
- H. **PRAY SERIOUSLY AND EFFECTIVELY** – James 5:16-17 – It did not rain for three years because Elijah prayed with all his might and seriously. This kind of praying gets results. May God save us from dry-eyed prayer that has no feeling.
- I. **PRAY WITH CONFIDENCE**– Hebrews 4:16 – When our hearts are right with God, we have confidence toward God. We can come to God without fear (1 John 3:21). I am washed in the blood of Christ. I have received the righteousness of Christ. I come to God in the name of Jesus. I do not need anything else in order to come with confidence.
- J. **PRAY IN THE WILL OF GOD** – 1 John 5:14 – Prayers that bear fruit are prayers that are in agreement with the will and purpose of God. God hears and answers when we ask for that which will honor and glorify Him.
- K. **PRAY IN THE SPIRIT** – Ephesians 6:18; Romans 8:26-27 – God *the Father* answers prayer that *God the Holy Spirit* is the cause of. Yield completely to the Spirit’s control. He will teach you *how* to pray and *what* to pray.

#### VI. **HINDRANCES TO PRAYER or WHY MILLIONS OF PRAYERS GO UNANSWERED**

- A. **NOT HONEST IN THE REASON FOR ASKING** – James 4:3 – This verse says that when they ask you they do not receive. The reason they ask is wrong. They only want things so that they can use them for their own pleasure. Many of our prayers are selfish. Be sure that all you desire is that God will do His will and that He will receive all the honor.
- B. **DOUBT IN THE HEART** - Mark 11:23 – Jesus said, “I tell you the truth. You can say to this mountain, ‘Go, mountain, fall into the sea’. And if you have no doubts in your mind and believe that the thing you say will happen, then God will do it for you”. When we are doubtful and fearful, God often delays the answer to our prayers. It is not enough only to pray. We must *believe* when we pray (*Matthew 21:22*). The doubting man receives nothing from the Lord (*James 1:6-7*).
- C. **SIN IN THE LIFE** – Psalm 66:18 says that if we keep sin in our hearts, the Lord will not hear us. Isaiah 1:15 is a good illustration of this. God told the people that when their hands were full of blood he would not hear them even when they said many prayers.  
There are people who teach that God hears and answers all prayers. The Bible teaches that when we keep sin in the heart, God fails to answer and He does not even hear.
- D. **ABSOLUTELY NO RESPECT FOR THE WILL OF GOD** – 1 John 5:14 – Here we read that this is the confidence we have in Him, if we speak anything in agreement with His will, He hears us. Remember, whenever you pray in the Spirit, He speaks for you **according to the will of God** (Romans 8:27). When you come into the presence of God in prayer, He will not answer prayers with foolish demands, selfish prayers and asking for silly things that you do not need. All prayer must be in agreement with God’s will and purpose. Our Lord was the best example in the matter of prayer. When Jesus was in Gethsemane, He told His Father, “Father, if you desire to do it, remove this cup from me. But do not do what I desire, but what you desire” (Luke 22:42).

- E. **FAILURE TO OBEY GOD'S COMMANDMENTS** – 1 John 3:22 – “And whatsoever we ask, we receive from him, because we keep his **commandments** and we **do those things which are pleasing in his sight.**” In 1 John God's *commandments* refer to the whole **Word of God** and to His will as He shows it in the Word. Read 1 John 2:3-5. The humble heart that obeys the Word of God is the one which receives answers to prayer

## VII. THE WONDERFUL POWER OF PRAYER

**We can see the measure of the power of prayer in the following ways:**

### A. WE CAN SEE THE POWER OF PRAYER FROM THE FACT THAT GOD HEARS AND ANSWERS PRAYER!

1. Psalms 65:2 – This verse tells us that God hears the prayers of every person who comes to Him.
2. Isaiah 65:24 – Isaiah tells us that God knows what we need before we ask and He will answer us even before we finish asking.
3. Jeremiah 33:3 – In this verse God promises that He will answer you when you call on Him, and that He will do great and powerful things that you do not even know about today.
4. 2 Chronicles 7:14 – God says that if His people, who are called by His name, will humble themselves and pray and turn from their sinful way of life, **THEN HE WILL HEAR THEM FROM HEAVEN.**
5. 1 Peter 3:12 – This verse tells us that the Lord's eyes are on those people who are right with Him, **AND HIS EARS ARE OPEN TO THEIR PRAYERS.**

### B. WE CAN SEE THE POWER OF PRAYER BY THE FACT THAT GOD PROMISES GREAT THINGS IF WE PRAY!

1. Mark 11:24 – So I tell you to ask for things in prayer. And if you believe that you have received those things then they will be yours.
2. Matthew 18:19 – This verse tells us that if two believers on earth will agree about something, then they can pray for it and the thing they ask for will be done for them by the Father in heaven.
3. John 14:14 – “If you ask anything in my name, I will do it.”
4. Matthew 21:22 – “And if you believe, when you pray, you will receive all things which you request.”
5. James 5:16 – This verse says that the powerful and requesting prayer of a righteous person has strength to do many things.

### C. WE CAN SEE THE POWER OF PRAYER BY THE FACT THAT THE BIBLE IS FULL OF DEMONSTRATIONS ABOUT IT!

1. Joshua prayed and the sun stood still (Joshua 10:12-14).
2. Jacob won when he fought with God in prayer. God saved His life. God blessed him and changed his name. (Genesis 32:25-28).
3. Moses prayed and stopped God from destroying Israel (Exodus 32:10-14).
4. Elijah prayed and fire fell from heaven (1 Kings 18:36-38).
5. Hannah prayed. Her childlessness was healed. Samuel was born (1 Samuel 1:9-20).
6. Daniel prayed and God shut the lion's mouth (Daniel 6:10-22).
7. Hezekiah prayed and God lengthened his life fifteen years (2 Kings 20:1-6).
8. The church prayed and God shook the building and filled them all with the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:31).
9. The church prayed again and God set Peter free from prison and his chains through a miracle (Acts 12:5-11).
10. Paul and Silas prayed and God shook their prison with an earthquake (Acts 16:25,26).

◆ **SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES FOR NUMEROUS OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS.**

## **VII. CONCLUSION**

I believe that from this lesson we can make the following conclusions:

- A. Prayer is absolutely necessary. Without prayer the grace of God will not support us. Without prayer we will not know the presence of Christ and the power of the Spirit.
- B. God hears and answers prayer. Therefore it is impossible to measure the possibilities.
- C. God commands us to pray, therefore it is important.
- D. Effective and confident prayer produces results. Such prayer must be earnest. We must continue to pray without stopping in order to get results. Prayer must come from a heart that repents and obeys God. We must pray with faith and in the Holy Spirit in order for God to work.
- E. God will not answer when our reason for praying is not honest and our hearts are full of doubt
- F. God will not answer our prayer when there is sin in our hearts and we refuse to do the will of God.
- G. Not praying is sin. When we do not pray we tie God's hands and steal God's blessing from the church. Lack of prayer makes the soul spiritually poor.
- H. Prayer is powerful because it stopped the sun. Prayer brought down fire from heaven. Prayer shut the mouths of lions. Most of the people in churches today do not have power in prayer. We should all give ourselves to prayer. We should take the full measure of His blessing that comes through prayer. We should do this for the glory of God.

**GREAT DOCTRINES OF THE BIBLE EXAM**

**LESSON 17**

Questions to be answered by every student enrolled in the Rogma International Free Bible Study Course

Register No \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

**Choose and Round O the correct answer in the following: -**

1. For the believer: (Value 3 points)
  - a. prayer is a choice left up to the believer.
  - b. prayer is commanded by God.
  - c. neglect of prayer is all right.
  
2. What is prayer? (Value 3 points)
  - a. Communication between the believer and God.
  - b. Reading the Word of God.
  - c. Getting down on your knees.
  
3. What is the basic and most emphasized characteristic of prayer? (Value 3 points)
  - a. Adoration
  - b. Asking
  - c. Intercession
  
4. What does Isaiah 65:24 say about the power of prayer? (Value 3 points)
  - a. God must answer yes to our prayer.
  - b. God can say no to our prayer sometimes.
  - c. God sometimes sends the answer before we pray.
  
5. According to 2 Chronicles 7:14 what attitude should a believer have when he prays? (Open Bible) (Value 3 points)
  - a. He must be humble.
  - b. He should pray with a proud heart.
  - c. He should fear God.
  
6. **Matching.** Place the letter in front of the definition in the blank space of the appropriate word. (Value 12 points)

_____ Adoration	a. Expressing our thanks to God
_____ Supplication	b. Pleading for another person
_____ Intercession	c. Expressing our needs
_____ Thanksgiving	d. Expressing love to God

7. What do the following verses say about prayer? (Value 25 points)
- a. Isaiah 55:6 \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. 2 Chronicles 7:14 \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Luke 18:1 \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. James 4:2 \_\_\_\_\_
8. List 6 keys to get answers to your prayers (Value 18 points)
- a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_
  - f. \_\_\_\_\_
9. Fill in the blank space. (Value 3 points)  
It is \_\_\_\_\_ for a believer not to pray. (1 Samuel 12:23)
10. Why are the prayers of many people not answered? (Value 12 points)  
(Place the letter in front of the reference in the space in front of the description.)
- |  |                |
|--|----------------|
| ____ They are not sincere.                   | a. Mark 11:23  |
| ____ They have doubt in their hearts.        | b. Psalm 66:18 |
| ____ They have sin in their lives.           | c. 1 John 5:14 |
| ____ They do not want to do the will of God. | d. James 4:3   |
11. Matching. Place the letter in front of the reference in the appropriate space in the definition column. What do the following verse say about failure to pray? (Value 15 points)
- |   |                   |
|---|-------------------|
| ____ It is a sin against God.                 | a. Mark 11:23-24  |
| ____ It is a sin against the church.          | b. 1 Timothy 2:1  |
| ____ It is a sin against fellow human beings. | c. James 4:2      |
| ____ It is a sin against yourself.            | d. Ephesians 6:18 |
| ____ It is a sin of unbelief.                 | e. 1 Samuel 12:23 |
12. Please tell us how God answered your prayer in a special way one time. (Whatever you answer here will not change your grade)