

BIBLE

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Biweekly Devotional: Top 10 Prayers Of The Bible

One of the most important aspects of any Christian's faith is communicating with God through prayer. The Bible gives us some powerful examples of prayers from our spiritual forefathers to consider when we want to praise God, seek his guidance, or ask for deliverance or blessing. For the next two weeks, we'll look at some of these prayers and examine how the authors might have felt and what we have to learn from each of them.

Day One (#10) Jonah's Prayer From The Belly Of A Fish

Jonah found himself in deep trouble when he ignored God's clear direction and went the other way. God called Jonah to go to the city of Nineveh and preach repentance, but instead in the opposite direction. Once the seas became violent, the sailors tossed Jonah overboard to save their own lives. There, he was swallowed by a great fish and remained in its belly for three days and three nights. Read Jonah 2:1-3:10 to learn how Jonah cried out to God in that time.

- Have you ever not done something God was calling you to do? Why?
- What is the tone of Jonah's prayer?
- What is the most desperate you have ever felt? Did you pray?
- How was the situation resolved?
- What did Jonah do after he was "vomited" on the shore?
- In what ways were Jonah's plight in the belly of the big fish similar to the plight of the Ninevites? Could either save themselves without some intervention?
- Do you suppose Jonah learned something about being hopelessly lost and desperately needing saving during that time made him more willing to go to Nineveh?
- Are your prayers different in times of desperation than they are in times of peace and prosperity? If so, why? How are they different?
- Do you pray more frequently in good times or bad times? Why?
- Can a regular time of communication with God help protect us from desperate situations?

Pray and ask God to give you a heart that will be obedient to his calling and a desire to be in regular communication with him. Also, thank him for hearing your prayers and answering them.

Day Two (#9) Elijah's Prayer For Fire From Heaven

Elijah, a prophet of God, was determined to prove, once and for all, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Israel) was the one true God. To do this, he set up a test with the prophets of Baal. Read 1 Kings 18:1-40 to see the test he devised, how he called out to God to answer and how the people responded to seeing the power of the one true God.

- Do you pray bold prayers? What is the boldest prayer you have ever prayed?
- Are you more likely to pray for something bold or something safe? Why?
- Why do you think Elijah had them pour water on the sacrifice before praying? Wouldn't that make it harder for God to respond?
- In verse 36, Elijah says he has "done all these things at your command." Do you think this challenge was a prayerfully considered event, or a something Elijah thought up on the spur of the moment?
- In verse 37, what was Elijah's motivation for this challenge? Was it personal promotion or to turn the hearts of the people back to God?
- Do you think this had any impact on how God responded?
- Think back to your boldest prayer. What was your motivation for praying for it?
- Has God ever answered one of your prayers in a powerful way that left no doubt he was the one true God?
- What is holding you back from praying bolder prayers?
- What is something bold you could begin praying for today?

Pray and ask God to give you boldness in your prayers and the courage to be obedient all the things he commands you to do.

Day Three (#8) Prayer Of Jabez

Early in the Old Testament, buried in a chapter detailing the descendants of Judah, hidden in a laundry list of names most of us have never heard nor can we pronounce, is a powerful story of a man named Jabez whose prayer was answered by God. Read 1 Chronicles 4:1-10 to see what Jabez prayed and how God responded.

- How was Jabez different than his brothers?
- How does verse 10 describe the tone of Jabez's prayer?
- Describe a time you "cried out to God"? How did you feel?
- Do you suppose Jabez's was motivated by greed when he asked God to bless him and enlarge his territory?
- Is it wrong to ask for God's blessing and more "territory" (influence)?
- Are you using the things you have been blessed with and the authority you have now to serve God and to bless others?
- If God gave you even greater blessings and authority, how would you use them?
- Do you feel God's hand is on you and he's keeping you from pain? Have you ever asked him to?
- Why do you think God chose to grant Jabez's request?

Pray and ask God to make you a better steward of the blessings and authority he has given you.

Day Four (#7) Daniel's Prayer Of Thanksgiving For The Interpretation Of Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednigo were three young Israelite boys taken to Babylonia when Jerusalem was besieged and fell to Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon. They were put into the king's service, but found themselves in an impossible situation. If they, or the king's magicians and astrologers couldn't interpret the king's dream, they were all going to be put to death. Making it even more difficult, the king refused to tell anyone what happened in the dream. Daniel and his friends, however, knew the perfect place to take an impossible task was the God who through all things are possible. Read Daniel 2:1-49 to see how they responded when God answered their prayer and what it meant for them.

- Think back to an impossible situation you were in. Did you pray or did you try to handle it yourself?
- When you're up against something that looks impossible, does that make you more or less likely to take it before God in prayer?
- Do you ask God to help you with things that appear easy to accomplish?
- How do you decide whether you are going to pray about something or just do it yourself?
- Have you ever asked God to reveal "deep and hidden" things to you? If not, why not?
- Do you think it is possible for him to reveal things to us we could never know ourselves?
- Is there something unknown to you that you could ask God to reveal for you?
- How would you use the information? Would you use it just to get ahead, to benefit others or to witness to God's power?
- How did Daniel use the revealed information to bring glory to God?
- How did King Nebuchadnezzar respond?

Pray and ask God to reveal a solution to the problem that is most troubling you today and to show you how you can use the answer to his glory.

Day Five (#6) Solomon's Prayer At The Temple Dedication

The King of Israel, Solomon, was likely the wisest and richest king to ever rule. In today's devotional we join him as he is preparing to dedicate the just completed temple to the God of Israel. Solomon's father, David was Israel's second king and had spent his later years gathering all of the supplies Solomon would need to complete the temple. In 1 Kings 8:1-61, we join Solomon on this long awaited day as the Ark of the Covenant, which represented God's presence, was brought into the temple before all the people of Israel, and Solomon says the prayer of dedication.

- What's the longest you have ever had to wait to accomplish a goal? How did you feel?
- Has anyone from a previous generations helped you build your faith? If so, what did they do?

- Are you doing anything now to help those younger than you build their faith? Who is someone younger who could use help?
- What might you be able to do now that would provide a spiritual benefit for younger generations?
- In the Old Testament, the Israelites built temples for God where he promised to dwell, but in the New Testament Christians don't do that. Why not? Since the death and resurrection of Jesus, what is now the temple where the Spirit of God dwells?
- The focal point of religion at the time was the temple. Now it is the church. What is the difference between the Old Testament Temple and the New Testament church? (Hint: The word church doesn't refer to a building, but to people)
- Solomon prays beginning in verse 33 about how sin will separate people from God, but that He will return when people pray and turn their hearts back to Him. Is that still the pattern today or through Christ's atoning blood are all who accept Christ's death on the cross inseparable from God?
- In verse 35, Solomon makes the case that sin can also separate them from the natural blessings of God such as rain and protection from things such as disaster and disease. Is that still possible today?
- In verse 56 Solomon points out that not one word has failed of all the promises God gave to Moses. What are some times in your life when God has proven to be faithful?
- On what occasions could you and your family be celebrating God's goodness and faithfulness?

Pray and thank God for his faithfulness and for Christ's death on the cross which covers our sins and allows sinless God to dwell in our sinful bodies through his Holy Spirit.

Weekend Reading: Jesus' Prayers

Prayer was so important to Jesus, he would get up early in the morning to go off and pray. Not surprisingly, some of the most moving and powerful prayers in the Bible are from Jesus, that is why we felt they deserved a separate place all to themselves.

- Jesus Praying That This Cup Might Pass/Thy Will Be Done (Mark 14:32-42)
- Jesus Praying For Forgiveness Of Those Who Crucified Him (Luke 23:26-43)
- Jesus Praying For All Believers (John 17:20-25)

Day Six (#5) Paul's Prayer For The Ephesians

Shortly after Jesus' death, as Christianity began to spread, Jewish leaders were adamant that this new religion be stamped out. To ensure this happened, they began to persecute the follows of Jesus by beating them, putting them in prison and even having them killed. By his own admission, no one was more diligent in persecuting Christians than a young religious leader named Saul. However, after having a face-to-face encounter with the risen savior, (Acts 9) Saul, who changed his name to Paul, became one of the most fearless leaders of the church and defenders of the faith. In today's reading Paul writes to the church at Ephesus where he has heard they are doing great things in the name of Jesus. Read Ephesians 1:15-23 and Ephesians 3:14-21. This is how Paul said he is praying for the believers of Ephesus.

- What is the tone of these prayers? Does Paul sound more like the person who used to persecute Christians or like someone who has had a truly life- and spirit-altering experience with Jesus Christ?
- Do you talk the same way you talked before becoming a Christian or do you speak differently?
- Paul begins by giving thanks for the Ephesians. What Christians/spiritual mentors do you give thanks for and why?
- What does Paul pray the Father will give them in chapter 1, verses 17-18?
- Paul, who had an encounter with Jesus, mentions power several times when praying about what we have received from the Father. Do Christians really have power? If so, why isn't it discussed more in the church?
- Do you feel like you experience this power in your spiritual life? Do you pray to receive it or more of it?
- Who are some people you should be praying these same two prayers for?
- In Ephesians 3:18, Paul prays that they would be able to understand how wide and long and high and deep the love of Christ is. Do you feel loved by God?
- What is your biggest dream of what you can accomplish in the kingdom of God? Paul says you can accomplish immeasurably more than that through the power of the Holy Spirit that is at work in us. Stop and reflect for a moment what might be possible through you with the help of the Holy Spirit?

Pray and thank God for the fellow believers God has put in your life. And pray that you would come to know this power that Paul spoke of that you might accomplish, through Him, immeasurably more than you can think or imagine.

Day Seven (#4) David's Prayer Of Thanks For Gifts To Build The Temple

As King David's life was nearing an end, he longed to build a temple where the spirit of God could dwell. (Christ hadn't yet died for our sins, so the Spirit of God couldn't dwell in humans as he does now.) However, God told him that he couldn't build the temple because he had done too much killing in his lifetime. So David took it upon himself to gather all of the materials that would be needed for his son to build the temple. Read 1 Chronicles 29:1-20. These are the words of King David as he stood before the Israelites and gave thanks for their generous gift to build the temple.

- In verses 8-9, when the leaders gave generously, how did that make the people feel?
- How do you feel when you are asked to give for a religious cause? Do you feel thankful you have resources to give?
- Who does David say owns everything in heaven and on earth?
- Who do you feel owns the possessions you control? Are they yours? Gods?
- How might you manage your possessions differently if you believed they belonged to God?
- Where does David say wealth and honor come from? Do you agree, or do you believe each person makes their own breaks in life?
- In verse 14, David seems humbled that God would have given them so much to give away. When you give, do you focus on how much you are giving away or how much God has given you so that you can give that much away?
- In verse 20, how did the people conclude this time of giving? Who did they focus on?

- If God wanted to use you to get \$10,000 to a lifesaving ministry, how much would he have to give you before you would give them \$10,000? Would he have to give you \$10,000? \$100,000? \$1,000,000? More?
- Are you storing up treasures in heaven or treasures on earth?

Pray and thank God for all he has given you. Ask him to reveal how you view your possessions and to give you a generous spirit?

Day Eight (#3) Peter And John Pray For Boldness

The Jewish leaders hoped that once Jesus died, his following would disperse and this movement would end. However, quite the opposite occurred. The apostles continued to preach that healing and salvation could only come through the name of Jesus. Further, Peter and John healed a crippled man near the temple gate in the name of Jesus. The religious rulers of the day had Peter and John arrested and brought them to be questioned the next day. The religious leaders eventually let them go but warned them not to speak or teach in Jesus' name again. Read Acts 4:1-31 to see how Peter and John responded to these threats.

- How did Peter and John respond when they were asked not to speak in Jesus's name?
- Have you ever been asked not to share your faith?
- Have you ever started to share something spiritual but decided not to? Why?
- Are you free to share your faith where you work?
- How would or do people react if you do?
- Do you pray for opportunities to share your faith?
- Peter and John said they share what they saw and heard with Jesus. Is witnessing really as simple as sharing what you've experienced in your own life?
- What have you experienced in your own faith that you could share with others?
- Are you comfortable sharing your faith when the opportunity presents itself?
- What is it that makes us afraid/nervous to share what we have seen and heard spiritually in our own lives?

Pray for opportunities to share your faith and boldness to speak to what you have seen and heard in your spiritual walk.

Day Nine (#2) Jehoshaphat's Prayer Of Deliverance

After King Solomon died, the kingdom of Israel eventually split into two parts: Israel and Judah. In time, a man named Jehoshaphat became king of Judah. One day Jehoshaphat learned that several kingdoms had come to wage war against him. It looked hopeless. Not knowing what to do, Jehoshaphat called together the people of Judah to inquire of the Lord what they should do. Read 2 Chronicles 20:1-30 to find out what Jehoshaphat prayed and how God responded.

- How does Jehoshaphat begin his prayer? Do you begin your prayers by acknowledging God for who he is?
- In verse 6, who did Jehoshaphat focus on instead of the kings or the armies he was facing?
- When you are in a difficult situation, are you more likely to focus on the problem or the power of the God you serve?

- In verse 12, Jehoshaphat acknowledges the helplessness of his situation and who he is looking to for help. When you face difficult situations, do you look to God for help, or do you forge ahead on your own to resolve it.
- Is it hard for you to wait on the Lord for direction as they did in verses 12-13? Or do you feel the need to just keep trying things and moving ahead?
- Do you believe God can and will speak to you if you ask for direction and wisdom?
- Have you ever faced a hopeless situation? How did you pray? How did God respond?
- Did God do what he said he would in this situation?
- How did God's deliverance impact the remaining reign of Jehoshaphat?

Pray and thank God for who he is and his power to deliver you from every situation. Present to him any discouraging, hopeless situation, let him know that your eyes are on him for resolution and that you are going to wait on him for direction.

Day Ten (#1) The Lord's Prayer

After hearing Jesus pray, the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray. Jesus then taught them a prayer on which to model their prayers. He followed that with a story stressing the importance of persistence in praying and giving them confidence that due to the nature of God, he would answer their prayers. Read Luke 11:1-13 to learn this model and to see the words of encouragement Jesus gave his disciples.

- Why do you think Jesus began his prayer by calling God "Father" instead of just saying "God," thereby emphasizing their relationship? How do you begin your prayers?
- Jesus also began by praising the name of God. Do you suppose this is to remind God who he is, or to remind us who we are addressing?
- In saying, "your kingdom come," Jesus is inviting God to intervene in events on earth. Does God need to be invited to intervene in events on earth? Should we begin each day by asking God to be present and intervene in our lives?
- When Jesus asks to be given "daily bread," is he just asking for food, or all the provisions for the day (wisdom, faith, compassion, love, etc.)?
- When you ask for forgiveness, do you list your sins individually or do you ask for them to be forgiven collectively? Do you put more emphasis on the sins and your sinful nature of the grace and goodness of God?
- Why is it important that we include forgiving others in conjunction with asking for forgiveness ourselves?
- Why would Jesus teach us to pray that we avoid temptation all together instead of just ask for strength to resist temptation? Does that say something about the weakness of mankind?
- From the example given, do you think persistence in prayer affects the answers we receive?
- How much do you want to give your children things that are good for them?
- If you think of God as your father, does that affect how you expect him to respond?

Pray and thank your father in heaven that through the death and resurrection of Jesus, you are his child. Thank him that he hears our prayers and that he answers them.

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