



GOOD NEWS

for the unsaved WORLD!

(#32)
Using the Bible in prayer – recommendations and cautions

PRAYER WITH A DIFFERENT FOCUS



USING THE BIBLE IN PRAYER.

WE MAY WONDER WHY

The Spirit of God was active in the early church (and at other times in history) in ways that he is not active among us.

- ❖ Is it just that he doesn't want to?
- ❖ Or have we kept him from doing so?

IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

*When the Spirit was most active, there seemed to be a connection between:
1) the Bible, 2) prayer, and 3) the power of the Holy Spirit.*

- ❖ Is it just that he doesn't want to?
↳ That would be his right.
- ❖ Or have we kept him from doing so?
↳ That would be our wrong.

SUGGESTION

- Yes, the Holy Spirit can do as he pleases (John 3:8).
- But just perhaps...
 - IF we delighted to combine Scripture with our prayer (as well as with our lives)...
 - THEN might we become an "environment" where the Spirit was delighted to be present?

BIBLE + PRAYER = ?

- We can describe it several ways...
 - ✓ Scripture-guided prayer
 - ✓ Prayer based on Scripture
 - ✓ Praying the Bible
- But no matter how we say it, it involves combining Scripture – words given by the Holy Spirit – with prayer.

➢ It also involves delighting in God-focused goals.

1) Getting to know God better. AND: 2) Having our own lives changed by submitting to the words of Scripture.

✱ The Spirit delights in such things! ✱

PRAYER WITH A DIFFERENT FOCUS



IF we took so much delight in the Spirit's Words (Scripture) ...

THAT they were a constant part of our lives and our prayer...

WHAT might happen?

PRAYING THE SPIRIT'S WORDS (= the Bible)

means we combine Bible study, godly meditation and prayer into an all-in-one activity!

- **BIBLE STUDY:** We need to *understand* what the passage says, in order to pray accurately.
- **GODLY MEDITATION:** We need to *think* about what the passage says, and how it may apply to us. (This is the *opposite* of the world's mindless "meditation.")
- **PRAYER:** We need to *talk* to God about: 1) what we have learned and observed, and 2) our response to how it applies to our lives.

DON'T UNDERESTIMATE THE VALUE OF GROUP PRAYER.

- In the book of Acts (where we see the Holy Spirit at work) many of the examples involved groups praying together.

2 of the 3 specific examples we have focused on involve group prayer.

Then they all prayed ... **GROUP**

Then all the believers ... lifted their voices in prayer... **GROUP**

... Stephen prayed, ... **INDIVIDUAL***

Acts 1:24a; 4:24a; 7:59b (NLT) *(He had no other option!)

Consider also what Jesus said...

"Where two or three have come together in my name, I am there among them."
Matthew 18:20 (GW)

A SHORT EXAMPLE

Do everything in love.
1 Corinthians 16:14 (NIV)

"Lord, you define love, not me. The world has its own false definitions that try to influence everything we do; and without you and your Word, there is no possible way to escape the world's definitions.

"Help me to love as you love, not as the world loves. Thank you for the Bible, which teaches me what genuine love is. And help me to submit to it, so that I might attain a renewed mind - one that is made new in righteousness and holiness. Then I will love as you loved.

[CONTINUED]

Do everything in love.
1 Corinthians 16:14 (NIV)

[FROM PREV. PAGE]

"It is so easy to pick times for love, and to ignore love at other times (when things seem to be less loving or lovable). Yet you say *everything* must be done in love, which implies *every time* as well.

"There are many things I do not want to do in love, especially when things are not going my way. But things did not go your way, either, when they were nailing you to the cross. If you could love even then, help me to love in my minor trials and problems of life."

WARNINGS AND CAUTIONS



WHEN USING THE BIBLE IN PRAYER.

1. SUBMITTING TO WHAT SCRIPTURE SAYS.

We are not to modify or distort *the Bible* to fit our views. Rather, we must change *our views* (and actions) to fit the Bible!

This is the only way our "unsaved thinking" can be undone. (We need "renewed minds" – Romans 12:2.)

The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.
Romans 8:6-7 (NIV)

All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.
Ephes. 2:3 (NIV)

2. ACCEPTING ALL OF WHAT SCRIPTURE SAYS.

We are not to "pick and choose" the Bible passages, based on what we want to hear! (This results in distortion of God's Word.)

→ This is one of the things people do when they want to keep their "unsaved thinking."

[THIS WAS A PROBLEM EVEN IN THE APOSTLE'S DAY.]

[PAUL'S WRITINGS] ... which ignorant and unstable people distort, leading to their own destruction, as they do the rest of the Scriptures.

2 Peter 3:16b (ISV)

[WARNING:] Even some of you will distort the truth ...

Acts 20:30a (NLT)

3. NOT ADDING TO, OR SUBTRACTING FROM SCRIPTURE.

When Scripture doesn't fit our views, it's not Scripture that's wrong! Don't change it so it sounds more pleasant, or so it better fits with your views!

→ This is another thing people do when they want to keep their "unsaved thinking."

Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the Lord your God that I give you.

Deut. 4:2 (NIV)

Don't add to his words, or he will rebuke you, and you will be shown to be a liar.

Prov. 30:6 (ISV)

[See also: Revelation 22:18-19.]

4. BASE YOUR PRAYER ON WHAT THE TEXT SAYS... NOT JUST THE WORDS THAT ARE PRESENT IN THE PASSAGE.

We need to pay attention to context. "Word-picking" may be popular with people... but it doesn't impress God.

→ If you're going to do that... you might as well pray over a dictionary!

[A GOOD EXAMPLE:] They read from the Book of the Law of God and clearly explained the meaning of what was being read, helping the people understand each passage.

Neh. 8:8 (NLT)

[WHEN GOD DESCRIBED HIS WORDS TO ISRAEL:] ... they're not just empty words for you—they are your very life.

Deut. 32:47a (ISV)

5. PRAYING THIS WAY IS ONLY AS GOOD AS YOUR INTEGRITY AND TRUTHFULNESS.

God knows your heart. Pretension, hypocrisy, and Scripture twisting may sometimes fool people... but not God.

→ These are what people do when they are fakes.

[AS JESUS SAID:]

"These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.

They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men."

Matthew 15:8-9 (NIV)

6. YOUR ATTITUDE IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN YOUR WORDINESS.

Spirit-led people have often had long prayers; but it was prayer with meaning, not babbling.

→ Lots of empty words is a characteristic of a moral fool!

... the speech of a fool [comes] when there are many words. Much dreaming and many words are meaningless. Therefore stand in awe of God.

Eccles. 5:3b, 7 (NIV)

But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken.

Matthew 12:36 (NIV)

WHAT SHOULD WE CONCLUDE?

IF WE WOULD LIKE THE HOLY SPIRIT TO WORK AMONG US THE WAY HE DID AT VARIOUS TIMES IN THE PAST...

(INCLUDING IN THE BOOK OF ACTS)

MAYBE WE SHOULD CONSIDER THE WAY THEY LIVED AND PRAYED!

➤ Permeating our lives and our prayer

→ with the WORDS of the Spirit (= the Bible and what it teaches)!

Credits

SCRIPTURE

- Scriptures marked "NLT" – Scripture quoted from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright ©1996. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois 60189. All rights reserved. (www.newlivingtranslation.com)
- Scriptures marked "NIV" - Scripture quoted from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved. (www.zondervanbibles.com)
- Scriptures marked "GW" - Scripture is taken from GOD'S WORD®. Copyright 1995 God's Word to the Nations. Used by permission of Baker Publishing Group. All rights reserved.
- Scriptures marked "ISV" - Scripture taken from the Holy Bible: International Standard Version®. Copyright © 1996-forever by The ISV Foundation. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED INTERNATIONALLY. Used by permission. (<https://www.isv.org/bible/>)

PICTURES (original sources; modifications may have been made)

- Megaphone – roshellin / CC0: <https://openclipart.org/detail/167891/megafono>
- Woman praying – Maria Kröger / CC BY-SA (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/>). https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lecarla_Praying.png
- Open Bible – https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Open_bible_isaiah.jpg, Ken Horn / CC BY (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/>)
- Presentation – Dennis Hinks © 2020.