

Prayer soup: 41 ingredients for effective prayer.

by Larry Smith — Pray Big Ministries — 06/18/03

Even the disciples had to ask Jesus to teach them about prayer. Many people struggle with prayer because they haven't been taught. In God's word we find many instructions concerning prayer. Let the Holy Spirit teach you as you look throughout scripture to see the various "ingredients" of prayer.

1. Seek solitude with God

Moses, Elijah, Daniel, David, Jesus and other great men of God, spent time alone in prayer with God. Away from others. In Matthew, Jesus instructs us to go into a closet and pray.

Matthew 6:5,6 ⁵ And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. ⁶ But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

Mark 1:35 And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.

Mark 6:46 And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray.

Matthew 14:13 When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns.

Exodus 24:15-18 ¹⁵ When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it, ¹⁶ and the glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai. For six days the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day the LORD called to Moses from within the cloud. ¹⁷ To the Israelites the glory of the LORD looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain. ¹⁸ Then Moses entered the cloud as he went on up the mountain. And he stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

2. Be still

Fast food. Federal Express. Express coffee. Cell phones. E-mails. pdfs. tiffs. The world calls us to be "movers and shakers" while God calls us to be "still and rest in Him."

Psalms 37:7 Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.

Psalms 46:10 "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."

3. Wait

Our flesh says, "I want it now." God says, "wait." We are so impatient. God says, "let me teach you patience." So many times we move ahead before we ask Him in prayer. He says inquire of me *first*.

Numbers 9:8 Moses answered them, "Wait until I find out what the LORD commands concerning you."

Psalms 27:14 Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.

Psalms 33:20 We wait in hope for the LORD; he is our help and our shield.

Psalms 37:34 Wait for the LORD and keep his way. He will exalt you to inherit the land; when the wicked are cut off, you will see it.

Psalms 38:15 I wait for you, O LORD; you will answer, O Lord my God.

4. Come to God in humility

God is looking for men and women with a humble heart, who are willing to stand helpless before Him. Relying in faith, on His strength to sustain them. God draws close to those who are humble.

Psalms 25:9 He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way.

James 4:6 But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

James 4:10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

1Peter 5:6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

Psalms 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Isaiah 66:2 Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?" declares the LORD. "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word.

5. Praise His name

Praise is important. It opens the doors to God's presence. Do you want to be close to God? The Word says come to Him with praise. Enter His gates with thanksgiving. Bless His name.

Psalms 100 ¹ Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth. ² Serve the LORD with gladness; Come before Him with joyful singing. ³ Know that the LORD Himself is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. ⁴ Enter His gates with thanksgiving, And His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him; bless His name. ⁵ For the LORD is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting, And His faithfulness to all generations.

Revelation 5:12 In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"

6. Praying God's will to be done

Your will or God's will? How do you pray? To know God's will — read His love letters to you.

Matthew 6:10 your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Matthew 26:42 He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done."

John 4:31-34 ³¹ Meanwhile his disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat something." ³² But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about." ³³ Then his disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought him food?" ³⁴ "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work."

7. Ask/seek/knock

James says we have not because we ask not, or we ask with the wrong motives. Paul teaches us to bring everything to God in prayer. Even Jesus teaches us to ask.

Matthew 7:7-12 ⁷ "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. ⁹ "Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? ¹¹ If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! ¹² So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

James 4:1-4 What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? ² You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. ³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. ⁴ You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

James 1:5-7 ⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. ⁶ But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. ⁷ That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord;

Psalms 119:18 Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.

Psalms 119: 27 Let me understand the teaching of your precepts; then I will meditate on your wonders.

Psalms 119: 33 Teach me, O LORD, to follow your decrees; then I will keep them to the end.

8. Be specific

God is a God of details. He can and will answer specific prayers. Moses asked God not to kill the children of Israel. Gideon prayed for dew on the fleece. Hanna asked for a child. Elijah prayed for rain. Jesus prayed that Lazarus would be raised from the dead. The blind man asked for sight.

Matthew 7:7-12 ⁷ "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. ⁹ "Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? ¹¹ If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! ¹² So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

James 1:5-7 ⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. ⁶

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Exodus 32:9-14⁹ "I have seen these people," the LORD said to Moses, "and they are a stiff-necked people.¹⁰ Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation."¹¹ But Moses sought the favor of the LORD his God. "O LORD," he said, "why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand?¹² Why should the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent that he brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth?' Turn from your fierce anger; relent and do not bring disaster on your people.¹³ Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self: 'I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance forever.'"¹⁴ Then the LORD relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.

Mark 10:51 "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him. The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to see."

9. Confession of sins

God knows everything we do. He sees our sins. In prayer, we have the confidence that we can come to Him and confess our sins. When we confess our sins, we reestablish our intimate relationship with Him. We will find compassion and forgiveness when we confess and forsake our sins. If we do not confess, but attempt to hide our sins from the One Who sees all, He will not listen to our prayers.

1 John 1:8-10⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us.⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

Isaiah 59:1,2¹ Behold, the LORD's hand is not so short That it cannot save; Neither is His ear so dull That it cannot hear.² But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He does not hear.

Psalms 32:5 Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"-- and you forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah

Psalms 103:2,3² Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits--³ who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases,

Psalms 103:8-12⁸ The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.⁹ He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever;¹⁰ he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him;¹² as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

Proverbs 28:13 "He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion."

Psalms 139:23,24²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:²⁴ And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

10. Repentance

After we confess we need to turn from our sins. "Repent" was John the Baptist's, Jesus' and Peter's first message.

Matthew 3:1,2,6¹ In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea² and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."⁶ Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

Matthew. 4:17 From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

Matthew 11:20 Then Jesus began to denounce the cities in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent.

Matthew 12:41 The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here.

Acts 2:38 And Peter said to them, "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

11. Love

Do all things in love. If we love one another, God lives in us.

Joshua 23:11 So be very careful to love the LORD your God.

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

1 Corinthians 13:13 And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 16:14 Do everything in love.

Matthew 5:44 But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

Matthew 22:37 Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."

Matthew 22:39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'

John 13:34 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

John 15:17 This is my command: Love each other.

Romans 5:5 And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness...

Philippians 1:9 And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight,

1 Peter 4:8 Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

1 John 4:12 No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

12. Forgive others

Forgiving others is important. Unforgiveness can open the door to anger and bitterness. And these can open the door to Satan. Simply put, unforgiveness can hinder our prayers.

Matthew 6:12 Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Matthew 6:14 For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

Matthew 18:21-22 ²¹ Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?

²² Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

13. Obedience to God's Word

Jesus says if we love Him, we will keep His commandments hidden in our hearts. If we abide in Him, and His Word abides in us, He promises to do what we ask Him in prayer.

John 14:15 "If you love me, you will obey what I command.

John 15:10 If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.

John 15:14 You are my friends if you do what I command.

John 14:14 "If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.

John 15:7 "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you.

14. Be thankful

David tells us to enter into God's gates with thanksgiving. When only one leper came back to thank Jesus for healing him, He asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?"

Psalms 100 Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth. ² Serve the LORD with gladness; Come before Him with joyful singing. ³ Know that the LORD Himself is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. ⁴ Enter His gates with thanksgiving, And His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him; bless His name. ⁵ For the LORD is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting, And His faithfulness to all generations.

Luke 17:12-17 ¹² As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance ¹³ and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!" ¹⁴ When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed. ¹⁵ One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. ¹⁶ He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him --and he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷ Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?"

Colossians 4:2 Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

Hebrews 12:28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe,

15. Faith

Faith is hoping and believing in that which you cannot see. Jesus is the author and perfecter of our faith. Ask Him to increase your faith.

Luke 17:5,6 ⁵ The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" ⁶ He replied, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you.

Hebrews 11:1-3 ¹ Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. ² This is what the ancients were

commended for.³ By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

Hebrews 11:5-7⁵ By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because God had taken him away. For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God.⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.⁷ By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

Hebrews 12:1-3¹ Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.² Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.³ Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

James 1:5-7⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.⁶ But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.⁷ That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord;

John 14:12-14¹² I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.¹³ And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father.¹⁴ You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

Matthew 8:10-13¹⁰ When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, "I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith."¹¹ I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.¹² But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."¹³ Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go! It will be done just as you believed it would." And his servant was healed at that very hour.

Matthew 9:1,2¹ Jesus stepped into a boat, crossed over and came to his own town.² Some men brought to him a paralytic, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven."

Matthew 9:20-22²⁰ Just then a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak.²¹ She said to herself, "If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed."²² Jesus turned and saw her. "Take heart, daughter," he said, "your faith has healed you." And the woman was healed from that moment.

Matthew 9:27-29²⁷ As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!"²⁸ When he had gone indoors, the blind men came to him, and he asked them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" "Yes, Lord," they replied.²⁹ Then he touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith will it be done to you";

Matthew 13:53-58⁵³ When Jesus had finished these parables, he moved on from there.⁵⁴ Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?" they asked.⁵⁵ "Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas?"⁵⁶ Aren't all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?"⁵⁷ And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, "Only in his hometown and in his own house is a prophet without honor."⁵⁸ And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.

Matthew 17:14-20¹⁴ When they came to the crowd, a man approached Jesus and knelt before him.¹⁵ "Lord, have mercy on my son," he said. "He has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water."¹⁶ I brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal him."¹⁷ "O unbelieving and perverse generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me."¹⁸ Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy, and he was healed from that moment.¹⁹ Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, "Why couldn't we drive it out?"²⁰ He replied, "Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."

1 John 5:15 And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.

16. Persistence

Many times we ask once and simply stop. Perhaps we believe we should not bother the Creator of the universe. Jesus teaches us to be persistent in our prayers. Not to give up. Jesus gives us parables on 'not giving up.' The man at the neighbor's door at midnight. The persistent widow. He teaches us to ask, seek and knock. Even Jesus asked God three times in the Garden concerning the cross.

Luke 18:1-8¹ Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.² He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men."³ And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, "Grant me justice against my adversary."⁴ "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men,⁵ yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!'"⁶ And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says."⁷ And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off?⁸ I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"

Matthew 15:21-28 ²¹ Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. ²² And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. ²³ But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. ²⁴ But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ²⁵ Then came she and worshiped him, saying, Lord, help me. ²⁶ But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. ²⁷ And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. ²⁸ Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

Matthew 7:7-11 ⁷ "Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. ⁸ "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it shall be opened. ⁹ "Or what man is there among you, when his son shall ask him for a loaf, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ "Or if he shall ask for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? ¹¹ "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!

Matthew 26:39-44 ³⁹ And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. ⁴⁰ And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? ⁴¹ Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. ⁴² He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. ⁴³ And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. ⁴⁴ And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.

1 Kings 18:42-44 ⁴² So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees, ⁴³ And said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, There is nothing. And he said, Go again seven times. ⁴⁴ And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not.

17. Pray to the Father, asking in Jesus' name

The name of Jesus is above every name. He has been given all authority in heaven and on earth. He is sitting at the Father's right hand interceding for us.

Ephesians 1:20,21 ²⁰ which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come.

John 14:12-14 ¹² I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. ¹⁴ You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

John 15:16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit --fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.

John 16:23,24 ²³ In that day you will no longer ask me anything. I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. ²⁴ Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.

18. Ask with the right motives

James warned us to check our motives when we pray. Are our motives pure or selfish? Jesus tells us to pray for God's Kingdom to come. His will to be done. Not our will.

James 4:1-3 ¹ What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? ² You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. ³ When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

1 John 5:14,15 ¹⁴ This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that he hears us --whatever we ask --we know that we have what we asked of him.

19. Corporate prayer

Enlist others to pray with you. Pray together for your church. Your lost friends.

Matthew 18:19 "Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.

Acts 1:13-15 ¹³ When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. ¹⁴ They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers. ¹⁵ In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty)

Acts 12:5 So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.

Acts 12:12,13 ¹² When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. ¹³ Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer the door.

20. The Holy Spirit will teach us how to pray

Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to be our helper. To guide us in times of prayer. Be still. Listen. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you who to pray for.

John 14:15-17 ¹⁵ “If you love me, you will obey what I command. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever-- ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.

1 John 2:24-27 ²⁴ See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. ²⁵ And this is what he promised us --even eternal life. ²⁶ I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray. ²⁷ As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit --just as it has taught you, remain in him.

Acts 13:2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”

Acts 20:22,23 ²² “And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. ²³ I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me.

Romans 8:5,6 ⁵ Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. ⁶ The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace;

1 Corinthians 2:10-14 ¹² but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. ¹¹ For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man’s spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. ¹² We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. ¹³ This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. ¹⁴ The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Galatians 6:8 The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

Ephesians 6:18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

21. Praying God’s written Word

Many prayers in the Bible are simply praying back to God the things He has promised in His Word. Make every effort to be in the Word. Ask God to make it your delight. Ask Him to teach you His Word. To give you understanding. Hide it in your heart, so you will not sin against Him.

Psalms 119:11 I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

Psalms 119:18 Open my eyes, that I may behold Wonderful things from Thy law.

Psalms 119:33, 34 ³³ Teach me, O LORD, the way of Thy statutes, And I shall observe it to the end. ³⁴ Give me understanding, that I may observe Thy law, And keep it with all my heart.

John 15:7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

1 John 2:14 I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

22. Bless — don’t curse

Jesus came to save men’s lives — not to destroy them. He commands us to pray for those who mistreat us. To pray blessings even for our enemies.

Luke 9:52-56 ⁵² and He sent messengers on ahead of Him. And they went, and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make arrangements for Him. ⁵³ And they did not receive Him, because He was journeying with His face toward Jerusalem. ⁵⁴ 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?” ⁵⁵ But He turned and rebuked them, and said, “You do not know what kind of spirit you are of; ⁵⁶ for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.

“And they went on to another village.

Luke 6:27,28 ²⁷ “But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

Romans 12:14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

James 3:9,10 ⁹ With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God’s likeness. ¹⁰ Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be.

23. Pray for others

Many times we charge right into a time of prayer asking for our needs, without thinking of others. The word instructs us to be concerned for others. To pray for others’ needs. To pray for all in authority.

1 Timothy 2:1,2 ¹ I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone — ² for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.

Things that could hinder prayer

Just as the Word teaches there are things that help prayer, the Word also teaches about things that can actually hinder prayer.

1. Doubt

If you don’t believe God can answer your prayer, He probably won’t.

Matthew 13:58 Now He did not do many works there because of their unbelief.

James 1:5,6 ⁵ But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. ⁶ But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.

2. Pride

God does not like a prideful heart. He resists the proud.

Proverbs 8:13 “The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way, And the perverted mouth, I hate.

Proverbs 29:23 A man’s pride will bring him low, but a humble spirit will obtain honor.

James 4:6,7 ⁶ But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.⁷ Therefore Submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw close to God and He will draw close to you.

1 John 2:16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

3. Praying to be seen by men

Prayer is intimate conversation with God. Not something we do to show off to others. Jesus warns us against making prayer something it should not be.

Matthew 6:5,6 ⁵ “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

4. Unconfessed sin

Unconfessed sin separates us from fellowship with the Father.

2 Chronicles 7:14 if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land

Psalms 66:18 If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened;

John 9:31 We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will.

5. Disobedience

God is looking for those who are obedient to His Word.

1 John 3:16-23 ¹⁶ This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. ¹⁷ If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? ¹⁸ Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. ¹⁹ This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence ²⁰ whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. ²¹ Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God ²² and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him. ²³ And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.

6. Unforgiveness

Unforgiveness can lead to bitterness and anger. Unforgiveness can hinder your prayers.

Matthew 6:12 Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Matthew 6:14 For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Colossians 3:13 Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

7. Wrong motives

In the book of James, we see that we have not because we ask with the wrong motives.

James 4:1-3 ¹ What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? ² You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. ³ When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

1 John 5:14,15 ¹⁴ This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that he hears us --whatever we ask --we know that we have what we asked of him.

8. Bitterness and anger

We are called to forgive. We will be forgiven the way we forgive others. Jesus says if we have anger with our brother we will be subject to judgement.

Matthew 5:21-24 ²¹ "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' ²² But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell. ²³ "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.

1 Timothy 2:8 I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing.

Ephesians 4:31,32 ³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. ³² And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

James 3:14,15 ¹⁴ But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. ¹⁵ This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.

9. Not seeking holiness and not desiring to live in peace

Blessed are the peacemakers. We are to make every effort to be at peace with others.

Hebrews 12:14,15 ¹⁴ Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. ¹⁵ See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

10. Busyness/Seeking the world

Who is your God? What are you chasing after? Be careful of the worries of life, the deceitfulness of wealth. Seek eternal treasures — not those that will be stolen, rust or be eaten by moths. Seek God's Kingdom first.

Psalms 16:4 The sorrows of those will increase who run after other gods. I will not pour out their libations of blood or take up their names on my lips.

Matthew 13:22 The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful.

Mark 8:36 What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?

Luke 12:29-33 ²⁹ And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. ³⁰ For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. ³¹ But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. ³² “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. ³³ Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.

Ecclesiastes 2:17 So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

Ecclesiastes 5:10 Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless.

11. Husbands must treat their wives with respect

Husbands are required to treat their wives with respect so that their prayers will not be hindered.

1 Peter 3:7 Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

12. Lack of time in God’s Word

How can we pray God’s will if we do not know His Word? Abide in His Word.

Psalms 119:11 I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

John 15:7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.

13. Not guarding your tongue

No one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil full of deadly poison. It is a world of iniquity. Be ever so careful with your words.

Proverbs 10:19 When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise.

Psalms 39:1 I said, “I will watch my ways and keep my tongue from sin; I will put a muzzle on my mouth as long as the wicked are in my presence.”

Proverbs 17:19 He who loves a quarrel loves sin; he who builds a high gate invites destruction.

Jeremiah 9:3 “They make ready their tongue like a bow, to shoot lies; it is not by truth that they triumph in the land. They go from one sin to another; they do not acknowledge me,” declares the LORD.

James 3:3-11 ³ Now if we put the bits into the horses’ mouths so that they may obey us, we direct their entire body as well. ⁴ Behold, the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder, wherever the inclination of the pilot desires. ⁵ So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. Behold, how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! ⁶ And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell. ⁷ For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed, and has been tamed by the human race. ⁸ But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. ⁹ With it we bless our Lord and Father; and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; ¹⁰ from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. ¹¹ Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water?

14. Lack of persistence

Jesus teaches us to be persistent in our prayers. God answers those who continually cry out to Him.

Luke 18:2-7 ² He said: “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. ³ And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’ ⁴ “For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care about men, ⁵ yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually wear me out with her coming!’” ⁶ And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. ⁷ And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off?

15. We forget to ask

God desires that we ask Him. We don’t have because we do not ask.

James 4:2 You want something but don’t get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God.

Matthew 7:7-11 ⁷ “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. ⁹ “Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? ¹¹ If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

James 1:5-7 ⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. ⁶ But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. ⁷ That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord;

16. We are consumed with worry/anxiety

When we worry and become anxious, it's because we are taking our eyes off of Jesus. When Peter fixed his eyes on Christ he walked on the water. When he focused on the wind and the waves, he began to sink. Fix your mind on the promises of God's Word.

Matthew 6:25-32 ²⁵ "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷ Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? ²⁸ "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹ Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰ If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹ So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

Matthew 6:34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Philippians 4:6,7 ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Luke 12:22 Then Jesus said to his disciples: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear.

17. We don't ask for the Holy Spirit to guide us

So often we want to be in charge. We do not want to ask our heavenly Father to help us. Submit to Him. Ask Him to guide you — in all things.

Psalms 119:124,125 ¹²⁴ Deal with your servant according to your love and teach me your decrees. ¹²⁵ I am your servant; give me discernment that I may understand your statutes.

Luke 11:13 If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

Ephesians 6:18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

Romans 8:26,27 ²⁶ In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. ²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.

18. We forget to ask in Jesus' name

Jesus tells us to ask in His name.

John 16:24 Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.

John 14:13 "And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

19. We resist and do not listen to the Holy Spirit

We need to learn to listen to the Holy Spirit. God has given us His Spirit to direct our conscience.

Acts 7:51 "You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit!"

Ephesians 4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Hebrews 3:7-11 ⁷ So, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you hear his voice, ⁸ do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert, ⁹ where your fathers tested and tried me and for forty years saw what I did. ¹⁰ That is why I was angry with that generation, and I said, 'Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.' ¹¹ So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.'"

John 14:26 "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

John 16:13,14 ¹³ "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. ¹⁴ "He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you.