

**What we can communicate in prayer.** Being able to approach the throne of God and communicate something that is in your mind is an awesome opportunity that should cause you to consider what you can or should say (much more than if you approached an earthly ruler). What God teaches us to communicate to Him in prayer can be summarized as the “ACTS” of prayer. Through prayer, we can communicate our adoration of God (Acts 4:24), the confession of our sins (1 John 1:9), our thanksgiving to God (Colossians 4:2), and supplications (petitions, requests, Philippians 4:6).

**This communication is powerful.** Although God already knows what is going on in our lives and knows our innermost thoughts, prayer is not some meaningless exercise. Rather, He promises that prayer is powerful in what it can accomplish! But, recognize that prayer is not powerful because we are anything. Rather, prayer is powerful because God is powerful, because Jesus is at the right hand of God petitioning Him on our behalf, and because we are His children (Matthew 7:9-11)! In fact, prayer is taught as being powerful in both physical and spiritual ways (James 5:13-18). Although God does not always answer our prayers according to what we ask, He does assure us that our prayers are powerful! Yet, also appreciate that prayer is not to be used as one would think about making a wish to a genie. Rather, God teaches that prayers of the righteous are powerful when they are offered in faith and according to His will (1 John 5:14-15). Therefore, appreciate the great privilege in prayer in being able to communicate to God and know that God hears your prayers and assures you that your prayers are powerful! While there are many things that happen beyond your control and that are much larger than you, you can communicate to the God who is over all!

### Conclusion

Prayer is a tremendous privilege – and one that God’s people should greatly appreciate! For, through prayer, we can approach the throne of God (the Creator of this universe), accomplish something He wants us to do, and communicate with Him! Because this great privilege has been given to Christians today, we should learn to pray effectively and devote ourselves to prayer!



Christians generally know that they should pray, but do not always fully appreciate what is so special about prayer or understand how to pray. In fact, many have grown frustrated and discouraged with their prayer lives, believing they are not making the best use of prayer. For, it is easy for prayers to become rote/routine without experiencing the great privilege and blessing God has designed it to be. Consider the following questions to evaluate your prayer life: Do you ever find yourself viewing prayer as a burden/chore you must check off for the day? Do you ever feel as if God is not listening to your prayers? Do you ever pray with the expectation that what you are praying about will never happen? Do you find yourself repeating the same prayers over and over because you do not know what you should pray about? It does not have to be this way! God’s word can help us develop the proper prayer life that is fitting with the great privilege God designed prayer to be!

The purpose of this lesson is to learn why prayer is so special and why we should view it as a true privilege so that it can have the proper place in our lives.

### Prayer Approaches The Throne Of God

**Jesus Christ makes it possible to approach the throne of God.** Read Hebrews 4:14-16. The picture of this passage harkens back to the tabernacle and temple in the Old Testament, wherein there were two sections: The holy place and the most holy place. Only the high priest could enter the most holy place (where the ark of the covenant was kept). God would meet with His people from the mercy seat (the lid of the ark of the covenant, between the two cherubim with their outstretched wings, Exodus 25:22). In the Old Testament, the high priest would enter

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the most holy place through the veil in the tabernacle/temple one time each year with the blood of atonement to find mercy for both himself and the others in Israel.

Today, Jesus is pictured as being our great High Priest (Hebrews 5:1-10). Rather than just passing through the veil, He has passed through the Heavens. Rather than being a normal high priest from the descendants of Aaron, He is the Son of God. Rather than taking the blood of animals to remember sin once every year, He has offered His own blood as the perfect sacrifice once for all. Through the sacrifice of Jesus, we can now approach the throne of grace with boldness. For, Jesus is our great and sympathetic High Priest who is now at the right hand of God's throne and represents us before God when we pray! So, we have Jesus (who lived on earth and was tempted just as we are, knowing our weaknesses) as our Advocate before God when we approach Him in prayer!

**A picture of God on His throne.** There are various glimpses of God in the Bible that should cause us to stand in awe of Him! Consider one found in Revelation 4:1-11. Notice the praise that is offered to God by those who were before the throne of God in Heaven. Can you imagine approaching the throne of God after reading this scene? The closest we can picture to this is probably the opportunity and honor to go before an earthly king/ruler and make a request of that person. When we pray to God, we approach the throne of this awesome God who created the universe! And, we can do so with boldness because Jesus has presented us who are Christians as acceptable to God!

**Our prayers are like incense offered to God.** As the scene regarding the throne room of Heaven continues in Revelation 5, the focus turns to the scroll in the hand of God and one is sought who is worthy to take the scroll. The one who is worthy emerges – it is the Lamb who has been slaughtered (Jesus Christ). When He takes the scroll, praise is given to Him. The praise that is offered includes the prayers of the saints, pictured as golden bowls full of incense (Revelation 5:8). Another part of the tabernacle/temple was the altar of incense, positioned right before the veil that separated the holy place from the most holy place. Incense was offered twice each day and God gave a recipe to follow for this incense to please God (Exodus 30; Luke 1:8-10). Other passages also picture prayer as being like incense offered to God (Revelation 8:3-4; Psalm 141:2). Therefore, God views our prayers like sweet-smelling fragrance to Him, that come up to Him on His throne! So, prayer is not some annoyance God tolerates; but something that is pleasing to Him that He considers to be holy!

## **God Wants His People To Pray**

**Old Testament examples of prayer.** God's people in the Old Testament were committed to prayer. For example, Hannah prayed to God when she was deeply distressed because she had no children (1 Samuel 1:11). David prayed to God frequently and wrote many of the psalms (Psalm 141:1-2). Daniel prayed to God even when doing so would result in him being thrown into the lion's den (Daniel 6:10).

**Examples of Jesus's prayers.** Appreciate that even Jesus (who was God living on this earth) saw the need to pray to God. For example, Jesus sought quiet time with His Heavenly Father in prayer (Luke 5:16). In fact, Jesus even spent all night in prayer (Luke 6:12). Then, Jesus prayed when His betrayal, arrest, and death were quickly approaching (Luke 22:41-44)!

**New Testament examples of prayer.** Jesus is not the only example of prayer being offered in the New Testament, as we see God's people continuing to be prayerful. For example, the apostles prayed after Jesus ascended to Heaven and they were waiting according to what Jesus had instructed them (Acts 1:14). Paul and Silas prayed to God after they had been put into prison (Acts 16:25). Paul prayed with the Ephesian elders before they parted ways (Acts 20:36).

**Instructions to pray.** Prayer is always presented as being something God's people can and should do. In fact, prayer is a privilege God expects His people to take advantage of in their lives. Consider just a few of the many New Testament passages about prayer: Matthew 6:5, 9; Romans 12:12; Ephesians 6:18; Philippians 4:6-7; Colossians 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:17.

## **Prayer Is How We Communicate With God**

**God hears the prayers of the righteous.** While God communicates to us through the Bible's message, prayer is how we come before the throne of God and communicate with Him! Take a moment to appreciate this – that we can come before the throne of God and communicate to the God of the universe! Although anyone can go through the actions involved in offering a prayer to God, the Scriptures teach that God does not welcome just anyone who approaches His throne (Isaiah 1:15). In fact, the principle in Scripture appears to be that God does not hear the prayers of those who are not seeking to do His will in a receptive way. The promises regarding God hearing prayers are made to those who are righteous (1 Peter 3:12).