



## Prayer

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Scripture: The whole counsel of God

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## Conversations with God

### INTRODUCTION

The starting point for our study will be to look at the early conversations that God chose to record in the Bible. In order to observe these conversations we must look at the book of Genesis and possibly Job.

The goals for this class are to provide you with a solid understanding of prayer from the biblical perspective and to demonstrate how you might find the biblical perspective on any subject.

During the evaluation of the scriptures below we should ask ourselves a number of leading questions to further evaluate the text.

1. Who is talking?
2. What is the purpose of the conversation?
3. What does the text say?
4. Is this text referred to in any other scripture?
5. What conclusions does this text, in context, bring us to? What does the text mean?
6. How can we apply it to our lives?
7. Is there something that God wants me to know or do with the conclusions that I have drawn?

It is clear from scripture that prayer and the study of God's word are unbreakably tied together.

### SCRIPTURAL HISTORY

#### *God speaks to Man – Gen 2:16*

Here God commands Adam that He may eat from any tree in the garden except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

This instance of conversation and all that lead up to it demonstrate that the world is the Lord's and all that is in it. Adam had nothing to say before God.

#### *Man speaks – Gen 2:23*

God made Adam a helper, Eve. Adam now speaks and names her kind and later in 3:26 her personally.

This shows us that statements of joy in the presence of God are appropriate. It is interesting to note at this point that conversation and language were already established and therefore must have been a part of initial creation.

It is also interesting to note the natural way that God and man communicated in the garden. No highbrow prayers or flowery language just communication between the Creator and the created.

#### *The Serpent speaks to Eve – Gen 3:1*

The serpent came to beguile Eve into disobedience based on attacking the character of God.

#### *The first recorded conversation – Gen 3:9*

Up to this point in the chronology the conversations were recorded as one way. Keil and Delitzsch make note that it was not the serpent that spoke but a higher being that used the serpent.

In this exchange it is interesting to note that Adam and Eve heard the sound of the Lord walking in the garden in the cool of the day. This leads us to understand that God was in the habit of fellowshiping with man from the very beginning. It seems from the text that the Lord was looking for Adam and Eve and called out for them. The intimate fellowship between God and man was broken, "and they hid themselves". We know that the Lord is Omniscient and did not really wonder where they were.

It seems that up to this point our interaction with God was to be a natural and intimate activity.

#### *-- worship/sacrifice instituted --*

It seems, from the text, that sometime between driving Adam from the garden and the birth of Cain God implemented a system of worship as evidenced by Cain and Abel bringing their offerings to the Lord (Gen 4:3 – 5)

#### *God talks to Cain – Gen 4:6-15*

When Cain and Abel brought their offerings to the Lord a curious thing happens. The Lord accepts Abel's and rejects Cain's offering.

In this dialogue between God and Cain God asks Cain what the problem is and then in the same breath provides the answer and a challenge to Cain. God's statement in verse 7 of chapter 4 is one of great interest.

It is also interesting that God says to Cain (Gen 4:7) that he must master sin and Paul (Romans 6:14) also says that sin shall not be our master. These statements suggest that we can and should master sin and not the other way around.

***Men began to call (better translated proclaim) upon the Lord – Gen 4:26***

Enosh means weak, frail, and faint and designates the condition of man after the fall.

It seems, from the text, that Cain and his descendents began building the world system; they build a city and crafts.

Seth and his descendents began to erect the kingdom of God in that they began to call upon God in praise and worship.

***Noah walked with God – Gen 6:9 – 22***

The word walked in this sense can be translated; Noah conducted his life in a particular way with God. This is evidenced by God calling Noah blameless in verse 9 and in Noah doing according to all that God commanded him in verse 22.

Noah's daily communication and communion with God provided the entire human race with a representative when God's wrath was poured out on the wickedness of man.

***God spoke to Noah – Gen 8:15 – 19***

God commanded Noah to come out of the ark and bring all of his family and the animals with him. Again Noah did as the Lord God commanded him.

***Noah worships God – Gen 8:20 – 9:1***

After the events of the flood Noah built an altar and worshiped God. This communion was a simple but powerful statement that God is sovereign and Noah knew it.

God was satisfied with Noah's offering and promises to never curse the ground on account of man and never destroy every living thing again.

God blesses Noah and his sons and bid them be fruitful and multiply.

This interaction demonstrates the proper conversational, worshipful, loving relationship that should exist between God and man.

**FURTHER STUDY...**

- God makes a promise to Noah – Gen 9:8 – 17*
- God comes down to see the city – Gen 11:5*
- God calls Abram – Gen 12:1 – 3*
- God makes a promise to Abram – Gen 12:7*
- Abram worships God – Gen 13:4*
- God talks to Abram again – Gen 13:14 – 18*
- Abram talks to Melchizedek – Gen 14:18*
- Abram alludes to an earlier promise – Gen 14:22*
- The word of the Lord comes to Abram – Gen 15:1 – 21*
- An angel of the Lord talks to Hagar – Gen 16:7 – 13*
- The Lord appeared to Abram – Gen 17:1 – 22*
- The Lord appears to Abram again – Gen 18:1 – 33*
- Abimelech talks with God – Gen 20:3 – 7*

***God tells Abimelech to have Abram pray for him – Gen 20:7***

This is the first time that the word for prayer is used, palal. Abimelech asks God if He will slay the entire nation even though they were blameless and God shows himself to be righteous in providing a way out.

**HEBREW WORDS TRANSLATED PRAYER**

- Tefillah – supplication to God (Ps 65:2, 80:4; Isa 1:15; Job 16:17) also intercession, supplication to God for another (2 Kings 19:4; Isa 37:4; Jer 7:16, 11:14)
- Palal – to judge and then to interpose as an umpire or mediator. (Gen 20:7; Deut 9:20; 1 Sam 7:5; Job 42:8) with the general sense of prayer (Ps 5:2; 1 Sam 1:26; 2 Sam 7:27)
- Rib – to strive, and so to contend before a judge, to plead a cause (Job 15:4; Ps 55:17; Isa 1:17, 51:22)
- Athar – to burn incense and from there to pray to God (Job 33:26; Rev 5:8)
- Halah – to caress, to stroke one's face, to strive to please; spoken of one who entreats God's favor (Zech 7:2, 8:21, 22)
- Lahash – a quiet whispering prayer (Isa 26:16) sorrowful consciousness of sin crushes so completely that a man does not dare to address God aloud (Isa 29:14)
- na' (naw); a primitive particle of incitement and entreaty, which may usually be rendered: "I pray," "now," or "then"; added mostly to verbs (in the Imperative or Future), or to interjections, occasionally to an adverb or conjunction:

## GREEK WORDS TRANSLATED PRAYER

Deesis –	prayer for particular benefits, personal need
Proseuche –	prayer in general, not restricted regarding its contents, devotion
Enteuxis –	confiding access to God, childlike confidence, the hearts conversation with God (1 Tim 4:5)
Euche –	a vow, a dedicated thing (James 5:15)
Aitema –	a petition or request (Phil 4:6, 1 John 5:15)

## MAJOR PRAYERS IN THE OT

The following section takes a look at the earliest prayers in the Old Testament to draw out God's will for communicating with Him. This list is by no means exhaustive but a representative example.

One question that I want us to ask during this portion of the study is, *"Does prayer move the hand of God?"*

### Moses

God told Moses that He would just wipe out all of the rebellious people and start over with him. Moses being a good man and powerful leader with compassion for the people and a desire to see God glorified prayed to stay God's hand. (Exodus 32:11-35)

Does Moses change God's mind?

### Joshua

In chapter 10 of the book of Joshua it tells us that the heavenly bodies were subject to prayer. (Joshua 10:12-13)

Does Joshua really have power over the length of a day?

### Jacob

Jacob was always calling on God when he was in trouble. The one thing that Jacob had to his credit was that he believed God answered prayer. The

book of Genesis (28 to 31) records for us Jacob's faith.

### Hannah

Samuel's mother prayed in pain and anguish for God to remove her reproach and give her a son. (1 Samuel 1 & 2)

Hannah sings a song to the Lord after He grants her petition. Her joy and commitment overflow to the Lord.

### Samson

Among all of Samson's faults was not found a lack of conversation with God. Obedience, sure but Samson knew the God who answers prayer and how to talk to Him.

Samson teaches us that no matter how far we stray from God He is always just one prayer away from our deliverance. (Judges 15-16)

Judges 16:28 records Samson's only prayer. The word that is used to describe his prayer is na'.

Does our morality determine God's response to our prayers?

### Jonah

Praying from the fishes belly added some passion to the prayer of this disobedient servant of God. (Jonah)

### David

No assessment of OT prayer would be complete without King David. (Psalms)

From all of the scripture that relates to David we can surely see that David was a man of prayer in every sense of the word. He worshipped God in prayer, he petitioned God in prayer, and he pleaded with God in prayer and on and on. (Ps 55:17, Ps 95:6, Ps 65:2)

We could continue listing the OT saints on and on in our study of prayer; Abraham, Elijah, Daniel, Nehemiah, Solomon and many others.

We have a demonstrated pattern of prayer in the people whom God chose and used.

### **MAJOR PRAYERS IN THE NT**

The following section takes a look at the prayers in the New Testament to draw out God's will for communicating with Him specifically focusing on any clarifications that Jesus Christ provides. As always we must give the precedence to the New Testament when developing our theology.

#### **Jesus**

The general patten of Christ's life was to be a man of prayer. Many times in the NT we find our Lord and Savior bent in prayer. He taught His disciples how to pray, He prayed for the people, He prayed to heal sickness and He prayed for deliverance. (Matt, Mark, Luke, and John)

#### ***The Lord's Prayer (Part 1)***

In the book of Luke the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter one of the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray.

In Luke 18 Jesus gives us a parable to show that at all times we ought to pray and not loose heart.

#### ***The Lord's Prayer (Part 2)***

In John chapter 17 Jesus gives us a glimpse inside of His heart and His relationship with the Father.

Jesus intercedes for the disciples and for all who would follow in His footsteps. (17:4)

#### **Paul**

Paul teaches us much on prayer in his writings in the NT. (1 Timothy 4:6, Philippians 4:6, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, Colossians, Ephesians, 1 Timothy, Titus, Romans)

In literally every one of Paul's writings he exhorted his readers to prayer. He tells them how much that he wrestles in prayer for them and their spiritual growth and on and on.

### **TYPES OF PRAYER**

**Thanksgiving** - Giving thanks to God for all things in your life. We are commanded to give thanks in all circumstances. Being thankful is being grateful for his protection, provision, blessing, and most of all for his Son.

**Petition** - We ask God for the things we need in our life. Give us our daily bread. Give us the things we need to survive, a roof over our heads, employment etc. Petitions are usually self-orientated, presenting our personal needs to our Heavenly Father, in trust that He will provide.

**Supplication** - fervent consistent insistent prayer until a breakthrough takes place, whether in your personal life, or for someone else (intercession). *Luke 18:1-8.*

**Intercession** - Love on its knees in prayer, for others or prayer that pleads on behalf of the needs of someone else. Standing in the gap, which is, praying prayers of repentance, etc., identifying yourself with the sins of those for which you are in prayer.

Biblical Example: Nehemiah, a godly man, identified with the sins of his people, praying prayers of repentance, asking the Lord to forgive and to have mercy and to raise up once again the nation of Israel. *Neh. 1:3 - 10*

### **OBJECTIONS**

The question from Job 21:15 is a question that continues to be asked. Those who deny the personality of God declare that it is vain to pray, for there is no God to hear our prayers.

*How shall we answer them? (Ps 94:9, Acts 17:27; 1 John 5:14 - 15)*

The God of the Bible would not speak to or answer a sinner like you, He is too Holy.

*How shall we answer them? (1 John 1:9, Is 6:7)*

### CONCLUSIONS

So what conclusions can we draw from the study that we have conducted?

1. God seeks us for relationship even while we are still in our sin.
2. God created us with the ability to communicate with us.
3. God is instructive with us and wants us to listen to His wise counsel.
4. Prayer is a vital part of the Christian experience and critical in the proper function of the fellowship of believers in the local body. (Acts 2:41-42)
5. God intended prayer to be a conversation with Him at the relational level.
6. Prayer is a vital part of the church. It is where we gain access to the person and power of Jesus Christ.
7. Prayer in the life of the believer is both a privilege and a responsibility.
8. There is a right way to approach God and may be different based on the situation & purpose of prayer.
9. We should appeal to God based on His character and not ourselves.
10. Prayers of intercession in the OT foreshadowed the work of Christ.