

Prayer

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Prayer is a major component of practical Christianity, and critical to a walk of communion with God. In scripture, prayer is the simple way a soul can address God. Prayer and reading the Bible are often coupled together in scripture, perhaps because they are the two sides of communion with God. God speaks to us through His Word, and we speak to Him through prayer. Prayer can be audible or inaudible. You can pray from anywhere at any time. There is no need to pray through an official mediator (class of priests, etc.) because all believers are priests (1 Peter 2:5, 9), and there is only *“one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus”* (1 Tim. 2:5). Christian prayer is usually addressed to God the Father, and prayed in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (Col. 3:17). That being said, there are also instructions to pray to the Lord Jesus directly as well (Matt. 9:38), and we read of Paul praying to *“the Lord”* three times (2 Cor. 12:8). When we pray, we come before the very throne of God, and Christ is there as our Great High Priest. He too is interceding for us, and adds to our prayers, and lays them before the throne of God.

Ten Aspects of Prayer. There are many types of prayer mentioned in scripture. We need to understand the differences between these various aspects. Some are types are laudatory, which means they are responsive prayers, driven by the overflow of one's heart. Others are driven more by our needs or the needs of others.

1. **Repentance** (Luke 18:13; 2 Corinthians 7:9). Repentance is a change of thought (literally, 're-think'). Repentance itself is not prayer, but it is often expressed in prayer. However, someone could pray the words and not really mean them. We need repentance initially for salvation, and then ongoing if we have gotten away from the Lord.
2. **Worship** (Psalm 45:11; Revelation 19:10). Worship is different from praise and thanksgiving because it has to do with the greatness of the Person we worship. We worship a person for *who* they are. In scripture we only have license to worship deity. Another feature is that worship is not always expressed audibly.
3. **Praise** (Psalm 54:6; Hebrews 13:15). Praise differs from worship in that it has to do with an accomplished work. We praise a person for what they have done. It's okay to praise others (whereas it is not okay to worship others). Praise is mentioned as a sacrifice in Heb. 13... it costs us something. But praise is also called fruit in that

same passage. Why fruit? Because if we have any praise to offer, it is only a result of God's planting it there. Still, in grace, God counts it as a sacrifice of praise. Praise is expressed in words; i.e. you can't praise someone without communicating it to them. But praise does need to come from the heart.

4. **Thanksgiving** (Psalm 116:17). Thanksgiving differs from praise in that it is more personal. We thank a person for what they have done *for us*, whereas we typically praise the Lord for what He has done to the glory of God the Father. Thanksgiving is more personal, but not quite as high as praise.
5. **Fellowship or communion** (1 Timothy 4:5; 1 John 1:3). Communion simply means "common thoughts". Another aspect of prayer is simply the free flow of thoughts between ourselves and God. We get God's thoughts in His Word, and we share them back in prayer. We have the privilege of freely addressing God. We have direct access to the throne room of the Universe. Nehemiah is a nice example: he had an open line of communication with the Lord, and could therefore look up briefly in prayer at a moment of great need (Neh. 2:4).
6. **Confession** (Romans 10:9-10; Daniel 9:20). Confession is the admission of sin or guilt. We need to confess our sin to the Lord: (1) initially for salvation, and (2) ongoing to restore communion when we fail. It is also important to confess our faults to one another (Jam. 5:16), although this isn't prayer. Confession can be of personal or collective sin. Three great confession chapters are Ezra 9, Nehemiah 9, and Daniel 9.
7. **Groanings** (Romans 8:26). Groaning is a type of prayer that we use when our thoughts cannot be put into human language.
8. **Requests or Petitions** (Philippians 4:6). Requests are what we traditionally mean when we refer to 'prayer'. Simply put, requests are when we ask God for something. A request is an expression of dependence and confidence. God wants us to turn to Him for our needs. Often requests change ourselves as well as much as they change our circumstances. Of course, God desires more from us than just prayer requests, but still they are very important. Prayer works! "*The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much*" (James 5:16).
9. **Supplications** (Ephesians 6:18). Supplications are similar to requests, but they are more intense. To supplicate the Lord is to *beg* Him for something. We want to be careful not to beg the Lord for something that is not His will.
10. **Intercessions** (1 Timothy 2:1). To intercede is to come before God on behalf of another. We do this for our brethren, and we are also told to intercede for "kings

and all that are in authority”.

References:

1. Hyland, J. *Ten Aspects of Prayer*. Vestal, NY, December 20, 2014