

CHAPTER 4

“EXAMPLES OF PRAYER” MODELS FOR THE AGES!

FROM: JERRY

TO: GOD

**SUBJECT: CAN YOU SHOW ME WHAT AN EFFECTIVE PRAYER
LOOKS LIKE?**

“God, I think I am getting it, but there’s so much to read in the Bible! Is there anywhere I can look that might show me what a really good prayer should look like?”

FROM: GOD

TO: JERRY

CC: THE CHURCH

**SUBJECT: CAN YOU SHOW ME WHAT AN EFFECTIVE PRAYER
LOOKS LIKE?**

“Jerry—Thanks for asking! Yes, there are several wonderful prayers in the Bible! The prayers of Jesus, Daniel, Hezekiah and many others are in there! Read them, and discover what I find pleasing in them.”

Principle: God has given you models for prayer through the prayers of some of the great men of Scripture. In these prayers you will find what God desires in the prayers you pray! Study them carefully.

ILLUSTRATION

Years ago, a new employee of the treasury department was learning how to spot counterfeit currencies, and studied the official manual of instruction, profusely taking notes. He began to examine dozens and dozens of counterfeit specimens. He learned the fiber content of the bills, as well as the type and saturation of the ink used, and the precise margin of borders. He learned the different percentages of cloth-to-paper ratios counterfeiters used, and how they blended numerous off-color blends of green and gray inks. He learned every possible way a counterfeit bill could be identified. A supervisor called the new employee aside and instructed him on how to save much time and effort. “Spend your effort examining what the *real* money looks like,” was the suggestion. “To recognize what one genuine bill looks like will make just about every counterfeit one easy to spot.” It’s nice to learn the aspects of prayer which are not Scriptural, or effective. It’s simpler—and much more beneficial—to look at models of *effective* prayer, and find the similar aspects within them which appear over and over. That’s what we’ll do in this chapter. These great model prayers are in the Bible for our instruction, and we can certainly learn a great deal from them.

PRAYER QUOTE

“A godly man is a praying man. As soon as grace is poured in, prayer pours out. Prayer is the soul’s traffic with heaven; God comes down to us by His Spirit, and we go up to Him by prayer.”

—Thomas Watson

THE PRAYERS OF JESUS

Who could be a better example in prayer than Christ? While His prayer in Matthew 6:9-13 is called the ‘Lord’s Prayer’ (see Appendix A), actually, it is not. It is an *example* of prayer given us

by the Lord. The *real* Lord's Prayer is in John 17 (see *Appendix B*). Study both prayers. Note how Christ acknowledges: the *holiness* and *uniqueness* of God, *God's* will and glory (cp. John 11:41-42) as the primary emphasis, the *specificity* of His requests, and the importance of *obedience* to God and His Word.

THE PRAYER OF HANNAH

The prayer of Hannah for a son is the first clearly *direct* prayer in Scripture! Note her *urgency*, *humility*, and *trust*, as she promises to make God's *answer* a benefit to God's *glory* (see *Appendix D*).

THE PRAYER OF DANIEL

The prayer in Daniel 9:1-20 is another of the great prayers in the Bible. Look closely at how the prophet emphasizes: *God's* glory, *praise* before petition, *self-denial*, understanding *God's* mercy and *righteousness*, the reasons He sometimes *disciplines* us, *confession* of sin, and trusting *God's* character to answer our prayers the right way. (See *Appendix G*.)

THE PRAYER OF HEZEKIAH

Hezekiah and his people were in serious trouble from a foreign invader when he offered this majestic prayer in II Kings 19. See how the king approached God in genuine *repentance*, emphasized God's *greatness* and *honor* above the importance of his request, and understood that *God's* glory in the eyes of the world was what mattered most.

THE PRAYER OF PAUL

Paul was one of the greatest of all the apostles. Study his prayer in Ephesians 3:14-21. See how Paul recognized the *richness* out of which God delights in blessing us, as well as the importance of

Christ, and His *love* and *glory*. Note too, that glory to Father and Son (cp. John 11:41-42) is the *most* important thing to Paul in this prayer.

THE PRAYER OF EZRA

Ezra was an Old Testament priest at the time of the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. Recognizing the sinfulness of the people, Ezra prayed. Study in Ezra 9:6-15 how the prophet: *acknowledges* sin before asking favor, *praises* God for what He's already done, and recognizes the *goodness* and *mercy* of God in not punishing the people as much as He *could* have. Note how Ezra stresses his own complete *unworthiness*. (See *Appendix L*.)

THE PRAYERS OF THE EXODUS STORY

While all the other model prayers have been individuals', here's a chart of prayers which are unique. They are prayers of the exodus from Egypt, and express the pleas of Moses, Miriam, the nation Israel, and the prayer of old Jethro—father-in-law to Moses. These prayers reflect the types of prayers we all pray at one time or another—prayers of *praise*, *disappointment*, *doubt*, *desperation*, etc., and serve as 'refresher models' to us when we go before God (See *Appendix K*.)

THE PRAYER OF NEHEMIAH

In Nehemiah 1:4-11, Nehemiah's great desire was to rebuild the fallen walls of Jerusalem after the return from Babylonian captivity. His prayer to God expressed his fervent wish to leave his job as Persian cupbearer, and begin this daunting task. It is a short prayer, but contains essential elements you would do well to note (see *Appendix M*).

THE PRAYERS OF DAVID

David was perhaps Israel's greatest king. His prayer of thanksgiving is one of the finest in Scripture. Note in II Samuel 7:18-29 how he stresses his own *humility*, God's *Word*, God's *greatness*, and God's *faithfulness*. Again, in I Chronicles 17:16-27, note how David emphasizes his *humility*, as well as God's *will*, *redemption*, *power*, and *glory*. David recalls God's *past blessings*, which assure him of God's *future faithfulness*, and bases his own requests upon God's *Word* and *promises*. (See *Appendix F*.)

THE PRAYER OF ABIGAIL

Abigail's intercession before David (regarding her foolish husband, Nabal) is a model of *humility* and *forthrightness*. David had been insulted, and could have easily put Nabal to death. Abigail's intercession saved her husband's life, and shows us a proper way to come before the King of the universe (see *Appendix E*).

THE PRAYER OF JEREMIAH

Jeremiah was actually Scripture's 'master prayer' (see *Introduction*). He was a prophet in Israel whose message was virtually ignored. Notice how he extols God as *Creator*, and emphasizes the *concern*, *redemption*, and *blessings* of God regarding His people (Jeremiah 32:16-25).

THE PRAYER OF ELIJAH

Elijah was a man just like you and me (James 5:17). When he faced his greatest challenge—fighting the prophets of Baal—he prayed (I Kings 18:1-43) to God for *strength*, and God heard him. Note too, how Elijah persevered—never giving up in prayer. (See *Appendix J*.)

THE PRAYER OF SOLOMON

Solomon was the wealthiest of all the kings of Judah. Read his prayer at the dedication of the first temple in Jerusalem (I Kings 8:22-61). Do you see how Solomon recognizes God's *future faithfulness* based on *past blessings*? Notice how he stresses the *smallness* of man compared to the *greatness* of God, the importance of *glorifying God to outsiders*, and his own trust in God's *righteousness*, *forgiveness*, and *sovereignty*. Don't miss how Solomon begins with *praise* and *thanksgiving*, and emphasizes how God *alone* can deal with sinful hearts (see *Appendix I*).

In all these prayers, did you notice that the *personal* requests were less emphasized than God's *holiness*, *goodness*, and *will*? Try not to make these model prayers formula-prayers, but remember the principles you can learn from them.

My Blog!

By studying the prayers of others which God finds pleasing, we can learn more about Him and what He's looking for. Remember, in all these prayers, some of the personality and thoughts of the person praying were present. God doesn't want cookie-cutter prayers. He wants us to be personal with Him, and to grow and mature in our praying.

Heavenly Homework!

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- What do all the model prayers have in common?
- What is the general *order* in these prayers?
- Which of the model prayers do you relate to most? Why?

- What is generally the first thing you pray for, or about, when you pray?
- How might you be able to glorify God in the eyes of the world?
- What *past* answers to prayers can you recall which should assure you of God's faithfulness in answering your *future* prayers?

To do—

- ✓ Choose one of the model prayers in this chapter and make a list of the key points of emphasis. Use those in your own prayer today. Try this several times with different model prayers. See if it makes a difference.
- ✓ Look at the prayer of Ezra in Ezra 9:6-15. How does *your* approach to God compare?
- ✓ Look at Isaiah's approach to God in Isaiah 6:15. How does *your* approach to God compare?
- ✓ Look at the prayer of the Levites in Nehemiah 9:4-37. Study and analyze it. What stands out?
- ✓ When you pray, try visualizing yourself as God might have seen you *before* you were saved. Remember, while you approach God as His child, you should come in the humility of a sinner saved by grace.
- ✓ Look at the prayers in the *Appendices* of this book. List five reasons they seem so good.

Text message summary:

The model prayers of Scripture show us that prayer does *not* have a set format. They also show us that effective prayer *does* recognize

God's *holiness*, His *righteousness*, and His *mercy*. Make sure your prayers recognize these too, and aren't just lists of requests. God is not a glorified Santa Claus.

PRAYER JOURNAL

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PRAYING LIKE JESUS

Read Matthew 6. Why is Matthew 6 *not* the Lord's Prayer? Explain.

What are some things Jesus could *not* pray in the prayer of Matthew 6? Why?

Read John 17. What are some things we cannot pray in John 17? Why?

What are 3 *similarities* and *priorities* in these 2 prayers?

PRAYING LIKE DANIEL

“Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now, I have kept thy Word.” (Psalm

What can you learn about God's discipline (Isaiah 26:16) in this prayer?

Why is self-denial important in your prayers? Explain.

“When you can't see God's hand, trust in God's character.”
Explain what you think this means. How can this help your prayer life?

PRAYING LIKE HEZEKIAH

What is God's glory?

In Scripture, glory is often equated with 'weight'. Why do you think this is?

Why is it important to glorify God in the world's eyes? How can you do this?

PRAYING LIKE PAUL

What are some of God's riches from which we may draw in prayer? (Cp. Ephesians 3:20.)

Why do you think God is deserving of glory? Doesn't He already have glory? Explain.

What are some things you can do to bring God glory?

PRAYING LIKE EZRA

What's the difference between God's goodness and God's mercy?

How can you better show *humility* in your prayers?

Why does Ezra 'remind' God of His *past blessings*? Does God *need* reminding? What can you learn from this?

Why do you think Ezra prayed for the sins of others? How can this improve your prayer life?

PRAYING LIKE DAVID

Do a word study on the word *redemption* (redeem). Why was God's *faithfulness* and *redemption* important to David? How are they important to you? Explain.

Look up and note each mention of the word '*faithful*' in the Book of Revelation. What picture does this paint of God and Christ? How can understanding this improve your prayer life?

PRAYING LIKE JEREMIAH

Why should God be glorified as *Creator* too?

Why do you think it was important for Solomon to glorify God to '*outsiders*'? How can *you* do this?

PRAYING LIKE SOLOMON

What does it mean that God is '*sovereign*'? How can God's *sovereignty* give you confidence in your prayer life? Explain.

Read Psalm 100:4. Why is it important to come into God's presence this way? How do *you* come?

Which of the model prayers do you relate to *most*? Why?

What *common threads* do you notice running through all 8 prayers? List the 4 you feel are most important, and why:

List what you learned about *prayer* or *God* in these prayers that you didn't know before.

How can you use these to improve *your* prayer life?

Look up the references in 'The Prayer Model of the Early Church in Acts' (*Appendix N*). Which 5 of the 11 entries do you feel are most significant? Explain why you chose those.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Appendix N

The Prayer Model of the Early Church in Acts

- They all prayed together in **unity** (Acts 1:14)
- They recognized **God's authority**, and sincerely sought **His will** (Acts 1:24)
- They **regularly** prayed for **all things** (Acts 2:42; 3:1; cp. 10:9; 11:5; 12:12; 22:17)
- They prayed when seek **guidance** and **direction** from God (Acts 10:2, 4; 30-31)
- They prayed regarding the **study** and **teaching** of the **Word** (Acts 6:4)
- They prayed for, and about, **souls** won to Christ (Acts 8:15)
- They **persevered** in prayer for **those experiencing physical sicknesses and troubles** (Acts 7:59; 9:40; 12:5; 28:8)
- They prayed and **fasted** for **those in the work of the Lord** (Acts 6:6; 13:2-4; 14:23; cp. 9:11)
- They prayed and **praised God** in the midst of **personal trials**, and became an **example** to the lost (Acts 16:25)
- They prayed for fellow **believers' safety** (Acts 20:36; 21:4-5)
- They prayed for **lost souls** (Acts 26:29)