## Prayer

God presents believers with the amazing opportunity to participate in accomplishing His plan through prayer and intercession. In this way, believers have their personal needs met, and God’s grace extends to those for whom we intercede.

Andrew Murray highly values the prayer life of the believer. For him, prayer represents “the highest and holiest work to which a man can rise…. The powers of the eternal realm have been placed at its disposal…. It is the channel of all blessings and the secret of power and life.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

Mahesh Chavda asserts, “Nothing that God intends to do will happen without prayer.”[[2]](#footnote-2) Similarly, John Wesley stated, “God does nothing without the prayers of believers.”[[3]](#footnote-3) Murray adds that people were created in God’s image in order to participate in ruling the world: “God rules the world by the prayers of His saints.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

However, some claim that without the prayers of His people, God actually *cannot* act in the world. Ekman, for example, teaches that prayer gives God a “legal right to act on earth.”[[5]](#footnote-5) This is an exaggerated claim, since “whatever Yahweh pleases, He does, in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps” (Ps 135:6). Nonetheless, we do agree that prayer is God’s *preferred* method of operation.

### А. Biblical Survey

**1. Old Testament**[[6]](#footnote-6)

Adam and Eve’s communication with the Lord is better characterized as conversation than as prayer. In the time of Enosh, the son of Seth, people “began to call upon the name of Yahweh” (Gen 4:26). The prayer lives of Enoch and Noah were so intense that it is written of them that “they walked with God” (see previous chapter).

Abraham was a man of prayer. He built an altar and “called upon the name of Yahweh” (Gen 12:8; 13:4). His son Isaac followed his example (Gen 26:25). We also know of Abraham’s intercession for Lot (Gen 18:23-33).

The book of Genesis also informs us of instances where people came to the Lord with personal needs. Eleazer, Abraham’s servant, prayed that God would lead him to find a wife for Isaac (Gen 24:12-14). Isaac subsequently prayed for her ability to conceive (Gen 25:21), and Rebekah sought the Lord about complications of her pregnancy (Gen 25:22). Jacob frequently turned to the God of Abraham for help in trouble (Gen 28:20-22; 32:9-12).

Moses had a very active prayer life: “Prayer and communication with God were virtually Moses’ sole occupation.”[[7]](#footnote-7) The most famous instance of Moses in prayer was his intercession for Israel (Ex 32:11-13). As a result, “Yahweh changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people” (Ex 32:14).

Numbers chapter 14 narrates another instance where Moses’ intercession saved Israel from annihilation – when the people refused to enter the Promised Land (Num 14:13-19). Because of Moses’ intervention, God spared the people: “I have pardoned {them} according to your word” (Num 14:20). A similar case is described in Numbers 16:45-50. Additionally, Moses interceded for his sister Miriam, when Yahweh struck her with leprosy (Num 12:13).

Moses also prayed about his personal needs: his fear of challenging Pharaoh (Ex 3-4), when he was overcome by work (Num 11:10-15), his desire to see God’s glory (Ex 33:18), and finally a prayer to enter the Promised Land (Deut 3:25-6). God refused Moses’ request, however, to enter the Promised Land as a punishment for an earlier act of disobedience. He also refused to let Moses reject His offer of leadership over His people (Ex 4:10ff).

Upon closer analysis of Moses’ prayers, we discover that he gives God reasons why He should act: (1) for the sake of His reputation among the Gentiles (Ex 32:11-12; 33:16; Num 14:13-16; Deut 9:28), (2) because of His covenant with Abraham (Ex 32:13; Deut 9:27), (3) to accomplish His plan (Deut 9:26, 29), or (4) out of His mercy (Num 14:17-19).

There were also cases when Israel appealed directly to the Lord without Moses’ mediation. The results varied. During the time of their oppression in Egypt, “We cried to Yahweh, the God of our fathers, and Yahweh heard our voice and saw our affliction and our toil and our oppression” (Deut 26:7). On the other hand, after they refused to enter the Promised Land, “You returned and wept before Yahweh; but Yahweh did not listen to your voice nor give ear to you” (Deut 1:45).

In the book of Joshua, we encounter several very significant and instructive instances of prayer to God. First, when Joshua was crushed emotionally about the defeat at Ai, he turned to the Lord and discovered the reason for their failure – the transgression of Achan (Josh 7:6ff). A very remarkable instance was when Yahweh “stopped the sun” in answer to Joshua’s prayer (Josh 10:12-14).

The Old Testament historical books abound with examples where people petitioned the Lord for direction (e.g., 1 Sam 9:9; 10:22). God would answer in various ways: a prophetic word (1 Kin 14:5; 2 Kin 22:13), Urim and Thummim (Ezra 2:63), or by dreams (1 Sam 28:6). When messengers from Gibeon approached Joshua with terms of peace, he failed to “ask for the counsel of Yahweh” and was consequently deceived by them (Josh 9:1-15).

The main reason Israel sought God’s counsel was for waging war. The book of Judges begins with such a prayer to the Lord: “Who shall go up first for us against the Canaanites, to fight against them?” (Judg 1:1), and ends in a similar way, when Israel thrice appealed to the Lord in their battle against the tribe of Benjamin (Judg 20:18-28). We will return to this case later in this chapter. David frequently sought the Lord about waging war (1 Sam 23:2-4; 30:8; 2 Sam 5:19-23), as did Jehoshaphat as well (1 Kin 22:5-8; 2 Kin 3:11).

Although the book of Judges describes the sufferings Israel experienced from turning away from Yahweh, it also records the prayers of repentance when God’s people returned to Him. Each time Israel fell victim to its enemies, “the sons of Israel cried to Yahweh,” and He showed them mercy and raised up a deliverer.

We are familiar with Gideon’s famous prayer with the fleece (Judg 6:36-40), which served as a confirmation of God’s will. Brandt and Bicket reason that it is appropriate to ask for confirmation from the Lord “when one feels that God may be leading in an unusual direction or asking one to do something contrary to good judgment or usual divine activity.”[[8]](#footnote-8) However, since the New Testament does not endorse the “fleece” approach, we suggest refraining from seeking confirmation in such a manner. The Holy Spirit, who lives in the hearts of believers, helps us know the will of God in a more direct manner.

Furthermore, prayer is frequent in the story of Samson. His father Manoah asked for a confirmation of his son’s special calling (Judg 13:8). Samson himself requested a drink during battle (Judg 15:17-19) and revenge against the Philistines (Judg 16:28). In spite of Samson’s shortcomings, he recognized his dependence on the Lord.

Before we examine the prayer life of Samuel, we must make mention of his mother Hanna, who “greatly distressed, prayed to Yahweh and wept bitterly” that God would grant her a son (1 Sam 1:10). Brandt and Bicket believe that earnestness in prayer expressed in tears moves God: “Tears announce the soul’s anguish and its intensity and the two together elicit response from a compassionate God.”[[9]](#footnote-9)

Samuel was very devoted to prayer. In the beginning of his ministry, he summoned the nation to repentance from idolatry with prayer and fasting (1 Sam 7:3-6). When threatened by the Philistines, Israel called on Samuel to pray, and “Yahweh answered him” (1 Sam 7:8-9). Even when Israel subsequently rejected Samuel’s leadership and requested a king, he continued to support God’s people in prayer: “Far be it from me that I should sin against Yahweh by ceasing to pray for you” (1 Sam 12:23). When Samuel learned of Saul’s disobedience, he spent all night in prayer (1 Sam 15:11).

It is difficult to briefly summarize the prayer life of David, who wrote the majority of the psalms, which are prayers to God. Along with expressions of thanksgiving and praise, David prayed for direction, mercy, understanding, comfort, deliverance from evil men, help, cleansing, right behavior, blessings, truth, grace for Israel, and the vision of God.[[10]](#footnote-10) He understood that “prayer is appropriate in all of life’s circumstances.”[[11]](#footnote-11) Coggan rightly notes, “The Psalmists have an uncanny way of expressing the depths of human experience.”[[12]](#footnote-12)

We can draw many helpful insights from David’s son, Solomon. In the beginning of his reign, God gave him an open door in prayer: “Ask what {you wish} Me to give you” (1 Kin 3:5). Solomon responded, “Give Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?” (1 Kin 3:9). God gave him not only great wisdom, but also “riches and honor” (1 Kin 3:13). We can also mention Solomon’s grand prayer at the dedication of the temple (2 Chr 6:13ff). Kneeling down with hands held high, King Solomon asked that Yahweh would answer prayers directed to that place.

Three other “prayer warriors” among the kings of Judah deserve mention: Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Asa. In 2 Chronicles 20:5-12, Jehoshaphat called on the Lord for aid in the face of threats from Moab and Ammon. As is common in biblical prayers, he sought to “stir God to action” by reminding Him of: (1) His power and authority, (2) His relationship with Abraham, (3) His readiness to defend His temple, (4) the past opposition of these tribes against Israel, and (5) of the present helplessness of Israel. God answered and gave victory.

In 2 Kings 19:15-19, Hezekiah prayed in the face of similar threats, this time from Assyria. The content of his prayer was similar: (1) appeal to Yahweh’s authority, (2) reminder of Assyria’s blasphemies against Him, and (3) concern for His reputation among the nations. In another case, Hezekiah sought the Lord for healing and received the divine reply, “I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; behold, I will heal you” (2 Kin 20:1-5).

Finally, when under pressure from the Ethiopians, Asa called on the name of the Lord, appealing to Israel’s helplessness, God’s power, and His covenant with Israel (2 Chr 14:11).

The lives and ministries of the great prophets Elijah and Elisha were saturated with prayer. In answer to their prayers, Yahweh did outstanding miracles. In answer to Elijah, for example, God withheld rain (1 Kin 17:1), and then restored it (1 Kin 18:42). In the latter case, Elijah served as an example of earnestness in prayer: “He crouched down on the earth and put his face between his knees.”

Furthermore, when Elijah called on the Lord concerning the departed son of the widow, “Yahweh heard the voice of Elijah, and the life of the child returned to him and he revived” (1 KIn 17:22). In answer to Elijah again, the Lord sent fire from heaven to confirm his prophetic ministry and mission (1 Kin 18:36-38). In addition, in times of personal crisis and distress, the prophet found a source of comfort and restoration in the Lord (1 Kin 19).

At the inauguration of his prophetic ministry, Elisha appealed to the Lord for a miracle ministry, crying out, “Where is Yahweh, the God of Elijah?” (2 Kin 2:14). God frequently displayed His power in Elisha’s ministry, but not as often through prayer as through his prophetic proclamations. We note some exceptions, though, where the prophet engaged in active prayer, such as raising the son of the Shunammite from the dead (2 Kin 4:33) and granting supernatural sight or blindness (2 Kin 6:17-20).

The last example of prayer we will take from the prophets concerns a less well-known individual named Jabez. His special prayer appears in a genealogical list: “’Oh that You would bless me indeed and enlarge my border, and that Your hand might be with me, and that You would keep {me} from harm that {it} may not pain me!’ And God granted him what he requested” (1 Chr 4:10).

What can we learn about the prayer lives of the “writing prophets”? In his vision of God’s glory, Isaiah responds to God’s call with the words, “Here am I. Send me!” (Isa 6:8). He begins chapter 25 with a psalm of praise, and in the next chapter, he prays a prayer of trust in the Lord (Isa 26:11-19). Finally, near the end of his prophecy, Isaiah prays for the restoration of Israel (Isa 63:15-64:12).

Another “writing prophet,” Jonah, cried out to Yahweh in the water even before the fish swallowed him up (Jon 2:8). From within the fish, Jonah thanked God for his rescue (Jon 2:2-9). At the end of this book, we learn that Jonah complained before the Lord that he pardoned the inhabitants of Nineveh.

Micah revealed that disobedience can hinder answers to prayer: “Then they will cry out to Yahweh, but He will not answer them. Instead, He will hide His face from them at that time because they have practiced evil deeds” (Micah 3:4). God announced the same through Jeremiah (Jer 11:11; 15:1). At times, the Lord even forbade Jeremiah to pray for the people of Judah (Jer 7:16; 11:14). However, during a time of promised restoration, God will again open His ears to the prayers of His people (Jer 29:12) and give them insight into His plan (Jer 33:3).

Through prayer, Ezekiel sometimes obtained a better understanding of what God was doing and why (Ezek 4:14; 9:8). Amos requested mercy from the Lord for Israel, and God consequently spared His people from punishment (Amos 7:2-6). Similarly, Joel sought mercy from God, again reminding Him that His reputation was at stake (Joel 1:19-20; 2:17).

Among the Minor Prophets, the most remarkable example of prayer is found in the book of Habakkuk. In the beginning of his prophecy, he expressed his dissatisfaction with God’s hesitation to judge Judah (1:2-4). Then he took offense that God would use wicked Babylon to accomplish the judgment (1:12-17). At the end of his prophecy, however, Habakkuk eloquently uttered a prayer of trust in Yahweh. This prophetic book shows us that regardless of the situation, we can trust Him fully (3:1-19).

We will conclude our survey of the prophets with Jeremiah’s extensive experience in prayer. He is called the “weeping prophet” because he often poured out his heart before the Lord. When he was called to prophetic ministry, he expressed doubt that he could fulfill it (Jer 1:6). He complained about the pitiful spiritual condition of the people of Judah (Jer 5:3) and even called on Yahweh to punish them (Jer 12:1-4; 17:18; 18:19-23).

Concerning his personal life, Jeremiah complained about his suffering for the Lord (Jer 20:7-9) and appealed for protection from his enemies (Jer 15:15-18; 17:14-17). In the end, however, he expressed his trust in Him (Jer 20:10-13). During his imprisonment described in chapter 32, Jeremiah praises God’s greatness in spite of not fully understanding God’s ways (Jer 32:16-25).

Jeremiah is considered the author of the book of Lamentations. Here we encounter a different attitude toward God’s people. Jeremiah filled the role of intercessor, pleading with God to show mercy and restore Judah (see Lam 5). After the inhabitants of Judah were exiled to Babylon, those who remained requested Jeremiah’s prayers for God’s direction, but in the end ignored His counsel (Jer 42-43).

After the Babylonian captivity, Judah’s leaders offered up prayers of repentance and confession for the people. After Ezra heard of the unfaithfulness of those who had returned from exile, he feel on his knees and stretched out his hands to Yahweh, confessing the sin of God’s people (Ezra 9:5-15). Daniel did likewise, who intensified his prayer “with fasting, sackcloth and ashes” (Dan 9:3-19), as did Nehemiah, who “sat down and wept and mourned for days… fasting and praying before the God of heaven” (Neh 1:4-11). The leaders of Judah joined him in a prayer of repentance (Neh 9:5-38).

Other features of Nehemiah’s prayer life deserve mention. He prayed repeatedly for God to punish his enemies (Neh 4:4-5; 6:14) and also requested that God would remember his good deeds and reward him correspondingly (Neh 5:19; 13:14, 22, 31).

Daniel prayed three times a day, “kneeling on his knees” (Dan 6:10), even when threatened with death for doing so (Dan 6:12-13). He not only prayed regularly, but also turned to the Lord as special needs arose (Dan 2:17-18). One particular episode of prayer and fasting in Daniel’s life takes the appearance of a spiritual battle, aiding angels in their struggle against the powers of darkness (Dan 10:11-14). Daniel was an excellent example of perseverance in prayer. Twice we note that he diligently sought the Lord until he received an answer (Dan 9:3; 10:12-14).

**2. New Testament**[[13]](#footnote-13)

In the Gospels, we learn of the prayer life of Jesus Christ. It may seem surprising that the eternal Son of God would be so devoted to prayer. Yet, this demonstrates the genuineness of His incarnation and dependence on the Father as a human. He identified with our humanity in His prayer life even to the point that “in the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears” (Heb 5:7) and prayed a prayer of submission to the will of His heavenly Father (Mk 14:36).

Jesus custom was to pray in solitude. Luke pays special attention to this: “Jesus Himself would {often} slip away to the wilderness and pray” (Lk 5:16). Mark confirms that Jesus preferred to pray alone: “In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left {the house,} and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there” (Mk 1:35). Coggan comments, “He could not carry on a ministry of such constant self-giving without such renewal.”[[14]](#footnote-14)

Luke highlights other special features of Christ’s prayer life. He was praying when the Holy Spirit descended on Him (Lk 3:21-22), prayed before choosing His 12 apostles (Lk 6:12), and prayed before His transfiguration (Lk 9:28-29). Even after one of His most remarkable miracles when He fed more than 5000 people, instead of savoring the moment, “He left for the mountain to pray” (Mk 6:46; сf. Jn 6:15).

Jesus turned to His Father in every circumstance, both in celebration of His disciples’ successful ministry (Lk 10:21), and when in torment of soul (Mk 14:35-36; Jn 12:27-28) or body (Mk 15:34). He shared every life experience with His heavenly Father.

We receive special insight into Jesus’ prayer life in John chapter 17, where the apostle records His prayer for His disciples. Jesus began the prayer with a personal request for His glory to be restored, since He had accomplished His earthly mission (vv. 1-8). Then, He prayed for His disciples’ protection from sin and apostasy (vv. 9-19).[[15]](#footnote-15) Moreover, He prayed for unity between all believers in Him, which would lead to success in evangelism (vv. 20-23).

At the end of this prayer, Jesus anticipates the time when His disciples will see His glory and promises to continue His ministry to them (vv. 24-26). Coggan insightfully notes that this prayer is structured to show “the expanding outreach of the prayer and concern of Jesus” – for Himself, for His present disciples, for future disciples, and for the world.[[16]](#footnote-16) According to the New Testament, the Lord continues His intercessory ministry for the Church in heaven (Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25).

Jesus always had full confidence that His prayers were heard. Before raising Lazarus, He said to His Father: “Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. I knew that You always hear Me; but because of the people standing around I said it, so that they may believe that You sent Me” (Jn 11:41-42).

Jesus not only spent time in prayer Himself, He also taught others how to pray. He emphasized that faith was vital for effective prayer (see Mk 11:24). Jesus also underscored the importance of persistence in light of God’s readiness to answer (Lk 11:5-13; 18:1-8).

Furthermore, when asked by His disciples, “Teach us to pray,” Jesus gave them as a model the “Lord’s Prayer” (Lk 11:1-4; Matt 6:9-13). Although in nearly every Christian denomination this prayer has become a component in the traditional liturgy, some feel that what is important is not repeating the prayer, but drawing essential principles from it. Harkness wisely counsels, “Too often the saying of words becomes a substitute for prayer.”[[17]](#footnote-17)

Murray asserts that the structure of the Lord’s Prayer is instructive for us. In particular, God’s interests should precede our personal ones.[[18]](#footnote-18) Karl Barth felt the same. He sees a parallel with the Ten Commandments, which begin with God’s interests, and human concerns follow.[[19]](#footnote-19)

Let us review the principles contained in the Lord’s Prayer which are important for a healthy prayer life.[[20]](#footnote-20) The model begins with addressing God as “Father.” Calling God Father is not limited to the New Testament. In the Old Testament, God was so addressed as well (e.g., Ps 103:13; Mal 2:10; Hos 11:1). When Jesus addressed the Father, He employed an atypical designation for the Jews of that time – “Abba” (see Mk 14:36), which we may translate “Daddy.”

Jesus’ instruction to address God as Father reveals that the Father desires close fellowship with His children. As a caring Father, God is ready to answer the prayers of His children. At the same time, we recognize that the Father resides “in heaven,” which accents His sovereignty.

Then we pray, “Hallowed be Your name.” The “name” of God represents His character.[[21]](#footnote-21) We are called here to bring God glory. In addition, Coggan comments, “A Christlike character is the best way of hallowing the name of God.”[[22]](#footnote-22) Next, we ask for God’s will to be done: “Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven,” which has both a present and an eschatological aspect.

Moreover, we ask for personal needs: “Give us this day our daily bread.” “Bread” is a symbol of “all we need for existence.”[[23]](#footnote-23) Here, we are expressing our dependence on the Lord. We look to Him daily, and God provides what is needed when it is needed. Although the Lord already knows our needs, He waits until we ask. Our prayer in faith will “loose the hand of God to act according to our need.”[[24]](#footnote-24)

We pray not only for external needs, but internal ones as well.[[25]](#footnote-25) In particular, we ask for forgiveness and forgive others: “And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” We have similar exhortations in Matthew 6:14-15 and Mark 11:25-26. At his crucifixion, Jesus displayed the ultimate in forgiving others when he prayed, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing” (Lk 23:34).

Finally, we ask God for protection from evil: “And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” We note here that the nominal form τοῦ πονηροῦ (*tou ponerou*), i.е., “evil,” could be in either masculine or neuter gender. The translation could be either “evil” as a principle, or “evil” as a person – the devil. Prayer is a key factor to resisting temptation (see Matt 26:41).

Is there a contradiction in praying not to be led into temptation, since it is a universal experience which God allows? The solution is found in the use of the phrase εἰς πειρασμόν (*eis* *peirasmon*), i.е., “into temptation.” Other than in the Lord’s Prayer, this Greek construction is found only in Mark 14:38 (and its parallels in Matthew 26:41 and Luke 22:40) and in 1 Timothy 6:9. These texts speak not of temptation itself, but of giving into temptation and committing sin. If we apply that meaning to the Lord’s prayer, then Jesus is encouraging us to pray for victory over temptation.

The concluding doxology, “For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen,” is absent in the best Greek manuscripts and in the commentaries on this prayer by Tertullian, Origen, and Cyprian. Other ancient manuscripts give different versions of this doxology. It is often thought that for liturgical purposes this closing was adapted for the Lord’s Prayer from 1 Chronicles 29:11.[[26]](#footnote-26)

In the context of the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus warned about not praying for show (Matt 6:6-7) or with empty repetition (Matt 6:8). The Lord revealed that prayer is so powerful that it can change history (Matt 24:20). In addition, prayer in agreement with others has even greater effectiveness (Matt 18:19).

The Gospel of John contains several amazing promises that unveil God’s great generosity and His readiness to answer prayer. We cite the following:

- Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do {it} (Jn 14:13-14).

- If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you (Jn 15:7).

- You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and {that} your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you (Jn 15:16).

- In that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full (Jn 16:23-24).

The passages above direct us to pray in Jesus’ name. Brandt and Bicket understand this to mean prayer according to His will and for His glory, recognizing as well that access to the Father comes only through the Son. In addition, according to John 15:7, those who abide in the Word pray with greater efficacy.[[27]](#footnote-27)

In the book of Acts, we encounter prayer in the very first chapter, when the disciples in the upper room “with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer” in anticipation of the coming Holy Spirit (Acts 1:14). After Pentecost Day, the apostles continued this practice, recognizing the need for diligence in prayer for effective spiritual ministry (Acts 6:3). In Acts 3, we observe Peter and John going in the temple at “the hour of prayer” (Acts 3:1).

In Acts 9, Peter is again in prayer when in Caesarea, he “went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray” (Acts 10:9) and received a vision of God’s plan to save the Gentiles. Another significant event occurred during a time of prayer and fasting by the leaders of the church in Antioch, when they received a confirmation of the apostolic ministries of Barnabas and Saul (Acts 13:2). Brandt and Bicket comment, “When we pray, we give God opportunity to speak, and we are more disposed to hear.”[[28]](#footnote-28)

The disciples also prayed before special ministry opportunities. For example, before raising Tabitha from the dead, Peter paused to pray, likely to receive direction from the Spirit (Acts 9:40). Before healing the father of the leading man of Malta, Paul did the same (Acts 28:8). Moreover, the church leaders at Antioch sent out Barnabas and Saul with prayer (Acts 13:3). When Paul parted with the elders of Ephesus they prayed together (Acts 20:36; also see 21:5). Finally, before choosing an apostle to replace Judas, the apostles prayed that the outcome of casting lots would be from God.

Not only did church leaders pray, but also the entire Church. We read in Acts 2:42, “They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” When Peter was being threatened with martyrdom, “prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God” (Acts 12:5).

Acts 4:24-30 presents us with an example of prayer during persecution. After the Jewish leaders threatened Peter and John, the congregation of believers turned to God, not asking for personal protection or for the overthrow of their enemies, but for more boldness to preach the gospel with supernatural confirmation. During the prayer, they proclaimed God’s sovereignty over nature and history. As their prayer concluded, “the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and {began} to speak the word of God with boldness” (v. 31). Paul and Silas had a similar experience in the Philippian jail (Acts 16:25).

Brandt and Bicket comment on prayer during persecution: “The concern and prayer at such times should be less for removing or preventing trouble and more for gaining strength and resolution to meet the troubles with cheerfulness and confidence.”[[29]](#footnote-29)

Acts chapter 7 narrates another appeal to prayer in a time of trouble, when Stephen was facing martyrdom. Just as his Lord had done, he prayed for God to receive his spirit and forgive his enemies (vv. 59-60).

Finally, Acts 10 relates the record of a Gentile who devoted himself to prayer, Cornelius, who “prayed to God continually.” The angel announced to him, “Your prayers and alms have ascended as a memorial before God” (v. 4). As a result, he, along with his household, became the first Gentiles to accept the gospel.

The General Epistles also devote attention to the believer’s prayer life. Peter, for example, quoted the Psalms, “For the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and His ears attend to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil” (1 Pet 3:12). John related the need for obedience for effective prayer (1 Jn 3:22). Disrespect for one’s wife may hinder prayer (1 Pet 3:7). James warned that prayer with wrong motives can also cause a hindrance (Jam 4:2).

James repeatedly exhorted believers to seek God: “You do not have because you do not ask” (Jam 4:2); “Is anyone among you suffering? {Then} he must pray (Jam 5:13); and, “Is anyone among you sick? {Then} he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him” (Jam 5:14). One of the most impressive prayer promises is found in John’s First Epistle, where he underscored the elements of praying in God’s will and praying with faith:

This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 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 (1 Jn 5:14-15).

The epistle to the Hebrews also emphasizes the need for faith: “And without faith it is impossible to please {Him,} for he who comes to God must believe that He is and {that} He is a rewarder of those who seek Him” (Heb 11:6). James stresses faith even more forcibly: “But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord” (Jam 1:6-7).

Our confidence in God’s answers to prayer derives from our access to Him through Christ: “Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus…, let us draw near” (Heb 10:19-22). James reminds us of the need for fervency in prayer, as Elijah prayed (Jam 5:16-18). Jude counsels us to pray in the Holy Spirit (Jude 20), which could refer to prayer in other tongues, or to prayer in general under the direction of the Spirit.

In the General Epistles, we also read about certain concrete things to request in prayer. The author of Hebrews asked for support in his circumstances (Heb 13:18-19), and John encouraged prayer for a Christian who commits a sin not “unto death” (1 Jn 5:16). Finally, prayer is a means of demonstrating humility before the Lord and dependence on Him: “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God… casting all your anxiety on Him” (1 Pet 5:6-7).

Paul’s teaching on prayer is rich in content as well. First, he revealed in his epistles that he himself led a very active prayer life.[[30]](#footnote-30) He once mentioned praying on his knees (Eph 3:14-19). He even wrote out some of his prayers:

- May the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also {do} for you (1 Thes 3:12).

- Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word (2 Thes 2:16-17).

- May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ (2 Thes 3:5).

Paul’s prayers addressed various concerns. He most of all prayed for the success of the churches he started or the people he discipled. He had a special burden for the people of Israel (Rom 10:1). When he was experiencing severe difficulties in his apostolic ministry (i.e., the “thorn in the flesh”), Paul appealed to the Lord for deliverance, but instead was reassured that this was working for his good (2 Cor 12:7-10). Once, Paul’s prayer appears vengeful (2 Tim 4:14-16).

Paul also exhorted others to be devoted to prayer (Rom 12:12, Col 4:2) with uplifted hands and a pure heart (1 Tim 2:8), with perseverance and in the Holy Spirit (Eph 6:18), as a remedy for anxiety (Phil 4:6-7), and even without ceasing (1 Thes 5:17). Murray understands unceasing prayer as follows: “The inmost life of the soul is continually rising upward in dependence and faith, in longing desire and trustful expectation.”[[31]](#footnote-31) In Ekman’s opinion, prayer without ceasing is the readiness to pray when the Spirit prompts.[[32]](#footnote-32) Brandt and Bicket reason that it simply refers to regularity in prayer, as well as readiness to pray as the Spirit leads.[[33]](#footnote-33)

Paul often requested prayer for himself (Eph 6:19; 1 Thes 5:25; 2 Thes 3:1-2; Col 4:3; Rom 15:30-32), as well as for all the saints (Eph 6:18) and all people (1 Tim 2:1), especially for those in authority (1 Tim 2:2). The Early Church assigned a special role to widows who dedicated themselves to prayer (1 Tim 5:5).

Prayer, then, was an irreplaceable element in Paul’s spiritual life. He was constantly in prayer and desired that others joined him in this endeavor. He praised Epaphras for his diligence in prayer, who was “always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers” (Col 4:12).

Paul’s theology of prayer included access to God through the blood of Christ (Rom 5:2; Eph 2:18), “in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him” (Eph 3:12). In addition, our relationship with God is one of “sonship”: “You have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’” (Rom 8:15), which inspires us to intimacy with the Father in prayer.

The Holy Spirit, of course, plays a key role in the work of intercession: “The Spirit Himself intercedes for {us} with groanings too deep for words” (Rom 8:26). Believer baptized in the Spirit have the supernatural ability to pray in other tongues (1 Cor 14:2).

### B. Historical Survey

Prayer has always been at the heart of Church life throughout its history. Consequently, we encounter numerous instances when Christian thinkers comment on the art of prayer.

Before we embark on a study of the practice of prayer in the Church, we will briefly comment on the Jewish synagogue prayer.[[34]](#footnote-34) The daily prayer time was divided into three parts. Prayer began with three offerings of praise followed by 13 prayers of confession and petition. Prayer concluded with thanksgiving and prayers for peace. “Prayers were probably said while people stood with their arms stretched heavenward or folded on the breast as in ancient Jewish worship.”[[35]](#footnote-35)

One of the first mention of prayer in the post-apostolic era is found in the *Didache* (2nd c.), where the Lord’s Prayer is prescribed: “Thrice in the day thus pray” (8.3). So then, repetition of the Lord’s Prayer dates back to the earliest times of Church history.

The Early Church also embraced the practice of praying at certain times of the day.[[36]](#footnote-36) According to Clement of Alexandria’s *Stromata* (2nd c.), prayers were to be offered three times a day at the 9th, 12th, and 15th hours, and also before meals and before sleep.[[37]](#footnote-37) In his work *On Prayer*, Tertullian confirms this rule, citing Daniel’s practice of thrice-daily prayer (Dan 6:10). He adds to Tertullian’s scheme another element – prayer before going to the sauna. Other writers also adhere to tripartite prayer, namely Jerome and Athanasius. We read in the *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* (4th c.), “Offer up your prayers in the morning, at the third hour, the sixth, the ninth, the evening, and at cock-crowing” (8.34).

In the *Apostolic Tradition* (2nd-3rd c.), attributed to Hippolytus of Rome, six episodes of prayer are prescribed with justification for each:[[38]](#footnote-38)

- The third hour – the time of the Savior’s crucifixion, the time of the presentation of the bread in the temple, and the time of the presentation of the Paschal lamb.

- The sixth hour – the time the earth was darkened during the crucifixion.

- The ninth hour – the time of the Savior’s death.

- Before sleep.

- At midnight – the time when the call went out, “The bridegroom comes.”

- Sunrise – the time when Peter denied the Lord.

The Catholic Church continues this tradition of seven times of prayer, which together are called the “Liturgy of the Hours.” The appointed times are: midnight, morning, 3rd hour, 6th hour, 9th hour, evening, and before sleep.[[39]](#footnote-39) Sometimes the midnight prayer is said before sunrise.

Since this prayer cycle is logistically problematic for ordinary parishioners, usually only clergy and monks observe it: “Prayer became the chief work of the monks.”[[40]](#footnote-40) Nevertheless, some of the “laity” regularly attended the morning and evening prayers. Some lived near the church building in order to attend as many sessions as possible.[[41]](#footnote-41)

Some monks attempted to exceed this rule. In the fourth century, certain Syrian monks attempted to pray continually, except for meals and sleep. In the fifth century in Greece, a monastic movement, the “Akiometes,” prayed all day and night in shifts.[[42]](#footnote-42)

In time, the Christian Church adopted the practice of reciting prepared prayers, especially for the Liturgy of the Hours.[[43]](#footnote-43) They employed for this purpose various psalms, the Lord’s Prayer, and creeds. Jungman claims, “The Psalms undoubtedly formed the chief element in the Church’s prayer.”[[44]](#footnote-44) Monks would sometimes read through the entire Psalter in one day. Praying the Lord’s Prayer could substitute for a psalm. Consequently, strings of beads were prepared to count the number of times the Lord’s Prayer was recited, up to 150 times, corresponding to the number of psalms.

From this practice, the concept of the “rosary” developed.[[45]](#footnote-45) A parallel “Liturgy of the Hours” appeared for prayers to Mary, which consisted of 150 psalms addressed to her. As a substitute for these psalms, the prayer “Hail Mary” could be offered. This rule merged with its parallel of 150 repetitions of the Lord’s Prayer resulting in the rosary in its present form – five repetitions of the following cycle: the Lord’s Prayer, ten Hail Marys, and a doxology called the “Glory Be.” An analog to the rosary exists in Eastern Orthodoxy, yet the beads are used to count repetitions of the Jesus Prayer.[[46]](#footnote-46)

As noted above, in time, Mary and saint began to occupy a more prominent position in the Church’s prayer life. We discuss this development in detail in chapters 13-14 below.

Some early teachers of the Church began to compose prayers that became standards for both individual believers and congregational life. An early example is found in Hippolytus’ *Apostolic Tradition* (2nd-3rd c.). We can also mention the liturgy of Basil the Great (4th c.), John Chrysostom (4th-5th c.), and Gregory the Great (6th c.). Moreover, at times the Church published prayer books for recitation. To this day, some Christian denominations still support and practice recitation of prepared prayers.

Regarding the bodily prayer posture,[[47]](#footnote-47) Clement of Alexandria, together with others, recommended lifting one’s hands and eyes to heaven. Tertullian joins with this opinion and forbade prayer in a sitting position, but rather on one’s knees. He also insisted that women cover their heads during prayer. From the second century, we observe the practice of praying facing the East, because the sun rises from that direction, and from the East, Christ will come.

Furthermore, it became customary to utter the phrase “through Christ” or something similar in recognition of the mediatorial work of the Savior. In addition, the practice of making the sign of the cross appeared early in church history. Nicetas of Remesiana (4th-5th c.) comments, that with the sign of the cross, one “arms himself against the devil.”[[48]](#footnote-48) Caesarius of Arles (5th-6th c.) claimed that, together with prayer, it protected from danger when travelling.

From the fourteenth century, a new movement began called “mental prayer,” especially among the Jesuits. This type of prayer involves not so much petitioning God, as reflecting on a theological truth or a biblical passage. This practice differs from the conventional conception of prayer, but nonetheless successfully avoids the peril of mysticism, since there is conscious reflection on a specific topic.

Let us attempt to characterize the Reformation’s contribution to the practice of prayer. Luther, for example, concentrated on prayer as an expression of dependence on the Lord. He once said, “I am so busy that I find I cannot do with less than four hours in the presence of God.”[[49]](#footnote-49) For him, prayer was “a need, a kind of breathing necessary to life.”[[50]](#footnote-50) He wrote in his *Large Catechism*, “We know that our defense lies in prayer alone. We are too weak to resist the Devil and his vassals.”[[51]](#footnote-51)

Calvin defended the position that we must pray in light of our position in Christ. We are participants in His prayer, which gives us assurance of God’s answer to our requests. Both he and Luther agreed that we do not simply pray for prayer’s sake, but in order to receive answers from God.

In the era of the Reformation, believers continued to recite prepared prayers. Yet, prayer from the heart was emphasized.

In assessing the Church’s practice of prayer, we can offer the following observations. As so often occurs in church history, church leaders as early as the post-apostolic period began to distort the biblical revelation. They substituted spontaneous, heart-felt fellowship with the Father with formality and the repetition of prepared prayers. They established a regime for conducting daily prayer that no one could practically observe except for monks.

The reason for this shift was that church leaders of the post-apostolic period had a weak understanding of the power of the new birth and the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of ordinary believers. Because of their doubt in the vitality of our new life in Christ, they subjected the Church to formalism in order to secure, in their eyes, a “quality” prayer life. However, in so doing they caused the Church to regress from the power of the new covenant to legalism, which, in fact, is a hindrance to spiritual growth. In addition, they deprived believers of close and direct interaction with their Heavenly Father.

The above discussion does not imply that it is improper to establish a regular rhythm of prayer, which can be beneficial to prevent prayer from being neglected. At the same time, we must keep in mind, as Brandt and Bicket note, that the New Testament gives no direction or instruction as to how long or how often to pray:

Each believer, on his or her own initiative, should determine and devise a personal prayer habit…. The regulation should not be rigid and inflexible, but it should be sufficient to give meaning and direction to praying.[[52]](#footnote-52)

### C. Elements of Effective Prayer

Drawing from our above biblical survey on prayer, we can highlight several key elements of effective prayer.

**1. God’s Will**

According to Scripture, all that we ask for in prayer must coincide with the will of God. John, for example, wrote, “This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us” (1 Jn 5:14). Kay affirms that we should pray for what God wants to do.[[53]](#footnote-53) Murray agrees, “Before we can believe, we must determine God’s will with certainty.”[[54]](#footnote-54) The converse is also true, as Hagin points out, “We should not want anything that the Word of God says we shouldn't have.”[[55]](#footnote-55)

The benefit of knowing God’s will is that, first of all, we can pray with confidence. In Hagin’s words, “When praying for things that are expressly promised in the Word, we can have complete confidence that God will give us what we need.”[[56]](#footnote-56) Second, we can pray with greater focus. Murray comments on this, “Our prayers must not be a vague appeal to His mercy or an indefinite cry for blessing, but the distinct expression of definite need.”[[57]](#footnote-57)

The New Testament unequivocally affirms that God wants us to know His will. Paul, for example, prays that believers “may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding” (Col 1:9). We also cite Romans 12:2: “Be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is.”

Without a doubt, the best source for discovering the will of God is God’s self-revelation, i.e., Holy Scripture. In our seeking God’s will, the Holy Spirit is also active, who “will guide you into all the truth” (Jn 16:13). Ekman, however, appears to exaggerate this point. He claims, “The Holy Spirit does not sanction prayer that has not been preceded by a personal Word from God.”[[58]](#footnote-58) Although the Spirit does indeed aid us in identifying God’s will, the latter is determined by Scripture. Correspondingly, Jesus promised to answer the prayer of those who “abide in Me, and My words abide in you” (Jn 15:7).

If for some reason the will of God is not clear, we should respond by praying a prayer of submission to God and His plan, whatever it may be.[[59]](#footnote-59) Situations also arise when we know the will of God, but do not want to do it. In such cases, we can imitate our Lord, who prayed, “Not My will, but Yours be done” (Lk 22:42).

**2. Faith**

Scripture declares that one of the most central elements in effective prayer is faith. Brandt and Bicket relate, “Faith is the prime mover of God’s hand.”[[60]](#footnote-60) Here are just a few passages that affirm that truth:

- 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 (1 Jn 5:15).

- But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord (Jam 1:6-7).

- Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be {granted} you (Mk 11:24).

The Greek of Mark 11:24 exists in several variants. The preferred option is πιστεύετε ὅτι ἐλάβετε, καὶ ἔσται ὑμῖν, i.е., “believe that you have received.” Some later manuscripts replace the past tense verb ἐλάβετε (*elabete*), i.е., “received,” with either the present tense λαμβάνετε (*lambanete*), i.е., “receive,” or the future tense λήμψεσθε (*lemspesthe*), i.е., “will receive.” Metzger and his associates reason that some scribe introduced the future tense due to its use in a parallel passage in Matthew 21:22: “All things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.”[[61]](#footnote-61)

Faith is defined in Hebrews 11:1: “Now faith is the assurance of {things} hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” Hagin understands this verse in the following way: “That which is in the spiritual realm is made real in the natural realm through faith. Faith grasps it and creates the reality of it in our life.”[[62]](#footnote-62)

Murry adopts the position that one must receive the answer to prayer by faith before it appears in experience: “On the strength of God’s Word we know that we have what we ask. So, with thanksgiving for what we have received and taken and now hold as ours, let us continue steadfast in believing prayer that the blessing, *which has already* been given us and which we hold in faith, may break through and fill our whole being.”[[63]](#footnote-63)

Ekman observes that people are not always ready to pray in faith. Sometimes time is needed to obtain the faith that the request will be granted. In such cases, one must firm up the conviction that the request coincides with God’s will, strengthen one’s faith, and then make the request. Ekman writes,

Don’t expect to receive anything from the Lord if you haven’t come to the point where you have a conviction in your heart that God will answer. Take all the necessary time to reach that point.[[64]](#footnote-64)

When you have a picture from the Holy Spirit in your inner being, and you know what the promises of God say, you can pray from a position of faith.[[65]](#footnote-65)

Ekman speaks here of another factor he deems necessary for faith’s operation – a picture from the Holy Spirit in the believer’s heart of the desired object of prayer. Murray goes even father to assert that without a special revelation from the Holy Spirit concerning the matter at hand, faith will not operate. He writes that in the Old Testament, “every special exhibition of the power of faith was the fruit of a special revelation,”[[66]](#footnote-66) and, “It is not the knowledge of *what* God has promised, but the presence of God *himself* as the promiser that awakens faith and trust in prayer.”[[67]](#footnote-67) Therefore, he concludes that faith in God’s promises in the Bible is not sufficient without a special confirmation by the Spirit.

In refutation of Murry’s position, we respond that, although the Holy Spirit does indeed strengthen our convictions, it is improper to assert that the Word of God is an inadequate foundation for our faith. God’s Word is the basis for the Christian life in its entirety, including one’s prayer life.

In their understanding of faith, Ekman and Murray allow that faith can find expression in persistence and perseverance as well. Ekman comments that the prayer of faith can be “persistent prayer and continual supplication.”[[68]](#footnote-68) Therefore, two approaches to prayer are recommended: (1) receive by faith the answer to your prayer before you see the manifestation, as Christ asserted, “All things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be {granted} you” (Mk 11:24), or (2) continue to pray with anticipation that God will answer, according to the Lord’s words, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you” (Matt 7:7).

Concerning the second approach, Hagin believes that this does not involve repeating one’s request, but rather reminding God of the request and of His promises concerning it. The weakness of Hagin’s interpretation is that the text in Matthew 7:7 speaks of repeated requesting, not of putting God in remembrance.[[69]](#footnote-69)

Finally, Kay contributes the thought that in the Gospels, Jesus sometimes responded to the faith not only of those petitioning Him, but also of their guardians, that is, their parents or masters.[[70]](#footnote-70) He cites the following cases: the father of a possessed boy (Mk 9:17-27), the leader of the synagogue, Jarius, in regard to his daughter (Mk 5:22ff), the centurion concerning his slave (Matt 8:4-13), and the Canaanite women regarding her daughter (Matt 15:22-28). In all these instances, the faith of the guardian was essential and sufficient for the miracle to take place.

**3. The Name of Jesus**

In the Scripture passages already cited, we frequently encounter the exhortation to pray in Jesus’ name. This charge is understood in various ways. Some say that prayer in Jesus’ name is done in recognition that our access to the Father comes only through Jesus Christ. This view finds confirmation in the Gospel of John, which emphasizes that Jesus is the only way to the Father (Jn 10:9; 14:6). Hagin comments, “We must ask the Father through the Lord Jesus…. We don't get our prayers answered because we are good; they're answered because of Jesus.”[[71]](#footnote-71)

Others propose that praying in Jesus’ name means asking according to God’s will, that is, praying as Jesus would pray. Supporting this view is the Hebrew concept of the “name,” which refers to someone’s character.[[72]](#footnote-72) So then, we pray in accordance with Christ’s character. Harkness takes this idea to an extreme in claiming that we need not use the “in Jesus name” formula in prayer, but simply pray in the “spirit of Jesus,” that is, according to His will.[[73]](#footnote-73) However, his proposition may cause us to neglect recognizing that our access to the Father is through the Son.

Another possible explanation is that Jesus has committed His authority to us. He has entrusted His name to us so that we could exercise His will on the earth. Murray asserts, “Jesus solemnly gives to *all* His disciples a general and unlimited power to the free use of His name at *all* times for *all* they desire.”[[74]](#footnote-74) Yet, later Murray makes the qualification that believers have authority “only to the same extent to which they yield themselves to live completely for the interests and work of the Master.”[[75]](#footnote-75)

However, we must consider that such a use of Jesus’ name is seen more in connection with performing miracles than in prayer to the Father. We do not use Jesus’ authority to demand something of the Father. On the contrary, we pray with humility. The authority of Jesus is for use against Satan and his works. The apostles understood this and used the Name for healing, deliverance, etc. For example, “In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene – walk” (Acts 3:6), and, “I command you (a demon) in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her” (Acts 16:18).

All things considered, we can affirm two reasons to employ Jesus’ name in prayer. First, in this way we acknowledge that our approach to God is granted due to the redemptive work of the Son. Second, prayer in Jesus’ name implies prayer according to God’s will, that is, to pray as Jesus would pray. To neglect the practice of praying in Jesus’ name would violate an important biblical principle and contradict Christ’s clear command (Jn 15:16; 16:23).

Another important issue regarding prayer in Jesus’ name is whether or not we can pray directly to Jesus. In Scripture, the typical rule is to pray to the Father in Jesus’ name by the Holy Spirit. However, we can affirm that prayers to Jesus are also appropriate.

The best and most ancient Greek manuscripts of John 14:14 contain the variant, “If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do {it}.”[[76]](#footnote-76) In addition, we have specific examples of prayer to Jesus: from Stephen (Acts 7:59), Paul (2 Cor 12:8), and John (Rev 22:20).[[77]](#footnote-77) The Bible instructs us to call upon His name for salvation (Acts 2:21; 9:14; 22:16; Rom 10:13-14; 1 Cor 1:2).

Although in the Bible, prayer to the Spirit is absent, we can engage in fellowship with Him (2 Cor 13:13). In addition, the Spirit plays a key role in how we pray, as we will see in the next section.

**4. The Holy Spirit**

The entirety of the Christian life should be carried out in the power of the Holy Spirit, including our prayer life. The Spirit reproduces the prayer life of the Savior in us.[[78]](#footnote-78) Correspondingly, the New Testament admonishes us to pray in the Spirit, as in Rom 8:26-27.

In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for {us} with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to {the will of} God.

We do not always know how to pray properly. Even though the Bible provides us with much instruction on prayer, nonetheless, our requests may not always align with God’s will. The Spirit, however, always prays according to the perfect will of God, which guarantees that the Father always hears and responds to the Spirit’s prayer.

Paul related that the Spirit prays in us or through us with “groanings too deep for words.” What does he mean here? Murray believes, “The Spirit dwelling within us prays, not in words and thoughts always, but in a breathing and a being deeper than utterance.”[[79]](#footnote-79) Hagin teaches that groanings too deep for words includes both groanings in prayer and prayer in other tongues. Yet, he adds that believers must give voice to the prayer of the Spirit. The Spirit helps us pray, but He does not pray instead of us.[[80]](#footnote-80)

The phrase “groanings too deep for words” translates the Greek words στεναγμοῖς ἀλαλήτοις. The noun στεναγμός (*stenagmos*) and its verbal form means: “to sigh, groan.”[[81]](#footnote-81) Groanings occurred when Israel suffered under oppression from Egypt (Acts 7:34), when Jesus “sighed” before he healed a mute man (Mk 7:34), when believers “groan” in anticipation of receiving their new bodies (2 Cor 5:2-4; Rom 8:23), and in similar contexts.

The adjective ἀλάλητος (*alaletos*) means “inexpressible, non-verbal.” It derives from the verb λάλεω (*laleo*), i.е., “to speak,” with the particle of negation α. A related word, ἄλαλος (*alalos*), means “mute, unable to speak.”[[82]](#footnote-82) So then, στεναγμοῖς ἀλαλήτοις cannot refer to prayer that is expresses in words, but only to groanings or sighing, which excludes speaking in other tongues. Nonetheless, we agree with Hagin that believers do participate in this type of prayer. The Spirit sighs or groans through them.

However, prayer in the Spirit does indeed include praying with other tongues. In Acts 2:4, the disciples, “began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.” Paul speaks at length about praying in tongues in 1 Corinthians 14, for example, “For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. What is {the outcome} then? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also” (1 Cor 14:14-15).

We also take into consideration that since people are not able to adequately serve the Lord in their own strength, the Spirit’s help is imperative in all matters. So then, even when someone prays in their known language, that individual must rely on the leadership and inspiration of God’s Spirit. Prayer in any sense, then, is prayer in the Spirit.

In this light, we can interpret Jude’s words in a general sense: “But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit” (Jude 20). Since, as we have just concluded, any worthy prayer is prayer in the Spirit, we cannot limit the application of this verse to only prayer in tongues.

At the same time, since Jude specifically speaks of “praying in the Spirit,” it is also fair to conclude that the verse may be emphasizing prayer in other tongues. Such a prayer brings believers special spiritual edification, as Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 14:4: “One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself.”

In Corinthians 14, Paul also instructs the one speaking in tongues to “pray that he may interpret” (1 Cor 14:13). This is typically understood to refer not only to bringing the interpretation of an utterance in tongues in a public meeting, but also to private prayers. Hagin notes that Paul does not say “pray for the gift of interpretation,” but rather, “pray that he may interpret.” Furthermore, Hagin states, “I am convinced that every believer should be able to interpret his own prayers, even though he never may interpret a message in tongues publicly.”[[83]](#footnote-83)

The final verse that discusses prayer in the Spirit is Ephesians 6:18: “With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints.” Ekman sees in this verse a call to respond to the Spirit’s prompting when He leads us to pray for a special need.[[84]](#footnote-84) Since we do not always know what the Spirit wants us to pray, in such cases prayer in tongues is very advantageous.

**5. Earnestness**

The Bible encourages prayer with passion, i.e., not only in words, but also with earnest desire to see answers. In other words, we take prayer seriously. James gives us the classic example of earnestness in prayer – Elijah the prophet:

Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit (Jam 5:16-18).

According to the Old Testament narrative, Elijah prayed earnestly not only that it would not rain, but also that rain would begin again: “Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he crouched down on the earth and put his face between his knees” (1 Kin 18:42).

What does James mean by “effective prayer?” The term “effective” translates the passive participle ἐνεργουμένη (*energoumene*), which comes from the verb ἐνεργέω (*energeo*). In the New Testament, this word communicates application of energy and is usually translated “work, be at work, be active, operate, be effective.”[[85]](#footnote-85) So then, this is “energized prayer.”

Hezekiah serves as another example. When he was ill, he appealed to Yahweh with tears and received an answer from the Lord: “I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; behold, I will heal you” (2 Kin 20:1-5).

Finally, it is interesting to compare the three attempts by the armies of Israel to defeat the tribe of Benjamin. Before each assault, Israel’s intensity in prayer increased until they finally achieved victory. Before the first attempt, they simply inquired of the Lord (Judg 20:18). Before the second battle, they “went up and wept before Yahweh until evening” (Judg 20:23). Before their third assault, Israel “remained there before Yahweh and fasted that day until evening. And they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before Yahweh” (Judg 20:26). Did their earnestness affect the outcome of their prayers?

**6. Perseverance**

Both in God’s Word, and in our experience, we see the need for perseverance in prayer. Ekman comments here, “Each believer goes into his prayer closet, gets hold of God and refuses to give up until the answer comes.”[[86]](#footnote-86)

Jesus Himself admonished His disciples “that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart (Lk 18:1). In the following parable, He compares the Father with an unjust judge, who nonetheless defends the widow “otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out” (Lk 18:5). In conclusion, “Will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly” (Lk 18:7-8).

As we know, not all our prayers are answered immediately. One reason is that God is testing our faith. Luke 18:8 concludes with the words, “When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?” In other words, are we ready to hold on by faith until the end? Hagin writes, “Often God permits our faith to be tried and tested right up to the end. When you believe God, you can stand firm, even though you are tested.”[[87]](#footnote-87)

Another key passage for this topic is Luke chapter 11, which includes Jesus’ famous saying, “So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened” (Lk 11:9-10). The imperatives in this verse, αἰτεῖτε (*aiteite* - ask), ζητεῖτε (*zeteite* - seeks) and κρούετε (*krouete* - knock), are in the Greek present tense, which indicate continuous action. We can therefore paraphrase, “ask and continue asking, seek and continue seeking, knock and continue knocking.”

Earlier in this chapter, the Lord encouraged perseverance in a parable about a man who would lend aid to his friend only because of the latter’s persistence. The conclusion: “I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him {anything} because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs” (Lk 11:8).

Ekman mentions that the devil can cause a delay in prayer.[[88]](#footnote-88) This was true in Daniel’s case, where the angel explained to him, “From the first day that you set your heart on understanding {this} and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days” (Dan 10:12-13). Some propose that in this case, Daniel’s persistence in prayer played a role in overcoming this demonic resistance.

Murray postulates that God often accomplishes His plan slowly and gradually. We see such a phenomenon both in the natural world, and in a believer’s spiritual development: “Man, in his spiritual nature, too, is under the law of gradual growth that reigns in all created life.”[[89]](#footnote-89) Consequently, it should not surprise us that God is often in no rush to answer prayer.

**7. Obedience**

According to Scripture, sin can hinder prayer’s effectiveness. The following passages point this out:[[90]](#footnote-90)

- You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and {that} your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you (Jn 15:16).

- Whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight (1 Jn 3:22).

- You husbands in the same way, live with {your wives} in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered (1 Pet 3:7).

James revealed that prayer for healing may require repentance: “Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed” (Jam 5:16). At the same time, we recognize that no living believer has reached perfection and that we all still commit sins. God does not require perfection from us in order to answer our prayers. Yet, He may withhold answers to prayer as a means of discipline and correction for His people.

In addition, the awareness of our sinfulness should motivate us to hold fast to Christ’s redemptive work, through whose blood we have access to God’s presence. Hagin writes, “We don't get our prayers answered on the basis of how good or how bad we have been; it is on the basis of our right standing in Him.”[[91]](#footnote-91)

**8. Agreement**

In Matthew 18:19, our Lord Jesus gave a special promise to those who agree together in prayer: “If two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven.” Hagin comments, “There is tremendous power as two or more agree in prayer concerning anything they may need.”[[92]](#footnote-92) He also cites Acts 4:31, where as a result of corporate prayer, “the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and {began} to speak the word of God with boldness.”

This prayer principle is linked to God’s intense desire for church unity. In this vein, Brandt and Bicket write,

God is highly pleased with any genuine movement toward oneness of believers, and consequently offers us keys to heaven’s treasury if as few as two believers agree (i.е., in prayer).[[93]](#footnote-93)

We can illustrate the power of prayer in agreement in Mark 2:3-12, when a crippled man’s friends brought him to Jesus. When Jesus saw “their faith,” that is, the faith of the crippled man and his comrades, He forgave him and healed him. Murray claims, “In the union and fellowship of believers the Spirit can manifest His full power.”[[94]](#footnote-94)

**9. Intercession**

Until know, we have been dealing primarily with prayer for personal needs. In that case, one can pray in Christ’s name according to God’s will in faith and receive an answer. However, prayers of intercession operate differently. Ekman rightly observes, “You can never with your will power manipulate another person’s will. Only God can touch that person.”[[95]](#footnote-95)

In other words, in intercession, the prayer of faith does not guarantee results. God will certainly respond to intercessory prayers in accordance with His will and deal with the individual. Yet, the party involved must respond to Him. Therefore, the prayer of intercession requires persistence and effort in prayer until God’s dealing overcomes that person’s resistance.

The Bible abounds in examples of intercessory prayer: Moses for Israel in the wilderness, Daniel for the restoration of God’s people, Abraham for Lot, etc. In this connection, we have noted earlier that the intercessor often “spurs God to action” by appealing to His glory and reputation among the nations, His covenant relationship with His people, and His merciful and just character. We can conclude that such an approach of “spurring God on” is appropriate in our time as well.

It is also important to note that the intercessor sometimes will stand in the place of the offenders, confessing their sins. Daniel (Dan 9:4-14), Ezra (Ezra 9:5-15), and Nehemiah (Neh 1:4-11) are examples, even though they were less guilty that those they prayed for.

The Bible contains specific injunctions to intercede for others. We cite Paul’s well known charge to Timothy:

First of all, then, I urge that entreaties {and} prayers, petitions {and} thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim 2:1-4).

The Lord Jesus Himself called his disciples to intercessory ministry: “Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest” (Matt 9:38). Murray comments on Jesus charge, “Whenever there is a complaint of a lack of workers or of competent helpers for God’s work, prayer holds the promise for them to be supplied.”[[96]](#footnote-96)

Ekman compares intercessory prayer with war. God’s people battle in the Spirit so that the will of God might be done on the earth: “Every revival in history has been preceded by Christians who have taken their responsibility to pray seriously.”[[97]](#footnote-97) Brandt and Bicket cite John Wesley, Charles Finney, and Dwight Moody in their claim, “Prayer - revival - evangelism. The sequence has been the same in all the great revival moves of history.”[[98]](#footnote-98)

The author of *Prayer: Rebelling against the Status Quo*, D. F. Wells, views prayer as the rejection of the usual order of things and an insistence on change. He describes prayer as “rebellion against the world in its fallenness, the absolute and undying refusal to accept as normal what is pervasively abnormal.”[[99]](#footnote-99) Furthermore, he writes, “Petitionary prayer, therefore, is the expression of the hope that life as we meet it, on the one hand, *can* be otherwise and, on the other hand, that it *ought* to be otherwise.”[[100]](#footnote-100) He insists that intercessory prayer must be accompanied by persistence.

**10. Thanksgiving**

An irreplaceable aspect of our prayer life is expressing thanksgiving to God for all He has done for us and for all He intends to do through our prayers. Hagin concurs, “The final step to answered prayer is to lift your heart to God constantly in gratitude and increasing praise for what He has done and for what He is doing for you now.”[[101]](#footnote-101)

Notably, when Paul prays for his congregations, he consistently gives thanks to God for them. We give the following examples:

- I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all (Phil 1:3-4).

- We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention {of you} in our prayers (1 Thes 1:2).

- We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you (Col 1:3).

Murray points out that the ultimate goal of prayer is God’s glory: “He who wants to pray the prayer of faith will have to live literally so that the Father may be glorified in him in all things.”[[102]](#footnote-102) In chapter 8, we discuss more fully the practice of thanksgiving and praise.

### D. Unanswered Prayer

From life experience, we learn that not all our prayers are answered. How can we explain this phenomenon? Numerous solutions are offered. Murray defends the position that we should always expect an answer to every prayer: “It is the will of God… that every childlike believing petition is granted.”[[103]](#footnote-103) He explains, “If you ask and do not receive, it must be because there is something wrong or lacking in the prayer…. The proof that we have prayed correctly is *our answer.*”[[104]](#footnote-104) It is highly likely – claims Murray – that our prayer is unanswered because we did not pray in accordance with God’s will. If that be the case, He will reveal that to us.

Hagin embraces a similar view: “All things God has provided are offered to us through prayer, and if we do not have them, it is because we have not made our prayer connection.”[[105]](#footnote-105) In other words, is we pray correctly, we can expect every request to be granted.

On the other hand, Brandt and Bicket make room for unanswered prayer. According to their understanding, God may refuse our request because He has something better in His plan: “Because God sees beyond what we can see, He will sometimes not answer our request because what we ask for might actually keep us from receiving a better answer to our needs or desires.”[[106]](#footnote-106)

Brandt and Bicket also raise the question of contractions in prayer. For example, if two armies petition God for victory in battle, whom should God support? They write, “When there are conflicts of human interest we can trust our faithful God, who sees all that is involved, to do what is best.”[[107]](#footnote-107)

Assessing Brandt and Bicket’s view, we see that their approach in essence does not differ from Murray or Hagin’s. The latter also affirm that if one prays outside of God’s will, He will not answer. If God has something better in mind than that for which we ask, this means that our original petition did not correspond to His perfect will. Therefore, we have prayed amiss.

Harkness advances a more radical position: “We are not to suppose that every specific request of every prayer will be granted.”[[108]](#footnote-108) To defend this view, he claims that God will not alter the natural order of things for the sake of one person’s request, but will preserve the order He put in creation for human good.

However, Harkness fails to consider two things. First, God’s creation is in a fallen state, which requires God’s special intervention at times. Second, he undervalues God’s ability and readiness to do miracles. This view flirts with deism.

So then, prayers that meet the above mentioned criteria, especially in regard to God’s will, will be answered if we persevere. Our major challenge is knowing His will. Therefore, we can view getting answers to prayers as a process in life. As we go, we learn how to discern the will of the Lord, how to stand in faith, how to pray with earnestness, etc. To the degree that we learn the art of prayer, we can expect results.

Nevertheless, Harkness does give good counsel in saying that if a certain request goes unanswered, we must not doubt God’s love for us or in His ability to care for us: “The saddest thing that can happen to us is to lose faith in the goodness of God when the desired answer does not come.”[[109]](#footnote-109)

### E. Special Topics

**1. Vows**

In the Old Testament, God’s people would sometimes resort to making vows in hopes of securing an answer to prayer. Before investigating this practice, we will define the different types of vows.[[110]](#footnote-110)

First, there was the vow of dedication. Numbers chapter 6 provides us with an excellent example – the vow of a Nazirite. Such an individual would abstain from shaving, from wine, and from touching a corpse. This was done to show special dedication to the Lord. In New Testament times, Paul (Acts 18:18) and several other believers (Acts 21:23-24) took this vow. Yet, Paul likely did so not for God’s sake, but in order to reach the Jews.

We see another example of the vow of dedication when David swore, “Surely I will not enter my house, nor lie on my bed; I will not give sleep to my eyes or slumber to my eyelids, until I find a place for Yahweh, a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob” (Ps 132:3-5).[[111]](#footnote-111)

Another type of vow resembled a contract. An individual would do (or not do something) in order to prompt God to action. For example, Saul forbade his soldiers from eating “until I have avenged myself on my enemies” (1 Sam 14:24).[[112]](#footnote-112)

The first biblical example of this type of vow was when Jacob promised to build Yahweh an altar, pay tithes, and make Yahweh his God in exchange for divine protection (Gen 28:20-22). Another example is when Israel promised to destroy the Gentile cities if God granted them victory over them (Num 21:3). Barren Hanna promised to give her child to God if He enabled her to conceive (1 Sam 1:11).

It is interesting to note that God never required a vow. It is actually stated, “If you refrain from vowing, it would not be sin in you” (Deut 23:22). We also learn that “vows were an integral part of many ancient Near Eastern cultures.”[[113]](#footnote-113) God did not forbid this ancient practice, but nonetheless made clear that if a person vowed, for honesty’s sake he or she must fulfill it (see Num 30:2-10; Deut 23:21-23; Еcc 5:4-6; Prov 20:25). David firmly resolved to fulfill his vows to the Lord (Ps 22:25; 61:8), and Asaph exhorted others to do the same (Ps 50:14; 76:11).

Although in Old Testament times, vows were a well accepted practice, they sometimes led to tragic consequences. Jephthah made a foolish vow to sacrifice to Yahweh the first thing that came out of his house to greet him, which happened to be his daughter (Judg 11:29-40).

Did Jesus forbid making vows? He commanded the following:

Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, “You shall not make false vows (ἐπιορκέω = “break an oath”), but shall fulfill your vows (ὅρκους = “oath”) to the Lord.” But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your statement be, “Yes, yes” {or} “No, no”; anything beyond these is of evil (Matt 5:33-37).

James echoes His teaching: “But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath (ὅρκους); but your yes is to be yes, and your no, no, so that you may not fall under judgment” (Jam 5:12).

Here, we must distinguish an oath from a vow. Unlike a vow, an oath is made not to receive something from the Lord, but to assure others of one’s honesty. An example of the latter is Revelation 10:6, where the angel “swore by Him who lives forever and ever… that there will be delay no longer.”

In the Matthew quote above, Jesus is apparently not citing one single Old Testament passage, but a combination of two, or maybe three (Lev 19:12; Num 30:2; possibly Deut 23:21). Leviticus 19:12 forbids a false oath, but the other passages address vows to the Lord: “If a man makes a vow to Yahweh… he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth” (Num 30:2). Yet, in the Matthean passage, the nominal and verb form for “oaths” are used throughout. Additionally, in His following discussion, Jesus addresses only oaths. Neither the Matthean passage, nor the text of James employ the Greek word εὐχή (*euche*), i.е., “vow.”[[114]](#footnote-114)

It appears, then, that Jesus did not forbid making vows. Nevertheless, in the new covenant economy, vows are unnecessary. The New Testament abounds with God’s promises to answer prayer if we pray properly. In light of God’s faithfulness and gracious character, we can trust in His favor to us in Christ. There is no need to resort to vows.

**2. Lots**

Another Old Testament practice that appears at times in the New Testament is casting lots. How are New Testament believers to relate to this practice?

First, we note that casting lots was originally a pagan practice, i.e., a means of divination. However, in distinction from other forms of divination, God never forbade this practice, but incorporated it into His order for Israel. In fact, the high priest carried lots with him in the form of the Urim and Thummim.[[115]](#footnote-115)

In the Old Testament, casting lots rendered a decision between varying options. For example, lots were cast for the scapegoat: ”Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats, one lot for Yahweh and the other lot for the scapegoat” (Lev 16:8). Moreover, the children of Israel divided up their inheritance of Canaan in this manner (Josh 15-19), guilty parties were discovered (Josh 7:14-18; 1 Sam 14:41-42; Jon 1:7), kings were chosen (1 Sam 10:20-22), and duties were assigned (Lk 1:8-9; 1 Chr 24:5; Neh 10:34; 11:1).

The book of Proverbs puts lots in a positive light: “The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from Yahweh.” (Prov 16:33), and, “The {cast} lot puts an end to strife and decides between the mighty ones” (Prov 18:18). Aune comments, “The use of lots in making decisions, therefore, was regarded as a means of allowing God to make the choice.”[[116]](#footnote-116)

The most remarkable example of this practice is when the apostles chose a replacement for Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:26). Aune observes that this instance differs from the Old Testament pattern, where lots were cast over an entire group to identify God’s choice. In Acts, the disciples chose between two candidates, a practice used in Roman society.[[117]](#footnote-117) In addition, the candidates had to possess special qualifications: to have been with Jesus from the beginning and to have been a witness of His resurrection (Acts 1:22). Moreover, the congregation prayed before the lots were cast (Acts 1:24-25).

However, commentators generally concur that such a practice is no longer appropriate for God’s people. All these instances occurred before the Day of Pentecost. Since that time, the Spirit personally directs the affairs of the Church. Baker writes, “Apparently after Pentecost the church relied upon the Holy Spirit to lead them through other means.”[[118]](#footnote-118) Peterson confirms, “It would appear that the apostolic example on this occasion is not to be followed by Christians today.”[[119]](#footnote-119)

**3. Fasting**

We investigate the biblical teaching on fasting in Appendix B.

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30. See Rom 1:9; 1 Thes 1:2; 3:10-11; 2 Thes 1:11; Eph 1:16-19; Phil 1:4, 9-11; Col 1:9-12; 2 Tim 1:3; Philemon 4; 1 Cor 14:18; 2 Cor 13:7. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
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104. Ibid., p. 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. Hagin, p. 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Brandt, p. 405. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Ibid., p. 405. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. Harkness, p. 313. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. Ibid., p. 313. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. Coleman R. O. Vow // Pfeiffer C. F., Vos H. F., Rea J. The Wycliffe Bible encyclopedia. – Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1975. – V. 2. – P. 1780-1781. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. Cartledge T. W. Vow // Bromiley G. W. The international standard Bible encyclopedia. – Rev. ed. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979–1988. – V. 4. – P. 998. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. See Arndt, p. 376, 416, 723. Commentators also diverge regarding what Jesus meant here. Blomberg and Morris feel that He was talking about oaths, but Hagner believes the matter concerns vows (See Blomberg C. Matthew // New American commentary. – Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992. – P. 112; Morris L. The Gospel according to Matthew // Pillar commentary. – Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1992. – P. 123; Hagner D. A. Matthew 1–13 // Word Biblical commentary. – Dallas, TX: Word, 1993. – P. 127). BDAG suggests that both variants are possible (Arndt, p. 376). [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Aune D. E. Lots // Bromiley G. W. The international standard Bible encyclopedia. – Rev. ed. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979–1988. – V. 3. – P. 173. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. Baker N. B. Lots // Pfeiffer C. F., Vos H. F., Rea J. The Wycliffe Bible encyclopedia. – Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1975. – V. 2. – P. 1053; Also see Polhill J. B. Acts // Dockery D. S. New American сommentary. – Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992. – P. 95. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
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