

# Occasional Update 14

22 June 2023

## 'PRAYER' and the 'SOVEREIGNTY of GOD' (Part 2)

(Part 1 was Update 10, 19 January 2023)

For **all** Updates, see <https://www.pray-for-the-nation.org/occasional-updates.php>

Two things I have again been thinking about are:

“What really is prayer and why pray?” and “Prayer and the Sovereignty of God.”  
Some of my thoughts on these are shared below, which I hope will help in our praying.

### What is prayer?

Simply, “talking *with* God” – not just talking to God, but also listening to what *He* has to say. It is how we “communicate” with God. If we don’t communicate with Him, how can we have a relationship with our heavenly Father?

Our prayers might include:

**Worship** of God for who He is, and what He has done, or is doing. Worship exalts the Lord.

**Praise** is an expression of our joy in the Lord, our gratitude, and our relationship with Him.

**Thanks** to God for answering our prayers, both for other people and for ourselves.

**Asking** God for His forgiveness for wrong things we have done, and thanking Him for His forgiveness. Asking God about other needs or situations we are in, in order that we might pray and act as He directs us.

**Intercession** for other people, or situations in our lives, family, friends, church, government, country, etc.

**Meditation** on what God is saying to us – listening to what He has, or is, saying to us through His Word (the Bible), and to us through “God-inspired” thoughts or words we hear ourselves, or through others – prophetic words for our edification, exhortation, and consolation, etc.

### Asking

“**Faith.**” When I was in Indonesia some years ago, we were praying for a crippled woman who could not walk. We prayed fervently, telling the Lord about our faith – believing that she would be healed. She was instantly healed, and walked! Then one of those praying said, “I can’t believe it! I can’t believe it!” God “smiled”; He had heard and answered our prayers because of His love for us and the woman who was healed. He “understood”!

“**Asking amiss.**” James 4:2-3 says, in part, “You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your pleasures.” Obviously, it’s not wrong to pray for what we need. Jesus taught us to pray, “give us today our daily bread”, and it’s not wrong to desire ‘pleasures’, but what are our motives? How will we use what He gives us? Will it bless others and be pleasing to God? Or is it selfish? To satisfy our pride? etc. *Maybe* there are reasons for God *not* answering.

**Praying “in Jesus’ name” and “according to His will.”** When we pray, and finish with the words “*in Jesus’ name*”, we need to realise that those words are more than just an “additional guarantee” that our prayers will be answered, and answered in the way we want. If I pray to God and ask for something, using Jesus’ name to ‘back-up’ the request, it implies that I have Jesus’ agreement and authority to this request. We also need to pray according to His will, as He leads us. See John 14:13-14; Rom. 8:26-28; 1 John 5:14-15; Luke 22:42.

A long time ago, during my college holidays, I did some work for the Post Office. I rode my bike from their centre to a suburban Post office, collected new telegrams (remember them?) and took them back to the centre, from which they were sent. I had been told to go and pick up the telegrams, but on my first trip, because I was unknown, I was asked, “Who sent you?” Then they checked with the main centre to make sure I had the authority to collect

them. Then the telegrams were given to me.  
When we pray, and our prayer is not answered, we can't demand, or command, that our prayer be answered simply by tagging the words "in Jesus' name" onto the end of our prayer. If we don't have Jesus' authority to ask in His name, and it's not His will, *praise God He has a better way, a better answer! He wants the best, and knows what is best!* See Romans 8:26-28. So we need to be careful how we use "in Jesus' name."

## The Sovereignty of God

One of Jesus' disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray." Jesus answered, "When you pray, say ... Our Father in Heaven, hallowed [holy, sacred, consecrated, or revered]. be Your name. Your Kingdom come. Your will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread" [what we need for each day] ..."

**QUESTIONS:** Is God *my* Heavenly Father? Do I want His Kingdom to come? Do I want His will to be done on earth (including in *my* life) as it is done in Heaven? Do I believe He *can* and *will* give me all that I need for each day? [Hopefully, our answers to each of these questions is 'Yes!']

God knows all things – past, present, and future; after all, He created all things. Hence, God-inspired prophetic words about the future are fulfilled, but they may be conditional. See, for example, Solomon's prayer to God, and God's response to him, in 2 Chronicles 6:26-39; and 7:12-20). Note the words, "*If... then...*" or "*When... if you... then I will...*"

God has all wisdom, and power – He knows what is best *and* He has the power to bring it about.

***He loves His children and knows what is best for them.*** When I went to university I wanted to be a Chemistry teacher. I got an A grade for my first year Chemistry (it was very similar to what I was taught in my last year at college). In my second year I got a D grade – I failed. I couldn't believe it! "Lord, what has happened? This is not what I prayed for!" Without going into detail, **God used this failure**, and I ended up with a Master's degree in Chemistry, and I eventually taught Tertiary level Chemistry for 43 years, the last 12 years as a Senior Lecturer at a university. God knows the end from the beginning!

Good mothers and fathers like to do what their children ask, but only as long as it is wise, safe, useful, etc. Many years ago, my wife and I were still up at about 10pm, and one of our sons got out of bed and asked if he could have an ice-cream. Our initial reaction was "No! Go to bed!" Then I thought, "Why not? He asked, and what's wrong with him having one?" To his (and his mother's) great surprise, his request was answered.

Matthew 7:7-11 Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you.

For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake?

If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children,

*... how much more will your Father in Heaven give good things to those who ask Him!*

God has *told* us to ask. He *wants* us to ask. He wants to hear our requests and **do what is best for us, and for others**. He knows and sees far better than we can! God's ways are better than our ways, even if sometimes we think differently.

**Oh the joy we have when we see our loving, all-wise Father, answering our prayers!**

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