



## Prayer...

...is the conversation of the soul with God, not in contemplation or meditation, but in direct address to him. Prayer may be oral or mental, occasional or constant, spontaneous or formal. It is a "beseeching the Lord" (Ex 32:11); "pouring out the soul before the Lord" (1 Sam 1:15); "praying and crying to heaven" (2 Chron 32:20); "seeking unto God and making supplication" (Job 8:5); "drawing near to God" (Ps 73:28); "bowing the knees" (Eph 3:14).

Prayer presupposes a belief in the personality of God, his ability and willingness to hold conversation with us, his personal control of all things and of all his creatures and all their actions.

Acceptable prayer must be sincere (Heb 10:22), offered with reverence and godly fear, with a humble sense of our own insignificance as creatures and of our own unworthiness as sinners, with earnest importunity, and with unhesitating submission to the divine will. Prayer must also be offered in the faith that God is, and is the hearer and answerer of prayer, and that he will fulfill his word, "Ask, and ye shall receive" (Matt 7:7,8; 21:22; Mark 11:24; John 14:13,14), and in the name of Christ (16:23,24; 15:16; Eph 2:18; 5:20; Col 3:17; 1 Peter 2:5).

Prayer is of different kinds, secret (Matt 6:6); social, as family prayers, and in social worship; and public, in the service of the sanctuary.

Intercessory prayer is enjoined (Num 6:23; Job 42:8; Isa 62:6; Ps 122:6; 1 Tim 2:1; James 5:14), and there are many instances on record of answers having been given to such prayers, e.g., of Abraham (Gen 17:18,20; 18:23-32; 20:7,17,18), of Moses for Pharaoh (Ex 8:12,13,30,31; 9:33), for the Israelites (Ex 17:11,13; 32:11-14,31-34; Num 21:7,8; Deut 9:18,19,25), for Miriam (Num 12:13), for Aaron (Deut 9:20), of Samuel (1 Sam 7:5-12), of Solomon (1 Kings 8; 2 Chron 6:1), Elijah (1 Kings 17:20-23), Elisha (2 Kings 4:33-36), Isaiah (2 Kings 19; 42:2-10), Peter (Acts 9:40), the church (12:5-12), Paul (28:8).

No rules are anywhere in Scripture laid down for the manner of prayer or the attitude to be assumed by the suppliant. There is mention made of kneeling in prayer (1 Kings 8:54; 2 Chron 6:13; Ps 95:6; Isa 45:23; Luke 22:41; Acts 7:60; 9:40; Eph 3:14, etc.); of bowing and falling prostrate (Gen 24:26,52; Ex 4:31; 12:27; Matt 26:39; Mark 14:35, etc.); of spreading out the hands (1 Kings 8:22,38,54; Ps 28:2; 63:4; 88:9; 1 Tim 2:8, etc.); and of standing (1 Sam 1:26; 1 Kings 8:14,55; 2 Chron 20:9; Mark 11:25; Luke 18:11,13).

If we except (not include) the "Lord's Prayer" (Matt 6:9-13), which is, however, rather a model or pattern of prayer than a set prayer to be offered up, we have no special form of prayer for general use given us in Scripture.

Prayer is frequently enjoined in Scripture (Ex 22:23,27; 1 Kings 3:5; 2 Chron 7:14; Ps 37:4; Isa 55:6; Joel 2:32; Ezek 36:37, etc.), and we have very many testimonies that it has been answered (Ps 3:4; 4:1; 6:8; 18:6; 28:6; 30:2; 34:4; 118:5; James 5:16-18, etc.).