

# WHAT KIND OF PRAYERS SHOULD WE PRAY?

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The Bible tells us to pray varied prayers to God.<sup>1</sup> A useful way of describing them is 'Relational Prayers', and 'Request Prayers'. Some people focus on Relational prayers, others focus on Request prayers. We need to learn to do both.

## RELATIONAL PRAYERS

[You might like to reflect on whether you pray prayers like these! You may feel them, but do you pray and say them?] These are taken from the book of Psalms.

### I TRUST IN GOD

'I trust in you LORD' [31:14].

'I trust in your unfailing love' [13:5].

'I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits' [130:5].

'I lift my eyes to you, to you who sit enthroned in heaven' [123:1].

'Into your hands I commit my spirit' [31:5].

'I waited patiently for the LORD: he turned to me and heard my cry' [40:1].

'My hope is in you all day long' [25:5].

'In you, LORD, have I taken refuge' [71:1].

'I cling to you; your right hand upholds me' [63:8].

'In peace I will lay down and sleep, for you alone, LORD, make me dwell in safety' [4:8].

### I LOOK TO GOD

'Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame' [34:5].

'Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always' [105:4].

'I lift up my eyes to the mountains— where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth' [121:1-2].

'I lift up my eyes to you, to you who sit enthroned in heaven. As the eyes of slaves look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a female slave look to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the LORD our God, till he shows us his mercy' [123:1-2].

### I HOPE IN GOD

'Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Saviour, and my hope is in you all day long [25:5].

'Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the LORD' [31:24].

'May your unfailing love be with us, LORD, even as we put our hope in you' [33:22].

'But now, Lord, what do I look for? My hope is in you' [39:7].

'Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him' [62:5].

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<sup>1</sup> For example: 'prayer and petition, with thanksgiving' [Phil 4:6], 'rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances' [1 Thess 5:16-18]; 'petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving' [1 Tim 2:1].

‘For you have been my hope, Sovereign LORD, my confidence since my youth’ [71:5].

### **I LOVE AND DESIRE GOD**

‘I love you, LORD, my strength’ [18:1, see also 116:1].<sup>2</sup>

‘Love the LORD, all his faithful people!’ [31:23].

‘I will sing of the LORD’s great love forever’ [89:1].

‘As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, the living God’ [42:1].

‘You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you’ [63:1].

‘Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you’ [73:25].

‘I long to dwell in your tent forever, and take refuge in the shadow of your wings’ [61:4].

‘On my bed I remember you, I think of you through the watches of the night’ [63:6].

### **I LIVE WITH, DWELL IN, FIND REFUGE IN, AND REST IN GOD**

‘One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple’ [27:4].

‘For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe. I long to dwell in your tent forever and take refuge in the shelter of your wings’ [61:3,4].

‘How lovely is your dwelling place, LORD Almighty! My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God...Blessed are those who dwell in your house;

they are ever praising you’ [84:12,4].

‘Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations’ [90:1].

‘Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, “He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust”’ [91:1,2].

‘LORD my God, I take refuge in you; save and deliver me from all who pursue me’ [7:1].

‘Have mercy on me, my God, have mercy on me, for in you I take refuge. I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed’ [57:1].

‘Truly my soul finds rest in God; my salvation comes from him’ [62:1].

### **I PRAISE AND THANK GOD**

‘Open my lips, Lord, and my mouth will sing of your righteousness’ [51:15].

‘I will give thanks to you, LORD, with all my heart’ [9:1].

‘My heart, O God, is steadfast; I will sing and make music with my soul’ [108:1].

‘Because you are my God, I sing in the shadow of your wings’ [63:7].

‘My li will shout for joy when I sing praise to you’ [71:23].

‘I remember the days of long ago; I meditate on all your works and consider what your hands have done’ [143:5].

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<sup>2</sup> In the NT, see Jn 14:21,23, [24], and 21:15,16,17; and 1 Pet 1:8.

## **I WORSHIP GOD**

‘Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker’ [95:6].

‘Worship the LORD in the splendour of his holiness; tremble before him, all the earth’ [96:9].

‘Exalt the LORD our God and worship at his holy mountain, for the LORD our God is holy’ [99:9].

‘Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs’ [110:2].

‘Let us go to his dwelling place, let us worship at his footstool’ [132:7].

## **I LOVE GOD’S WORDS**

‘Praise be to you, LORD; teach me your decrees. With my lips I recount all the laws that come from your mouth. I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word ... Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law’ [119:12-16,18].

‘Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long’ [119:97].

‘My heart is set on keeping your decrees to the very end’ [119:112].

‘My eyes stay open through the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promises’ [119:148].

## **I REMEMBER GOD’S WORKS**

‘I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago. I will consider all your works and meditate on all your mighty deeds’ [77:11,12].

‘I remember the days of long ago; I meditate on all your works and consider what your hands have done. I spread out my hands to you; I thirst for you like a parched land’ [143:5,6].

## **I CONFESS MY SIN TO GOD**

‘Have mercy on me, O God ... blot out my transgressions ... Wash away all my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin’ [51:1].

‘My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise’ [51:17].

‘Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD.” And you forgave the guilt of my sin’ [32:5].

## **I CRY TO GOD IN GREAT NEED**

'Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck' [69:1].

'My soul is weary with sorrow; strengthen me according to your word' [119:28].

'Out of the depths I call to you, LORD; Lord, hear my voice ... I wait for the LORD, more than watchmen wait for the morning' [130:1,6].

'These things I remember as I pour out my soul...' [42:4].

## **I LAMENT AND PROTEST TO GOD**

'Listen to my words, LORD, consider my lament' [5:1].

'Keep me as the apple of your eye;

hide me in the shadow of your wings

from the wicked who are out to destroy me,

from my mortal enemies who surround me' [17:8-9].

'How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me?

How long must I wrestle with my thoughts

and day after day have sorrow in my heart?

How long will my enemy triumph over me?' [13:1-2].

[As you pray these prayers, you might also add phrases like 'in Christ', 'through Christ', 'by Christ', 'through Holy Spirit', 'by Holy Spirit', etc.]<sup>3</sup>

Words are a natural expression of emotions, for by them we communicate our emotions to others. As CS Lewis wrote, 'I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation. It is not out of compliment that lovers keep on telling one another how beautiful they are; the delight is incomplete till it is expressed...' <sup>4</sup> This applies to all emotions. They need to be expressed in words and actions! Deep internal feelings are incomplete until they are expressed.

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<sup>3</sup> Yes, the alms are about Christ, but because they are about Christ, they are also about us.

<sup>4</sup> CS Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*. New York, Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1958, 93.