

***Praying With Confidence:
Searching for God's Will in Your Life***

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask Him!

Matthew 7:7 – 11 (NIV)

Introductory Concepts About Prayer

What is prayer? _____

How should we pray? See **Psalm 19:14, Matthew 6:7, Romans 8:26**

Why should we pray? See **Romans 12:12, 1 Timothy 2:1 – 6, Psalm 50:14 – 15, Philippians 4:6**

When should we pray? **1 Thessalonians 5:16 – 18**

What does that mean? How can we really do this?

Relative to this question, where should we pray? See **Matthew 6:6, Luke 5:16, Acts 4:23 – 24.**

To whom should we pray? See **Deuteronomy 6:13 – 15, John 16:23 – 24, Jude 20, and 1 Timothy 2:1 – 6**

Some Christians would argue that we should be praying to the Father (like the Lord's Prayer does), others might say we should be praying to Jesus, charismatics in particular might argue to pray to the Holy Spirit. We as Lutherans do not get hung up on this so how would you answer this?

Why do you think the Roman Catholic Church often prays to the Virgin Mary, the Saints, and even those who have died that we know? What is wrong with that?

What should we pray about? See **Philippians 4:6 – 7**.

What other important message is there for us in this verse about God's will?

What posture do you (and most LCMS Lutherans) usually assume when you pray? Why do we do this? See **Hebrews 5:7**.

What do we learn about prayer posture from the following verses: **Deuteronomy 9:17 – 18** and **Matthew 26:39, 1 Kings 8:54, Psalm 95:6, Mark 11:25, 1 Timothy 2:8**.

How do you feel when you are around people who pray as described in **1 Timothy 2:8**? When are we wrong to criticize those who pray in this fashion?

Different mnemonics have been developed to help us organize our formal prayers and consistently apply some basic components of prayer so that our prayers are “balanced”. Do you use these either of these mnemonics or have other tools that you use to help you organize your prayers?

ACTS
Adoration
Confession
Thanksgiving
Supplication

PART
Praise
Admit
Request
Thanksgiving

Does God hear the prayers of non-Christians? Why or why not? See **1 Timothy 2:5 – 6** and **John 14:6, Acts 10: 1 – 8, 34 – 38, 44 – 48**. See also **Hebrews 4:13**.

Prayer is not a “Means of Grace”.

“To be a true Christian and to pray are so inseparably united that a person cannot think of one without the other. As crying is the first sign of life in a newly born child, so prayer is the first sign of life in a reborn Christian.” – Dr. Walther

“However though prayer is essential, we must guard against the error of many Reformed theologians, who call it a means of grace. They regard it as a means through which a wrestling soul gains the exhilarating feeling that he is converted, or through which a groping soul receives supernatural revelation independent of the Word of God and the Sacraments.”

From The Abiding Word

What is “grace”? _____

How is God’s love different from God’s grace? _____

See **Ephesians 2:8 – 10** and **Romans 3:22 – 28**. Which is more important to mankind and why?

What is the definition of a Means of Grace? _____

What are the Means of Grace? and Why? See **I John 5:5 – 12**.

Why is prayer not a Means of Grace and why is that an important distinction?

How does this concept impact our thinking of what is occurring in prayer?

What is “The Sinner’s Prayer” and how could this prayer incorrectly be used as Means of Grace?

Examples of The Sinner’s Prayer from *Wikipedia*:

Billy Graham

Dear Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner, and I ask for Your forgiveness. I believe You died for my sins and rose from the dead. I turn from my sins and invite You to come into my heart and life. I want to trust and follow You as my Lord and Savior. In Your Name. Amen.

Cru (formerly Campus Crusade for Christ)

Lord Jesus, I need You. Thank You for dying on the cross for my sins. I open the door of my life and receive You as my Savior and Lord. Thank You for forgiving my sins and giving me eternal life. Take control of the throne of my life. Make me the kind of person You want me to be.

St. Paul Street Evangelization

God our Father, I believe that out of Your infinite love You have created me. In a thousand ways I have shunned Your love. I repent of each and every one of my sins. Please forgive me. Thank You for sending Your Son to die for me, to save me from eternal death. I choose this day to enter into (renew my) covenant with You and to place Jesus at the center of my heart. I surrender to Him as Lord over my whole life. I ask You now to flood my soul with the gift of the Holy Spirit so that my life may be transformed. Give me the grace and courage to live as a disciple in Your Church for the rest of my days. In Jesus name I pray Amen.

If someone came up to you and said “I want to believe in Jesus as my Savior. How do I become a Christian?” how would you respond? See **Acts 2:36 – 41**.

Prayer and God’s Will

True or False - Prayer can change the course the history?

Think of the ramification of what that means. It is saying that if people do not pray God will have history go in a particular direction but if they do pray He will have history go in a different direction. However, God knows all things. Does he not know what will happen in the future? This leads to the next question.

Does/can prayer change God’s mind? Why or why not? See **Malachi 3:6, Exodus 32:7 – 14, and II Kings 20:1 – 6**.

Can man block/thwart the will of God? Why or why not? **1 Timothy 2:1 – 4**.

How do we reconcile this with **Malachi 3:6** that we just read? Hint: Read **Malachi 3:6 –12**

Read **Matthew 10:29 – 31**. God knows everything. He knows every detail of your entire life. How can we say that prayer can change His mind about something in my life? Has He not planned out every one of those details? Doesn’t God have a plan for my life? Compare **Luke 12:6 – 7**. Is there a difference between God’s will and God’s plan?

What does it mean to pray in the name of Jesus?

When we say “God really answered my prayer!” in response to God answering earnest prayers on a particular matter or situation, what are we really saying or what likely outcome did God bring about?

What does that say about times when God does not answer our prayers in the way that we prayed or hoped that they would be answered?

Read **Matthew 21:21 – 22 (NT pg 23)**, **John 14:12 – 14 (NT pg 107)**.

How often do you “receive whatever you ask for in prayer”? _____

What do these verses (especially the **Matthew** verses) imply is the reason that we do not receive all that we ask when taken out of context?

In **John 14:12 – 14** that we just read, Jesus says “**You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it**”. Almost every prayer we pray ends with “In Jesus name I (we) pray” or “In your name we pray” or some other variation of stating that we are praying in the name of Jesus. However, many times we do not get that for which we prayed? Are Jesus’ words and promises not reliable? Why doesn’t God do what we ask for “in Jesus name”? To begin to answer this question compare **Acts 3:2 – 8, 16 (NT pg 117)** and **Acts 19:13 – 16 (NT pg 136)**. What is the difference in how something was done “in Jesus name.”?

What do each the following Scriptures tell about Jesus, His name, or what it means to pray in His name?

John 1:1 – 4 (NT pg 90) _____

Revelation 17:14 (NT pg 253) _____

1 Corinthians 2:14 – 16 (NT pg 163) _____

John 4:31 – 34 (NT pg 93), **John 6:38 (NT pg 96)**, **Matthew 26:39, 42 – 44 (NT pg 30)**

1 John 2:4 – 6 (NT pg 234), Philippians 2:5 – 13 (NT pg 193), Colossians 3:17 (NT pg 198)

Read **James 5:13 – 17 (NT pg 227)**. Is one Christian's prayer more effective than another?

If you pray for someone's salvation will it happen? If not, why not? Read **1 Timothy 2:1 – 4 (NT pg 204)**.

God's will is not just what he wants for us nor is it something He automatically imposes upon us. God's will is not something that God does only. He completes His will in and through us. Our own will can refuse to do God's will and thereby His will for us can be thwarted even to our eternal detriment. Christ is our example as well as the means by which we will come to know the will of the Father.

For other examples of things that are God's will that we can pray about with confidence, read the following verses and list out what is God's will.

Luke 11:9 – 13 (NT pg 71) _____

Galatians 5:22 – 23 (NT pg 187) _____

Philippians 4:6 – 7 (NT pg 195) and 1 Peter 5:7 (NT pg 231)

What blocks our prayers from being answered the way we pray them? Also what can we do about it?

Psalm 66:17 – 20 (OT pg 518) _____

Proverbs 28:9 (OT pg 598) _____

Isaiah 29:13 (OT pg 643) _____

Isaiah 59:1 – 2 (OT pg 675) _____

James 4:2 – 7 (NT pg 226) _____

How should this impact our worship? daily life?

What do **Romans 11:33 – 12:8** (NT pg 157) and **Mark 3:31 – 35** (NT pg 37) tell us about God revealing His will to us?

Romans 11:33 – 12:8 _____

Mark 3:31 – 35 _____

What are some instances when we simply will not know what God's will is? How can we identify them?

Acts 18:20 – 21 (NT pg 135) _____

2 Corinthians 12:7b – 10 (NT pg 182) _____

Since God wants us to know what His will is for us in our lives, how do we find it out? See **1 John 3:16 – 23** (NT pg 235).

Read **Exodus 20:18 – 19** (OT pg 66) and Oswald Chambers comments below. Do you agree or disagree with his comments? Why or why not?

“We show how little love we have for God by preferring to listen to His servants rather than to Him. We like to listen to personal testimonies, but we don't want God Himself to speak to us. Why are we so terrified for God to speak to us? It is because we know that when God speaks we must either do what He asks or tell Him we will not obey. But if it is simply one of God's servants speaking to us, we feel obedience is optional, not imperative. We respond by saying, ‘Well, that's only your own idea, even though I don't deny that what you said is probably God's truth.’

Am I constantly humiliating God by ignoring Him, while He lovingly continues to treat me as His child? Once I finally do hear Him, the humiliation I have heaped on Him returns to me. My response then becomes, ‘Lord, why was I so insensitive and obstinate?’ This is always the result once we hear God. But our real delight in finally hearing Him is tempered with the shame we feel for having taken so long to do so.”

Summary Guide for a More Effective Prayer Life

1. Make sure your prayers are not just a litany of personal requests. Come before the Father in humility praising God for His blessings, confessing your sin, recognizing your forgiveness in Christ, pouring out your heart in your petitions, and thanking God for listening.
2. Structure your formal prayer time around the daily study of God's Word. Pray before studying the Word that God would show you His will. Pray afterward that God would guide, guard, and lead you to do His will as revealed to you in His Word.
3. Truly pray "in Jesus name" by:
 - a. Truly recognizing Jesus as Lord of your life.
 - b. Recognizing and rejoicing that through Christ's death and resurrection you are able to boldly, yet humbly, come to the Father through Jesus having total confidence that God loves you, hears you, and wants what is best for you.
 - c. Living your baptism in Christ, following His example by:
 1. praying with an attitude of total submission to the will of the Father just as Jesus did.
 2. constantly seeking to do the will of the Father as Jesus did.
 3. battling the temptations of Satan with the power of God through His Word.
4. Recognize that God wants you to know His will for your life. He does not play games with us by withholding answers to our prayers. His will is revealed through the Word and Sacraments. Diligently study God's Word in private, small groups, and at church. Focus on God's will not your own.
5. Pray with confidence reminding God of the promises that He gives all of His children in His Word. Then ask God for understanding on how His promises are being fulfilled in your life.
6. Truly submit your will to God's will by praying each day that you would walk in His ways and be a blessing and witness to all those around you. Instead of praying "Walk with me Lord", pray "Let me walk with you Lord". Then "walk the talk".
7. Go through the day with a constant attitude of prayer recognizing God's presence and talking to Him in all things.

"Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

1 Thessalonians 5:16 – 18 (NIV)