

“The Precedent Of Prayer”

When it comes to the issue of prayer and how it plays out in everyday life we can use the Apostle Paul’s prayer life as a great starting point for us to consider. When did Paul Pray? How did he pray? What did the Apostle pray for? How is his life an example for us today?

It’s interesting to note that in the 13 Epistles Paul mentions his own prayers or his own prayer life at least 56 times (Pray = 28 times; Prays = 3 times; Prayer = 10 times; Prayers = 12 times; Praying = 3 times). Prayer played a critical role in his growth as a Christian.

I. Paul’s Practice Of Prayer

Read: Acts 9:11

(Immediately after his encounter with Jesus.)

“The Lord told him, “Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is **praying**.”

Read: Acts 13:2,3

(Paul’s 1st missionary journey)

“While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ So after they had fasted and **prayed**, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.”

Read: Acts 14:23

(1st Journey - Lystra, Iconium & Antioch; ministry decisions)

“Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with **prayer** and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.”

Read: Acts 16:13

(Philippi - Why were they looking for a place of prayer?)

“On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of **prayer** ...”

Read: Acts 16:16

(Paul, Silas, Timothy & Luke: They went more than once!)

“Once when we were going to the place of **prayer**...”

Read: Acts 16:25

(In the midst of trials & persecutions for the sake of others.)

“About midnight Paul and Silas were **praying** and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.”

Read: Acts 20:36

(Saying farewell to the Ephesian elders.)

“When he had said this, he knelt down with all of them and **prayed**.”

Read: Acts 21:5

(With the disciples at Tyre - just before Paul’s arrest in Jerusalem.)

“But when our time was up, we left and continued on our way. All the disciples and their wives and children accompanied us out of the city, and there on the beach we knelt to **pray**.”

Read: Acts 22:17

(During his defense after being arrested.)

“When I returned to Jerusalem and was **praying** at the temple, I fell into a trance ...”

Read: Acts 26:29

(For them to come to know God.)

Paul replied, "Short time or long--I **pray** God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become **what I am**, except for these chains."

Read: Acts 28:8

(Malta - just prior to his arrival in Rome; Publius' (chief official) father)

"His father was sick in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him and, after **prayer**, placed his hands on him and healed him."

We can see from these 11 passages that Paul was a man committed to praying. We must ask ourselves, "How am I practicing prayer?" In the big things and in the small, "Do I commit them to the Lord in prayer?"

II. Paul's Pattern Of Prayer

(How did he pray? What did the Apostle pray for?)

Read: Romans 1:8-10

(Thanksgiving; God's will to be done.)

"First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world. ⁹ God, whom I serve with my whole heart in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you ¹⁰ in my *prayers* at all times; and I *pray* that now at last by **God's will** the way may be opened for me to come to you."

Read: Romans 10:1

(Salvation; writing to Gentile Christians.)

"Brothers, my heart's desire and *prayer* to God for the Israelites is that they may be **saved**."

Read: I Corinthians 14:14,15

(We should pray in the Spirit & with our minds.)

"For if I *pray* in a tongue, my spirit *prays*, but my mind is unfruitful. So what shall I do? I will *pray* with my spirit, but I will also *pray* with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind."

Read: II Corinthians 13:5-7,9

(Discernment to do God's Word & for perfection.)

"Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you — unless, of course, you fail the test? And I trust that you will discover that we have not failed the test. Now we *pray* to God that you will not do anything **wrong** ... We are glad whenever we are weak but you are strong; and our *prayer* is for your perfection."

Read: Ephesians 1:16-19

(Wisdom, Revelation, Know Jesus, Power)

"I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my *prayers*. ¹⁷ I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of **wisdom** and **revelation**, so that you may **know him** better. ¹⁸ I *pray* also that the eyes of your heart may be **enlightened** in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and his incomparably great **power** for us who believe. That **power** is like the working of his mighty strength."

Read: Ephesians 3:16-19

(Strength, Love, Filling of the Spirit)

“I *pray* that out of his glorious riches he may **strengthen** you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I *pray* that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹ and to **know this love** that surpasses knowledge--that you may be **filled** to the measure of all the fullness of God.”

Read: Philippians 1:4-6

(Spiritual Growth)

“In all my *prayers* for all of you, I always *pray* with joy ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, ⁶ being confident of this, that he who began a **good work** in you will **carry it on to completion** until the day of Christ Jesus.”

Read: Philippians 1:9-11

(Knowledge, Depth, Insight, Discernment, Purity, Fruitful)

“And this is my *prayer*: that your love may abound more and more in **knowledge** and **depth of insight**, ¹⁰ so that you may be able to **discern** what is best and may be **pure** and blameless until the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the **fruit** of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ--to the glory and praise of God.”

Read: Colossians 1:3-4, 9-12

(Understanding, Endurance, Patience, Thankfulness)

“We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we *pray* for you, ⁴ because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints ... ⁹ For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped *praying* for you and asking God to fill you with the **knowledge of his will** through all spiritual **wisdom** and **understanding**. ¹⁰ And we *pray* this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing **fruit** in every good work, growing in the **knowledge** of God, ¹¹ being **strengthened** with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have **great endurance** and **patience**, and joyfully ¹² giving **thanks** to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.”

Read: I Thessalonians 1:2,3

(Continued Faithfulness In Serving God)

“We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our *prayers*. ³ We continually remember before our God and Father your **work** produced by faith, your **labor** prompted by love, and your **endurance** inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Read: I Thessalonians 3:10

(Supply Spiritual Growth)

“Night and day we *pray* most earnestly that we may see you again and **supply** what is lacking in your faith.”

Read: II Thessalonians 1:11,12

(Fulfillment of God’s Calling, Christ Glorified By Their Life)

“With this in mind, we constantly *pray* for you, that our God may count you worthy of his **calling**, and that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith. ¹² We *pray* this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be **glorified** in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Read: II Timothy 1:3 (Last letter written by Paul; personal prayer for Timothy)

“I thank God, whom I serve, as my forefathers did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember **you** in my *prayers*.”

Read: Philemon 4-6 (Soul Winners & Understanding)

“I always thank my God as I remember you in my *prayers*, because I hear about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints. I *pray* that you may be **active in sharing your faith**, so that you will have a full **understanding** of every good thing we have in Christ.”

Notice that there isn't a lot of time spent on asking God to heal aunt Lois. Now there is nothing wrong with praying for aunt Lois. What we need to keep in mind is that we may spend too much time praying for people to be *comfortable* and not enough time praying for people to be *spiritually mature*. We should pray for people's *comfort* but we should also pray for their *completeness*!

We can see from these 14 passages exactly what Paul prayed for. What do you spend your time praying for? Who do you pray for? Why are you praying for the people you are praying for and why are you asking God for those things?

The final area to examine answers the question, “When others ask what they can be praying for you for, what do you say?” How did Paul answer that question?

III. Paul's Petitions For Prayer

Read: Romans 15:30-33 (Deliverance, favor with the people.)

“I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by *praying* to God for me. *Pray* that I may be **rescued** from the unbelievers in Judea and that my **service** in Jerusalem may be **acceptable** to the saints there, so that by God's will I may **come** to you with joy and together with you be refreshed. The God of peace be with you all. Amen.”

Read: Ephesians 6:19,20 (Effective evangelism!)

“*Pray* also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will **fearlessly make known** the mystery of the gospel,²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains. *Pray* that I may **declare it fearlessly**, as I should.”

Read: Colossians 4:3,4 (Clear proclamation & receptivity.)

“And *pray* for us, too, that God may **open a door** for our message, so that we may **proclaim** the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. *Pray* that I may **proclaim** it clearly, as I should.”

Read: I Thessalonians 5:25 (General request that included his companions Silas & Timothy.)

“Brothers, *pray* for us.”

Read: II Thessalonians 3:1,2

(Ministry growth & deliverance.)

“Finally, brothers, *pray* for us that the message of the Lord may **spread rapidly** and be honored, just as it was with you. And *pray* that we may be **delivered** from wicked and evil men, for not everyone has faith.”

We can see from these 5 passages exactly what Paul requested when he asked for prayer.

Passages To Pray For Others

“Lord, I want to give thanks for _____ as I remember **him/her** in my *prayers*. I want to ask You to give _____ the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that **he/she** may know You better. I *pray* also that the eyes of **his/her** heart may be enlightened in order that **he/she** may know the hope to which You have called **him/her**. May _____ know the riches of Your glorious inheritance. May **he/she** know Your incomparably great power in every area of **his/her** life for I know that the power You offer is like the working of Your mighty strength. In Jesus’ name, Amen.” (Eph. 1:16-19)

“Lord, I *pray* that out of Your glorious riches You may strengthen _____ with power through Your Spirit in **his/her** inner being, so that You, Jesus, may dwell in **his/her** heart through faith. And I *pray* that _____ may be rooted and established in love. May **he/she** have the power to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ. May _____ begin to know Your love that surpasses knowledge and may **he/she** be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. In Jesus’ name, Amen.” (Eph. 3:16-19)

“Lord, I *pray* that _____’s love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that **he/she** may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ. May **he/she** be filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through You, Jesus, to the glory and praise of God. In Jesus’ name, Amen.” (Phil. 1:9-11)

“Lord, I’m thankful for _____’s faith in You. Thank you for **his/her** love for all the believers both here at RCC and those who around the world. Lord, I ask you to fill **him/her** with the knowledge of Your will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. May **he/she** live a life worthy of You. May _____ please You in every way. May **he/she** bear fruit in every good work. May **he/she** grow in the knowledge of You. May **he/she** be strengthened with all power according to Your glorious might so that **he/she** may have great endurance and patience. May _____ joyfully give thanks to You because you have qualified **him/her** to share in Your inheritance in the kingdom of light. In Jesus’ name, Amen.” (Col. 1:3-4, 9-12)

Feel free to pray in additional ways. As well, pray more than one prayer for each other. The idea here is not that these prayers form some magical formula but they do teach some of the fundamentals of effective prayer.

“May He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 1:4-6)