

Prayers of the Saints: History of Prayer in the Bible – the New Testament

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SCRIPTURE

Ex 30:7-8: And Aaron shall burn fragrant incense on it [*the altar of incense*]. Every morning when he dresses the lamps he shall burn it, and when Aaron sets up the lamps at twilight, he shall burn it, a regular incense offering before the LORD throughout your generations.

Mal 1:11: For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts.

Rev 5:8: And when He [*the Lamb*] had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.



CORPORATE PRAYER* IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

I. New and Improved

With the salvation that came in Christ Jesus...

How is prayer the same as in the Old Testament?

How was prayer transformed in the New Testament?

II. Chronology

A. Zechariah (Luke 1:8-10)

B. Anna (Luke 2:36-38)

C. Jesus

1. Jesus prays (Luke 3:21-22 – also see side bar)
2. Jesus teaches about prayer
 - a. The Disciples' prayer (Matt 6:5-15, Luke 11:1-13)
 - b. Specifics
 - For Harvest Workers (Matt 9:38, Luke 10:2)

Prayer saturates Jesus' life, but prayer for Jesus is no mere discipline. It's how the fully human Jesus does life in step with the Spirit. Jesus receives the gift of the Spirit while he is praying. "When Jesus also had been baptized and *was praying*, the heavens were opened, and the *Holy Spirit descended* on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, 'You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased'" (Luke 3:21-22).

As Jesus prays, "the heavens [are] opened." Jesus is the interface between heaven and earth, the place where divine-human communication happens. Notice the power train of *prayer* ---> *Spirit* ---> *Jesus* ---> *power*. Prayer leads to the descent of the Spirit, which confirms the Father's pleasure in his beloved Son. At Jesus' baptism... we glimpse the Trinity in conversation. That's what the drive-train is—a divine prayer meeting.

—Paul Miller, *A Praying Church*

* Prayer in Greek (NT)

To pray (*eukomy* & *pro-eukomy*): to desire something, with the implication of a pious wish — 'to desire, to wish.' To speak to or to make requests of God — 'to pray, to speak to God, to ask God for. In some languages there are a number of different terms used for prayer depending upon the nature of the content, for example, requests for material blessing, pleas for spiritual help, intercession for others, thanksgiving, and praise. There may also be important distinctions on the basis of urgency and need. The most generic expression for prayer may simply be 'to speak to God.' It is normally best to avoid an expression which means primarily 'to recite.' —*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* (Louw & Nida).

- For those who abuse or persecute you (Luke 6:28)
- For coming times of tribulation (Luke 21:36)

3. Prays for Disciples and Believers (John 17)

D. Disciples (see side bar too)

1. Pre-Pentecost (Acts 1:14)
2. Post-Pentecost (4:23-31)

E. The gathered church (Acts 2:42)

F. Apostles, disciples, and elders

1. For ministry (Acts 6:2-4)
2. Paul's prayers for the Believers and churches
3. Author of Hebrews (Heb 13:18)
4. James (Jam 5:13-18)
5. John (1 John 5:13-17)
6. Jude (Jude 1:20)

III. Praying in Jesus' Name

What does it mean to pray in Jesus' Name, and how should we use it?

IV. Praying together through the Lord's Prayer

LEADER: Our Father, Who art in heaven...

Let us praise the Lord that He is our Father. He has adopted us as His children, and we belong to Him through a covenant.

LEADER: Hallowed be Your Name.

Let us ask for the Name of the Lord to be held in honor. Let us ask Him to show the holiness of His great Name through us, the church.

After his resurrection, Jesus gets inside his disciples: "He breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'" (John 20:22). Immediately, we see Jesus's Spiritual presence. After his ascension, the disciples lead a ten-day prayer meeting: "All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer" (Acts 1:14). Just weeks before, even with Jesus right next to them, they couldn't pray. Now with Jesus on the inside, they can't stop praying. The Spirit of Jesus doesn't just respond to our prayers; he prompts us to pray.

On the tenth day of their prayer meeting, the Spirit descends "like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting" (Acts 2:2). Peter explains what is going on: "Having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he [Jesus] has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing" (Acts 2:33). What Jesus got at the resurrection (the Spirit), he now gifts to his church.

Now filled with the Spirit of Jesus, Peter preaches about "this Jesus... [whom] you crucified and killed... God raised him up." As a result, "about three thousand souls" are saved (Acts 2:23-24, 41). You can see the power train at work: *prayer* for ten days ---> descent of the *Spirit* ---> preaching about *Jesus* ---> *power* in conversion. Here's the point of the power train: We don't get the Spirit in the abstract. The Spirit brings Christ to us. So now, what Jesus has done individually in prayer, the disciples do corporately as the Spirit continually makes Jesus present. The praying person has become the praying community. Jesus has gotten inside.

—Paul Miller, *A Praying Church*

Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. —John 14:13

It didn't take long for my children to finish my prayers. Whether by the bedside or at the dinner table, all I had to say was "in Jesus' name..." and by two years old they could say "Amen!" Most Christians conclude their prayers "in Jesus' name", but we rarely think of this little habit as a means of giving God glory.

When we ask for good things in Jesus' name, God gets the glory. This doesn't mean God will give us more grandchildren, a house with 5000 sq. ft., or even healthy bodies just by tacking "Jesus" to the end of our prayers. It means that when we pray according to his revealed will in Scripture— asking for things like faith, godliness, and the Holy Spirit in Jesus' name—God hears, answers, and gets glory. If the kids in nursery started saying "By the name of Jacob [my five year old], give me that ball," and it actually worked, I would get glory through my son. I would beam with pride (and arrogance in my case) as kids handed over their toys at the invocation of my son's name. In the same way, the Father is glorified when we pray in the name of his Son.

—Kevin DeYoung, *Glory of God: In Jesus' Name*

LEADER: Your Kingdom come.

Let us pray for the Lord's Kingdom —His reign and rule— to come and manifest itself in our lives, in our families, in the church, and in the world.

LEADER: Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Let us ask for a passion to see the Father's will accomplished in and through us. Let us praise Him that He is directing all things to their appointed end.

LEADER: Give us this day our daily bread.

Let us ask for the things that we need as a church. Let us also ask for the empowering of the Holy Spirit, Who is our "heavenly bread."

LEADER: And forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Let us confess our sins to the Lord as a culture and as a church. Let us also ask that God's grace and forgiveness would be saturated in our church community.

LEADER: And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

Let us ask the Father to guard us from the enemies temptations and at the same time to crave holiness and purity.

LEADER: For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever.

ALL: In Christ's Name, Amen.