

THE PRAYERS IN THE BIBLE

G. Michael Cocoris

THE PRAYERS IN THE BIBLE

G. Michael Cocoris

© 2014 by G. Michael Cocoris

All rights reserved. This publication may not be reproduced (in whole or in part, edited, or revised) in any way, form, or means, including, but not limited to electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or any kind of storage and retrieval system *for sale*, except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the written permission of G. Michael Cocoris, 2016 Euclid #20, Santa Monica, CA 90405, michaelcocoris@gmail.com, or his appointed representatives. Permission is hereby granted, however, for the reproduction of the whole or parts of the whole without changing the content in any way for *free distribution*, provided all copies contain this copyright notice in its entirety. Permission is also granted to charge for the cost of copying.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Version ®, Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

GENESIS.....	1
EXODUS.....	2
LEVITICUS.....	4
NUMBERS.....	4
DEUTERONOMY.....	6
JOSHUA.....	7
JUDGES.....	7
RUTH.....	9
1 SAMUEL.....	9
2 SAMUEL.....	10
1 KINGS.....	11
2 KINGS.....	12
1 CHRONICLES.....	13
2 CHRONICLES.....	13
EZRA.....	14
NEHEMIAH.....	14
ESTHER.....	15
JOB.....	15
PSALMS.....	16
PROVERBS.....	32
ECCLESIASTES.....	32
THE SONG OF SOLOMON.....	32
ISAIAH.....	33
JEREMIAH.....	34
LAMENTATIONS.....	36
EZEKIEL.....	37
DANIEL.....	37
HOSEA.....	38
JOEL.....	38
AMOS.....	39
OBADIAH.....	39
JONAH.....	39
MICAH.....	40
NAHUM.....	40
HABAKKUK.....	40
ZEPHANIAH.....	41
HAGGAI.....	41
ZECHARIAH.....	41
MALACHI.....	42
MATTHEW.....	42
MARK.....	46
LUKE.....	47
JOHN.....	48
ACTS.....	49
ROMANS.....	50
1 CORINTHIANS.....	51
2 CORINTHIANS.....	51
GALATIANS.....	52

EPHESIANS	52
PHILIPPIANS.....	53
COLOSSIANS	54
1 THESSALONIANS	55
2 THESSALONIANS	55
1 TIMOTHY.....	57
2 TIMOTHY.....	57
TITUS	58
PHILEMON	58
HEBREWS.....	59
JAMES	59
1 PETER.....	59
2 PETER.....	60
1 JOHN	60
2 JOHN	61
3 JOHN	61
JUDE	61
REVELATION	61

THE PRAYERS IN THE BIBLE

The Bible not only contains many references to prayer, it records actual prayers, which it does for our learning (Rom. 15:4). The following list of recorded prayers in the Bible is not exhaustive. It was compiled by starting with the list given in *All the Prayers of the Bible* by Herbert Lockyer. Then his verses *about* prayer instead of verses that are actual prayers were omitted and prayers not on his list were added. All the comments are those of G. Michael Cocoris.

Genesis

1. Abraham was a man of prayer; He called on the name of the Lord (Gen. 13:4). One of his recorded prayers is a question. He asked, “Lord GOD, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house *is* Eliezer of Damascus?” (Gen. 15:2). Twenty-five years before, God had promised Abraham a son and at this late date, the promise had not been fulfilled. So Abraham is asking if an alternative plan will do! God, of course, says, “No.” The lesson is God’s delays are not God’s denials. So, keep praying (have you read Lk. 18:2-8 lately?).

2. God promised Abraham a son by his wife Sarah. Abraham went outside the will of God and had a son by Hagar, Sarah’s maid. According to the laws of the day that son, Ishmael, would be Abraham’s legal heir, but that was not God’s plan. Nevertheless, Abraham prayed, “Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!” (Gen. 17:18). To “live before” means “to have his favor.” This is simply a father asking God to bless his son, but given the circumstances, it is also an example of God’s great grace. Abraham’s prayer reminds me of what Paul said, “Let your request be known” (Phil. 4:6).

3. One of the most interesting prayers in the Bible is Abraham’s intercessory prayer for Sodom. You know the story. Abraham bargains with God, starting with asking God to spare Sodom if he could find 50 righteous people and working his way down to ten (Gen. 18:23-33). Of the many lessons we can learn from this prayer, two jump off the page: 1) Abraham humbly came before God. He prayed, “Indeed now, I who *am but* dust and ashes have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord” (Gen. 18:27). We must humble ourselves before the Lord (1 Pet. 5:6). Robert Browning calls it the “stoop of the soul.” 2) Abraham interceded for others. Lockyer calls that “the saint’s sweat of soul.” Instead of just asking something for yourself today, humbly ask God to deliver someone you know from the judgment of a righteous God.

4. God promised to make Abraham a great nation (Gen. 12:2), which means that Abraham would have a son, who would have a son, and so on. God fulfilled His promise to Abraham by giving him a son named Isaac. God provided a wife for Isaac, but for twenty years, she was childless. So “Isaac pleaded with the LORD for his wife, because she *was* barren; and the LORD granted his plea, and Rebekah his wife conceived” (Gen. 25:21). This is more than a man asking God for a child; it is a man asking God to do what God had promised He would do. The lesson here for us is that the Word of God tells us what God desires of us, but knowing the will of God and being able to do the will of God are two different things. Once we know the will of God, we need to pray for the grace of God to do it. When we do that, we discover that we can do all things (concerning the will of God) through Christ, who gives us the strength (the power of God; see Phil. 4:13).

5. By deceiving his father, Jacob stole the birthright that belonged to his brother Esau. Then he fled. Years later on his return to meet his brother, Jacob heard that Esau was coming to meet him with 400 men (Gen. 32:6). Jacob was “greatly afraid and distressed” (Gen. 32:7). So he prayed. He reminded God that He told him to return (Gen. 32:9). In other words, he was doing the will of God. He readily admitted that he was not worthy of God’s mercy or the truth God had revealed to him (Gen. 32:10). Then he requested, “Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he come and attack me *and* the mother with the children” (Gen. 32:11). The Psalmist did the same thing. He prayed, “Bow down Your ear to me, Deliver me speedily; be my rock of refuge, a fortress of defense to save me” (Ps. 31:2). What fear do you face today? Make sure you are doing God’s will and seek God’s protection. (Stay tuned for more on the Jacob story.)

6. On the way home to meet his brother, from whom he had stolen the inheritance years before, Jacob wrestled with the Lord all night (Gen. 32:24). In the process, the Lord “touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob’s hip was out of joint” (Gen. 32:25). Jacob told the Lord, “I will not let You go unless You bless me!” (Gen. 32:26). The Lord changed Jacob’s name to Israel because he “struggled with God and with men” and “prevailed” (Gen. 32:28). (The name “Israel” literally means “struggles with God.”) Jacob prevailed with men because he prevailed with God. Jacob’s conclusion was, “[I] have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved” (Gen. 32:30). Some situations are so serious that we need to “wrestle” with the Lord. Jesus told the apostles, “This kind [of demon] does not go out except by prayer and fasting” (Mt. 17:21). Some prayers are a single shot to heaven; others are an all-day, all-night “struggle” with the Lord. It works. Jacob’s experience has been called the “efficacy of earnest, fervent, agonizing prayer in distressed circumstances.”

Exodus

7. Have you ever found something in the Scripture that God wanted you to do, but you did not feel you could do it (love, forgive, witness, etc.)? What did you do at that point? When that happened to Moses, he prayed. When God informed Moses that he was to go Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt (Ex. 3:10), Moses replied, “Who *am* I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?” (Ex. 3:11). Moses felt inadequate and told God how he felt. God told Moses, “I will certainly be with you” (Ex. 3:12). Moses came up with so many objections, the Lord got angry with him (Ex. 4:14). Finally, Moses went to see Pharaoh (Ex. 5:1) and as they say, “The rest is history.” It is okay to feel inadequate. Just make sure you tell the Lord how you feel and listen to what He has to say. God’s answer to Moses and Paul was, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9).

8. We usually think of prayer as praise and petition. Moses used prayer to complain! Get a load of this: “So Moses returned to the LORD and said, ‘Lord, why have You brought trouble on this people? Why *is* it You have sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done evil to this people; neither have You delivered Your people at all’” (Ex. 5:22-23). Whoa! Moses had to learn that following the Lord does not always result in the immediate success of your plans. God operates on His timetable, not ours. So, when you have a complaint, start by telling the Lord how you feel. When you feel God has not come through for you, let Him know. When you

feel God has not done what He promised to do, remind Him. Oh, by the way, also remember that in response to Moses, God reminded him, “I am the Lord” (Ex. 6:2, 6, 8).

9. During the plagues in Egypt, “Moses went out of the city from Pharaoh and spread out his hands to the LORD; then the thunder and the hail ceased, and the rain was not poured on the earth” (Ex. 9:33). Moses stretched out his empty hand toward heaven, signifying his need and the Lord’s ability to fill it. Charles Wesley captured the idea with the words, “Father, I stretch my hands to Thee, no other help I know; if Thou withdraw Thyself from me, Ah! Whither shall I go.” Take your need to the Lord; He is the One with the ability to meet it.

10. One of the most memorable scenes of prayer in the Bible occurred during the battle with Amalek. Here is the story: “So Joshua did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses’ hands *became* heavy; so they took a stone and put *it* under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword” (Ex. 17:10-13). This scene is packed with principles of prayer. Prayer is needed to prevail in battle. Prayer is hard work, especially prevailing in prayer in the midst of a battle. Those who pray need support as well as those who do battle. The church does not win more spiritual battles because those doing battle do not have prayer support, and the few who do pray do not have the support of others helping them pray. We need to pray that those doing the work will prevail and those doing the praying will persist. Prayer is the key to prevailing in battle. It was “the weaponless hand of prayer,” not the weapons in the hands of the soldiers, that determined the success of the battle.

11. While Moses was on the Mount receiving the Law from the living God, Israel was in the valley worshipping a dead idol. The Lord was not happy. He said to Moses, “I have seen this people, and indeed it *is* a stiff-necked people! Now, therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation” (Ex. 32:9-10). Moses was not pleased either. Nevertheless, he “pleaded” with the Lord, “LORD, why does Your wrath burn hot against Your people whom You have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians speak, and say, ‘He brought them out to harm them, to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth’? Turn from Your fierce wrath, and relent from this harm to Your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self, and said to them, ‘I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of I give to your descendants, and they shall inherit *it* forever’” (Ex. 32:11-13). Notice, Moses did not just ask the Lord to spare them, he gave the Lord three reasons why He should not judge His people: 1) These are Your people, whom You saved with power. 2) If you destroy Your children, the Egyptians will mock You. 3) You made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In short, Moses based his plea on God’s work, God’s reputation, and God’s promise. Instead of just making a request, we should “reason” with the Lord based on His work, His wants, and His Word. It works. “So the LORD relented from the harm which He said He would do to His people” (Ex. 32:14).

12. When Moses returned from the Mount, he discovered the children of Israel had made a “god of gold” (Ex. 32:31). Realizing the seriousness of their sin, he prayed, “Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold! Yet now, if You will forgive their sin; but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written” (Ex. 32:31-32). Being blotted out of God’s book is a reference to physical death. It comes from the practice of keeping a registry of citizens and removing the names of those who die in judgment (see Ps. 69:28;

Isa. 4:3; so Unger, etc.; see also Num. 11:15). Of course, the Lord did not punish Moses for their sin (Ex. 32:33). He punished the children of Israel themselves (Ex. 32:34-35). The point is that Moses loved the children of Israel so much that he was willing to die for them. When we care for others, who are in sin, we intercede for them and when we care deeply, we are willing to take their punishment. Let us care for and intercede for other, even those who are in grievous sin.

13. How would you like to know the Lord? After Paul had been saved for more than twenty-five years, the passion of his heart was “that I may know Him” (Phil. 3:10). That was also the desire of Moses. So he prayed, “Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight” (Ex. 33:13) and “Please, show me Your glory” (Ex. 33:18). All of us need to make knowing the Lord the passion of our soul and the prayer of our heart. Notice that Moses prayed, show me Your “way” that I may know “You.” As we get to know others by watching their ways, so we get to know the Lord by watching the way He does things. That is why we need to know His Word. As we learn about God’s will, wisdom, and ways as recorded in His Word, we get to understand how He works. We get to know Him. The Lord told Moses, “You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live” (Ex. 33:20), but the Lord did allow Moses to see His glory (Ex. 33:22) and the Lord proclaimed that He was “merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children’s children to the third and the fourth generation” (Ex. 34:6-7). When you get to know the Lord, one of the great things you learn is that He is gracious as well as full of truth and righteousness.

Leviticus

In our journey through the Bible to note the prayers in the Bible, we have come to Leviticus. Leviticus does not contain a recorded prayer, but the burning of incense (Lev. 16:12-13) is a symbol of prayer (Rev. 8:4) and praying is mentioned in Leviticus 9: “Then Aaron lifted his hand toward the people, blessed them, and came down from offering the sin offering, the burnt offering, and peace offerings” (Lev. 9:22). As priests (1 Pet. 2:9), we should ask God to bless His children. For example, “Lord, bless our church today as we meet together to sing, pray, listen to Your Word, and fellowship with one another.”

Numbers

14. One of the most well-known prayers in the Old Testament is used as a benediction: “The LORD bless you and keep you. The LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you. The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace” (Num. 6:24-26). In each of three sentences, the subject, “the Lord,” is followed by two verbs, the second of which expands the first. The threefold repetition of the word “Lord” implies the Trinity. The prayer is that the Lord would bless us by protecting us, that His smile would shine like a light on us, showering His favor on us, and that He would pay attention to us, giving us peace. The Hebrew word translated “peace” (shalom) is a rich word that is more than the absence of war. It means “completeness, soundness, welfare, peace, tranquility” (BDB). One authority on Hebrew words says it means “completeness, wholeness, harmony, fulfillment,” the idea being “unimpaired relationships with others and fulfillment in one’s undertakings” (TWOT). The Lord wants to provide His protection

from evil, His favor, and His well-being to His children. As our Father, He wants to look at us, smile and bless us. Wow! Now, go have a good day, knowing the Lord wants to bless you with His good gifts.

15. As the children of Israel traveled through the wilderness, Moses prayed. “So it was, whenever the ark set out, that Moses said: ‘Rise up, O LORD! Let Your enemies be scattered, And let those who hate You flee before You.’ And when it rested, he said: ‘Return, O LORD, to the many thousands of Israel’” (Num. 10:35-36). As they traveled, the Ark of the Covenant led the way. In the morning, when it “set out,” Moses prayed. In the evening, when it “rested,” Moses prayed. We should emulate the example of Moses. As we travel, we should begin each day’s journey seeking God’s protection and at the close of the day, we should gratefully acknowledge His good providential care over us. As I have traveled, I have asked God for “journeying mercies.” This also applies to each day’s “journey” thought life. Before I get out of bed, I commit all the activities of that day to the Lord. I highly recommend Moses’ practice of praying for protection—daily.

16. What do you do when your concern for people become a heavy burden? Here is what Moses did: “So Moses said to the LORD, ‘Why have You afflicted Your servant? And why have I not found favor in Your sight, that You have laid the burden of all these people on me? Did I conceive all these people? Did I beget them that You should say to me, “Carry them in your bosom, as a guardian carries a nursing child,” to the land which You swore to their fathers? Where am I to get meat to give to all these people? For they weep all over me, saying, “Give us meat, that we may eat.” I am not able to bear all these people alone, because the burden *is* too heavy for me. If You treat me like this, please kill me here and now; if I have found favor in Your sight; and do not let me see my wretchedness!’” (Num. 11:11-15). When the burden of *people* became so great that he did not think he could take it any longer, Moses prayed. When deeply-felt concern for your young children, elderly parents, close friends, et al. becomes an unbearable burden, cast all your care on the Lord; He cares too (1 Pet. 5:7). In the case of Moses, the Lord provided support in the form of others to shoulder the load. I do not know what He will do in your case, but I do know we should take our unbearable burdens to the Lord.

17. When Moses’ sister spoke against Moses (Num. 12:1), the Lord struck her with leprosy (Num. 12:10). Sin can cause weakness, sickness, and even premature physical death (1 Cor. 11:30). Moses’ response was to pray for his sister to be healed. “So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, ‘Please heal her, O God, I pray!’” (Num. 12:13). Believers can intercede for sinning saints. The Apostle John writes, “If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death” (1 Jn. 5:16). The Lord answered Moses’ prayer (Num. 12:14-15) and He will answer our prayers of intercession (1 Jn. 5:16).

18. Again and again, Moses interceded for rebellious Israel. In Numbers 14, he is at it again. When the Lord threatened to destroy Israel and start over with Moses (Num. 14:12), “Moses said to the LORD: ‘Then the Egyptians will hear *it*, for by Your might You brought these people up from among them, and they will tell *it* to the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that You, LORD, *are* among these people; that You, LORD, are seen face to face and Your cloud stands above them, and You go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night. Now *if* You kill these people as one man, then the nations which have heard of Your fame will speak, saying, Because the LORD was not able to bring this people to the land which He swore to give them, therefore He killed them in the wilderness. And now, I pray, let the power of my LORD be great, just as You have spoken, saying, LORD is longsuffering and abundant in mercy,

forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He by no means clears *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth *generation*. Pardon the iniquity of this people, I pray, according to the greatness of Your mercy, just as You have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now” (Num. 14:13-19). Instead of taking God up on His offer to start over with him, Moses intercedes for Israel based on God’s reputation and character. Moses put the good of others and the glory of God before any concern for himself. When we have the heart of Moses, we will have the prayer ministry of Moses. By the way, “Then the LORD said: ‘I have pardoned, according to your word’” (Num. 14:20).

19. Unbelievable! Two hundred and fifty leaders rebelled against Moses! In rebelling against God’s chosen leader, they were rebelling against God (Num. 16:11). Moses challenged them to let the Lord decide who was right and in anger put the issue before the Lord saying, “Do not respect their offering. I have not taken one donkey from them, nor have I hurt one of them” (Num. 16:15). The Lord was so angry, He wanted to destroy the whole nation (Num. 16:21). Again Moses interceded for the people (Num. 16:22). The Lord spared the nation, but He destroyed the guilty. In Moses, we have an illustration of selfless service, righteous indignation, and persistent intercession. May we be as faithful as Moses in service, righteous anger and prayer.

20. In Numbers 27, there is the mention of a prayer without recording the prayer and there is another prayer that is recorded. When people came to Moses with a complaint, “Moses brought their case before the LORD” (Num 27:5). The recorded prayer is for a new leader. “Moses spoke to the LORD, saying: ‘Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, who may go out before them and go in before them, who may lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the LORD may not be like sheep which have no shepherd’” (Num. 27:15-17). Moses did not play king-maker. He prayed for God to provide a leader, who would be a true shepherd to the flock. Again, Moses is praying for the needs of others, needs they talked about and needs they had not thought about yet.

Deuteronomy

21. Throughout the book of Numbers, Moses repeatedly prayed for others. His first recorded prayer in Deuteronomy is for himself: “Then I pleaded with the LORD at that time, saying: ‘O Lord GOD, You have begun to show Your servant Your greatness and Your mighty hand, for what god *is there* in heaven or on earth who can do *anything* like Your works and Your mighty deeds. I pray, let me cross over and see the good land beyond the Jordan, those pleasant mountains, and Lebanon’” (Deut. 3:23-25). The Lord said, “No.” What happened? Earlier, the incessant complaining of the people provoked Moses to anger. In anger, Moses disobeyed the Lord; he struck the rock, instead of speaking to it as he was told to do. As a result of his sin, the Lord would not allow Moses to enter the land. The great lesson here is: Deal with your sin (anger), because it can hinder your prayer life (Ps. 66:18)!

22. In Deuteronomy 9, Moses rehearses one of his prior intercessions, “Therefore I prayed to the LORD, and said: ‘O Lord GOD, do not destroy Your people and Your inheritance whom You have redeemed through Your greatness, whom You have brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand. Remember Your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; do not look on the stubbornness of this people, or on their wickedness or their sin, lest the land from which You brought us should say, “because the LORD was not able to bring them to the land which He promised them, and because He hated them, He has brought them out to kill them in the wilderness.” Yet they *are* Your people

and Your inheritance, whom You brought out by Your mighty power and by Your outstretched arm” (Deut. 9:26-29). The Lord answered that prayer; He did not judge Israel because of the prayer of Moses. One of the greatest encouragements to keep praying is remembering how God has answered your prayers in the past. So take a moment to remember before you continue in prayer today.

23. Moses instructs City leaders what to do if a dead body were found and the killer was unknown (Deut. 21:1-9). Having killed a heifer as an atonement for the pollution of the city and having washed their hands, they were to pray, “Our hands have not shed this blood, nor have our eyes seen *it*. Provide atonement, O LORD, for Your people Israel, whom You have redeemed, and do not lay innocent blood to the charge of Your people Israel” (Deut. 21:7-8). These instructions do not apply to us today, but in that situation, God expected politicians to pray for the people! Paul tells us to pray for our political leaders (1 Tim. 2:1-2). Let us pray *for* our political leaders and pray that *they* learn to pray.

24. Deuteronomy 26 contains a long prayer that reviews God’s past blessings (Deut. 26:5-9), recites Israel’s gifts to the Lord and to others (Deut. 26:10-14) and ends with a request, “Look down from Your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless Your people Israel” (Deut. 26:15a). Having been blessed, we should give to the Lord and others and pray for God to bless others. When you pray today, ask God to bless His people, especially those at your church.

Joshua

25. As they entered the land, the children of Israel were victorious at Jericho, but they were defeated at Ai. Not knowing why, Joshua poured out his disappointment to the Lord: “Alas, Lord GOD, why have You brought this people over the Jordan at all; to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? Oh, that we had been content, and dwelt on the other side of the Jordan! O Lord, what shall I say when Israel turns its back before its enemies? For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear *it*, and surround us, and cut off our name from the earth. Then what will You do for Your great name?” (Josh. 7:7-9). The Lord revealed to Joshua that the defeat was because of the sin of Achan. The defeat was not because God failed the people but because one person failed God. The sin of one caused the defeat of the whole group! The prayer lesson is, like Joshua, we should take our defeat and disappointment to the Lord.

Judges

26. “Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass that the children of Israel asked the LORD, saying, ‘Who shall be first to go up for us against the Canaanites to fight against them?’” (Judges 1:1). When Joshua died, the people prayed for God’s direction in selecting a new leader. Likewise, we should pray for God’s wisdom in leadership selection (voting) and for His wisdom in our daily lives.

27. As a result of a military victory, Deborah said, “Bless the LORD!” (Judges 5:2) and “I will sing praise to the LORD” (Judges 5:3). Judges 5:4-31 records the victory song of Deborah and Barak. The hymn praises God for His triumph over the Canaanites. It is a reminder that we should thank the Lord for our blessings and sing His praises.

28. When God gave Gideon a command, Gideon asked for a sign, saying, “If now I have found favor in Your sight, then show me a sign that it is You who talk with me” (Judges 6:17). God

answered that prayer, but then Gideon asked God for a sign a second time (Judges 6:36-37) and third time (Judges 6:39)! In Gideon's case, God gave a sign, but that is certainly not the norm. Nowhere in Scripture are we instructed to ask God for a sign. Everywhere in Scripture, we are told to take God at His Word. When you find commands in the Word, I suggest that you ask for God's strength to do them, not for a sign.

29. The sad saga of the book of Judges can be summarized in the words "sin, servitude, supplication and salvation." Departure from the Lord resulted in defeat. Desperately crying out to the Lord resulted in deliverance. When the children of Israel cried out to the LORD, "We have sinned against You, because we have both forsaken our God and served the Baals!" (Judges 10:10) and "We have sinned! Do to us whatever seems best to You; only deliver us this day, we pray" (Judges 10:15), God delivered them. Suffering is often the stimulus to self-examination. In calamity, we become conscious of our sin. Confession results in cleansing (1 Jn. 1:9). In your prayers today, confess any known sin (see Gal. 5:19-21 for a list to consider). Then, seek the Lord concerning your current calamity.

30. One of the strangest prayers in the Bible is the vow of Jephthah: "And Jephthah made a vow to the LORD, and said, 'If You will indeed deliver the people of Ammon into my hands, then it will be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the people of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering'" (Judges 11:30-31). In an attempt to manipulate the Lord, Jephthah made a faithless, reckless vow. He tried to bargain with God. As a result of his vow, when the victorious Jephthah returned home, his daughter was dedicated to the service of God in a life of celibacy (Judges 11:39). This is an example of what not to do. Don't bargain with God. Bow your head and heart in prayer, trusting the Lord to fulfill His Word, not your foolish wish.

31. The Lord told a childless woman she was going to have a son. She told her husband, a man named Manoah, and he prayed, "O my Lord, please let the Man of God whom You sent come to us again and teach us what we shall do for the child who will be born" (Judges 13:8). Parents should ask the Lord for wisdom in rearing their children before they are born. This may not apply to you at the moment, but it is good to know about this verse, so you can share it with someone to whom it does apply. By the way, the name of the son was Samson. Now you know the rest of the story!

32. The story is well known. Defeated, captured, blind Samson is brought into the pagan temple of the Philistines. He positions himself between the pillars that support the temple and prays, "O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray! Strengthen me, I pray, just this once, O God, that I may with one *blow* take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes!" (Judges 16:28). God grants the request and the temple comes down, destroying all in it, including Samson. At the very end of his life, the man known for strength prays for strength. So should we, even when we, like Samson, don't deserve it. That is why it is called grace (see also Phil. 4:13).

33. Are you in a situation where you don't know what to do? Here is a suggestion. "Then the children of Israel went up and wept before the LORD until evening, and asked counsel of the LORD, saying, 'Shall I again draw near for battle against the children of my brother Benjamin?' And the LORD said, 'Go up against him'" (Judges 20:23). Ask the Counselor (Isa. 9:6) for wisdom (Jas. 1:5). He does not answer by phone or email. He put His answers in a book, the Bible (Jas. 1:21-25). In some situations, you might have to seek help finding the answer in the book from someone, who has more knowledge of the book.

34. As a result of a civil war, there was a division between the tribe of Benjamin and the other tribes of Israel. Weeping bitterly over the separation, the people prayed, "O LORD God of Israel,

why has this come to pass in Israel, that today there should be one tribe *missing* in Israel?” (Judges 21:3). We should cast all that concerns us on the Lord because He cares about us (1 Pet. 5:7).

Ruth

Like Leviticus, the book of Ruth does not contain a recorded prayer, but it mentions Naomi praying for her daughters-in-law (see “The LORD deal kindly with you” in 1:8 and “The LORD grant that you may find rest” in 1:9), Boaz praying for Ruth (“The LORD repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the LORD God of Israel” in 2:12), Boaz praying for the reapers (“The LORD *be* with you!” in 2:4), the reapers praying for Boaz (“The LORD bless you!” in 2:4), the elders praying for Ruth (“The LORD make the woman who is coming to your house like Rachel and Leah” in 4:11) and women blessing the Lord (4:14). So while there is no recorded prayer in Ruth, as someone has said, “the atmosphere of prayer pervades” it. Like the book of Ruth, may your day be spent in an atmosphere of prayer (1 Thess. 5:17).

1 Samuel

35. Childless Hannah prayed at the Tabernacle, “O LORD of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head” (1 Sam. 1:11). She “spoke in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard” (1 Sam. 1:13). She poured out her soul before the Lord (1 Sam. 1:15). This is the first recorded prayer in the Bible prayed by a woman. This incident indicates that from early times women prayed in the Tabernacle. It is the first example of silent prayer. Audible words are not essential for effective prayer, but it is important that we, like Hannah, pour out our soul, not just words, to the Lord. God gave her a son—Samuel, whose name means “God heard.”

36. After God granted Hannah’s request for a son, she bursts forth in an eloquent prayer-song of praise to the Lord (1 Sam. 2:1-10). Part of her prayer is “My heart rejoices in the LORD; My horn is exalted in the LORD. I smile at my enemies, because I rejoice in Your salvation” (1 Sam. 2:1). The salvation of which she speaks is, no doubt, the deliverance from her barrenness, but in that she also speaks of the coming Messiah (“His anointed” in 1 Sam. 2:10), some scholars say it includes her spiritual salvation as well. Like Hannah, we should rejoice our salvation (Lk. 10:20). As a young believer, I was told, “If from the heart, you thank God daily for your salvation, it will be hard for you to drift away from Him.”

37. When Samuel heard God speak to him (in those days, God spoke in an audible voice), he responded, “Speak, for Your servant hears” (1 Sam. 3:10).

That should be our prayer every time we read the Bible (Ps. 119:18).

38. Sometimes, God does not answer prayer. “So Saul asked counsel of God, ‘Shall I go down after the Philistines? Will You deliver them into the hand of Israel?’ But He did not answer him that day” (1 Sam. 14:37). There are many reasons for the silence of God. In Saul’s case, he was asking God for something that would glorify him, not God. God refuses to answer some prayers because we ask with the wrong motive; we ask solely for our pleasure (Jas. 4:3). Don’t get it backward. God is not our servant. We are His servants.

39. In difficult situations, we often ask, “How do I handle this?” When God told Samuel to anoint David as king, Samuel prayed, “How can I go? If Saul hears *it*, he will kill me” (1 Sam

16:2). The Lord answered that prayer (1 Sam. 16:2). He does the same for us through His Word and/or the wise counsel of a godly believer. So, when you do not know how to do the will of God, ask Him how, search the Word for His answer, and/or seek godly counsel.

40. David asked the Lord, “Shall I go and attack these Philistines?” (1 Sam. 23:2). The Lord answered, “Go and attack the Philistines, and save Keilah” (1 Sam. 23:2). In a difficult situation, Samuel asked the Lord “how” he could do God’s will (1 Sam. 16:2). When David faced a difficult situation, he asked God the “what” and the “when” of His will. We, too, should seek God’s wisdom to do God’s will. He promises to give wisdom to all believers who ask for it, “liberally and without reproach” (Jas. 1:5). And as you know, the wisdom of God is found in the Word of God.

41. David asked the Lord, “Shall I pursue this troop? Shall I overtake them?” (1 Sam. 30:8). The Lord’s answered, “Pursue, for you shall surely overtake *them* and without fail recover *all*” (1 Sam. 30:8). Sound familiar? This is similar to the previous passage we considered (1 Sam. 23:2). In other words, David repeatedly sought the will of God. No wonder he is called “a man after God’s own heart” (1 Sam. 13:14). Like David, let us seek the Lord and His will.

2 Samuel

42. David does it again! “It happened after this that David inquired of the LORD, saying, ‘Shall I go up to any of the cities of Judah?’ And the LORD said to him, ‘Go up.’ David said, ‘Where shall I go up?’ And He said, ‘To Hebron’” (2 Sam. 2:1). Again and again, David sought and probed the will of God. Paul prayed that the Colossian Christians would “be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” (Col. 1:9). He was praying that these believers would have insight, not just information. It is possible to have information without fully grasping all that that information means. As we seek the will of God in the Word of God, we should pray for insight, not just knowledge.

43. Would you believe, the next recorded prayer in the Bible is also of David asking God about His will? “So David inquired of the LORD, saying, ‘Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will You deliver them into my hand’ And the LORD said to David, ‘Go up, for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into your hand’” (2 Sam. 5:19). We need to be as consistent and as persistent as David in praying, in seeking God’s will and in doing what God says.

44. David “sat before the LORD” (2 Sam. 7:18) and prayed (see 2 Sam. 7:18-29 for the complete prayer). Among other things, David dwelt on the greatness of God and what He had done. For example, he said, “Therefore You are great, O Lord GOD. For *there is* none like You, nor *is there any* God besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears” (2 Sam. 7:22) and “For You have made Your people Israel Your very own people forever; and You, LORD, have become their God” (2 Sam. 7:24). He ended this prayer asking God to “bless the house of Your servant” (2 Sam. 7:29). We need to sit down, contemplate the greatness of God and all He has done for us, and seek His blessing.

45. When the Lord had delivered David from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul, he spoke to the Lord a long song (see 2 Sam. 22:1-51). It is a rich, poetic prayer filled with metaphors (the Lord is my fortress, my deliverer, my strength, my shield, the horn of my salvation, my stronghold, my refuge; my Savior, my support, my lamp, my power, etc.). He proclaims that when he was in the greatest of difficulties, he called on the Lord and the Lord answered him. He concludes, “Therefore I will give thanks to You, O LORD, among the Gentiles, and sing praises

to Your name” (2 Sam. 22:50). Why not start the day singing God’s praises for who He is and what He has done for you?

46. David was a deeply godly man, but he sinned, and on more than the one occasion that is so well-known. “And David’s heart condemned him after he had numbered the people. So David said to the LORD, ‘I have sinned greatly in what I have done; but now, I pray, O LORD, take away the iniquity of Your servant, for I have done very foolishly’” (2 Sam. 24:10; see also 24:17). Confession should be a part of our prayer life, because we, like David, sin. Note: “He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes *them* will have mercy” (Prov. 28:13).

1 Kings

47. Solomon prayed, “Give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?” (1 Kings 3:9; for the complete prayer see 3:6-9). The Lord responded that since Solomon did not ask for “long life for yourself, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice” (1 Kings 3:11), he would give Solomon a “wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you” (1 Kings 3:12). Then, the Lord said He would give Solomon “what you have not asked: both riches and honor, so that there shall not be anyone like you among the kings all your days” (1 Kings 3:13) and if Solomon kept His commandments, “I will lengthen your days” (1 Kings 3:14). WOW! The Lord does “exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think” (Eph. 3:20). What an encouragement when we pray!

48. In one of the longest recorded prayers in the Bible, Solomon prayed (1 Kings 8:22-53) and blessed the people (1 Kings 8:56-61). Between the two we are told, “When Solomon had finished praying all this prayer and supplication to the LORD, that he arose from before the altar of the LORD, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread up to heaven. Then he stood and blessed all the assembly of Israel with a loud voice” (1 Kings 8:54-55). Solomon knelt to pray and stood to bless the people. By one count, he made seven requests (1 Kings 8:31-53).

Long prayers, short prayers, kneeling to pray, standing to pray, asking for a few things, and asking for many things are all biblical. Don’t worry about such details. Just pray, in any position, for any length of time, for any number of things. Just pray—without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17).

49. *Elijah prayed, “O LORD my God, have You also brought tragedy on the widow with whom I lodge, by killing her son?” Then, he said, “O LORD my God, I pray, let this child’s soul come back to him” (1 Kings 17:20-21). Is Elijah saying God killed the widow’s son? No. Notice he is asking a question, not making a statement. The reason He asked the question was the widow was blaming her sin for her son’s death (1 Kings 17:18). Her sin did not cause it, but God’s sovereignty did allow it. God also raised the son (1 Kings 17:22). In the final analysis, God is “able to save and to destroy” (Jas. 4:12). As we pray, we need to remember that God is God! That is a good thing. Because He is all powerful, He can answer prayer and because He is gracious, He does answer prayer.*

50. When Elijah prayed that it would not rain, it did not rain for three and a half years. Then, in a confrontation with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, Elijah prayed for fire to consume a water-drenched altar saying, “LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You *are* God in Israel and I *am* Your servant, and *that* I have done all these things at Your word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that You *are* the LORD God, and

that You have turned their hearts back *to You* again. Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that *was* in the trench” (1 Kings 18:36-38). On top of that, it rained! Commenting on this incident, James explains, “Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit” (Jas. 5:17-18). The encouraging thing for us is that Elijah was a man with a nature like ours. We who have the weak nature of Elijah can have the prayer life of Elijah. Note: his passion was that the people know the Lord.

51. James says Elijah was a man with a nature like ours. Elijah’s next recorded prayer is an illustration of just how “human” Elijah’s nature was. “He prayed that he might die, and said, ‘It is enough! Now, LORD, take my life, for I *am* no better than my fathers!’” (1 Kings 19:4). After one of the most dramatic answers to prayer in the Bible (1 Kings 18), exhausted in body and brain, Elijah requested a one-way ticket home to heaven. By the way, both Moses and Jonah did the same. In all three cases, God said, “No!” This is an example of what not to request, but it is also an encouragement to pray no matter what you are thinking or feeling. Cast all your care on Him because He cares about you (1 Pet. 5:7). Just talk to the Lord.

2 Kings

52. The king of Syria sent “a great army” to capture Elisha. When Elisha’s servant saw their city was surrounded, he was deeply concerned. Elisha assured his servant, “Those who *are* with us *are* more than those who *are* with them” (2 Kings 6:16). Elisha prayed, “LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see” (2 Kings 6:17). The Lord opened the servant’s eyes to see a vast army of invisible forces ready to protect Elisha. There is more to the story. Elisha prays for the blindness and for the sight of his enemies and he even fed them before he released them! What lessons for us. We should pray to see things as they really are and for the grace to treat our enemies with such kindness.

53. To say it was a crisis is putting it mildly. King Hezekiah was facing the Assyrian army, the most powerful army of the day. He consulted Isaiah (2 Kings 19:2), who assured him God would deliver Him. Then Hezekiah prayed. Among other things, he said, “Save us from his [Sennacherib of Assyria’s] hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You *are* the LORD God, You alone” (2 Kings 19:19).

In a crisis, Hezekiah consulted the Word (through Isaiah) and prayed. God supernaturally delivered Israel from the Assyrian army. One short prayer in the will of God is more powerful than a large army! Pray, folks. Pray.

54. When Isaiah told Hezekiah he was about to die, Hezekiah prayed, “Remember now, O LORD, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth and with a loyal heart, and have done *what was good* in Your sight.’ And Hezekiah wept bitterly” (2 Kings 20:3). The Lord heard his prayer, saw his tears, and extended his life fifteen years (2 Kings 20:5-6). Hezekiah asked for a personal favor based on his righteous, loyal life (see Jn. 15:7). As someone has said, “If we expect answered prayer, we must seek habitually to live near to God.”

1 Chronicles

55. When you pray for yourself, for what do you ask? “Jabez called on the God of Israel saying, ‘Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that Your hand would be with me, and that You would keep *me* from evil, that I may not cause pain!’” (1 Chron. 4:10). Jabez asked for four things (“that” is used four times): to bless him (a Hebrew word used of prosperity), to enlarge his territory, (to give him either more business or a broader ministry), to strengthen him, and to keep him from evil. In short, he prayed for the provisions, power and protection of God.

56. When we think of prayer, we think of getting God’s blessing. There is also a prayer to bless God. “Therefore David blessed the LORD before all the assembly; and David said: ‘Blessed are You, LORD God of Israel, our Father, forever and ever. Yours, O LORD, *is* the greatness, The power and the glory, The victory and the majesty; For all *that is* in heaven and in earth *is Yours*; Yours *is* the kingdom, O LORD, And You are exalted as head over all. Both riches and honor *come* from You, And You reign over all. In Your hand *is* power and might; In Your hand *it is* to make great And to give strength to all. Now, therefore, our God, We thank You And praise Your glorious name” (1 Chron. 29:10-13). There is more to this prayer (1 Chron. 29:14-19), but you get the drift. We should not only seek God’s blessing (1 Chron. 4:10), we should bless God (1 Chron. 29:10-19).

2 Chronicles

57. His father has been described as a man’s man, a ladies’ man, a military hero, a gifted songwriter, a larger-than-life living legend, etc. He had five stepmothers, a half-brother who raped one of his half-sisters, and another brother who killed the rapist. When God asked David’s son Solomon what he wanted, Solomon requested, “Give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people; for who can judge this great people of Yours?” (2 Chron. 1:10; for the complete prayer see 1:8-10; see also 1 Kings 3:6-9). Regardless of your bad background or current circumstance, ask God for wisdom. He gladly grants it to those who ask (Jas. 1:5) and seek it in His Word (Jas. 1:21-22, 25).

58. Before going into battle, “Asa cried out to the LORD his God, and said, ‘LORD, *it is* nothing for You to help, whether with many or with those who have no power; help us, O LORD our God, for we rest on You, and in Your name we go against this multitude. O LORD, You *are* our God; do not let man prevail against You!’” (2 Chron. 14:11). Greatly outnumbered, Asa was not perturbed because He was fighting for the Lord’s cause (“do not let man prevail against You”). We might not be able to say that, but we can cry, “Help!” as we “rest on” the Lord. As you take on the battle of this day, ask for God’s grace to do His will for His glory.

59. Have you even been “at the end of your rope,” feeling you had no power, not knowing what to do? At the end of a long prayer, Jehoshaphat said, “For we have no power against this great multitude that is coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes *are* upon You” (2 Chron. 20:12; for the complete prayer see 20:5:12). In a military situation in which he felt powerless, Jehoshaphat prayed and looked to the Lord for direction and protection. Take your situation, including how you feel about it, to the Lord and trust Him to work it out or, at least, to do a work in you.

Ezra

60. After the seventy-year captivity in Babylon, a remnant of the nation of Israel returns to Jerusalem under the leadership of Ezra. Ezra breaks forth in a prayer of praise: “Blessed *be* the LORD God of our fathers, who has put *such a thing* as this in the king’s heart, to beautify the house of the LORD which *is* in Jerusalem and has extended mercy to me before the king and his counselors, and before all the king’s mighty princes” (Ezra 7:27-28). Ezra expresses gratitude to God for the goodness of Artaxerxes in helping them return. We should thank God for all His benefits, even for “heathen help.” Before continuing through this day, pause to thank God for all the benefits of the last week.

61. After a prayer of praise, Ezra’s next recorded prayer is a prayer of confession. Among other things, he says, “For we have forsaken Your commandments” (Ezra 9:10; see 9:5-15 for the complete prayer). The interesting thing about this prayer of confession is that Ezra is confessing the sins of the nation (“we”)! The people got the message and put away their pagan wives (see 9:14; 10:1-5). Obviously, we are not in a position to confess the specific sin of the whole nation, but we should be reminded again to confess our sins and pray for our nation.

Nehemiah

62. When Nehemiah heard that the people in Jerusalem were “in great distress and reproach” and the wall of Jerusalem was “broken down,” he prayed (Neh. 1:5-11). Like Ezra, Nehemiah confessed the sins of the nation of Israel (Neh. 1:5-7). Then, after citing Scripture concerning God’s will for Jerusalem (Neh. 1:8-9), Nehemiah asked God to “grant him mercy in the sight of this man” (Neh. 1:11). In other words, he was asking God to change the heart of king Artaxerxes, so that he would be allowed to go to Jerusalem. Nehemiah wanted to do God’s will in Jerusalem, but he could not do it because of his “job” situation. So he asked God to work that out so that he could do God’s work. If something beyond your control is hindering you from doing God’s will, ask God to remove the hindrance.

63. When Nehemiah began rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem, he encountered ridicule from Sanballat and Tobiah (see Neh. 4:1-3). Nehemiah’s response? You guessed it—prayer. He prayed, “Hear, O our God, for we are despised; turn their reproach on their own heads, and give them as plunder to a land of captivity! Do not cover their iniquity, and do not let their sin be blotted out from before You; for they have provoked You to anger before the builders” (Neh. 4:4-5). Nehemiah and the people also continued to build. “So we built the wall, and the entire wall was joined together up to half its *height*, for the people had a mind to work” (Neh. 4:6).

When you are ridiculed by others for doing the will of God, pray that God turns their reproach on their heads and just keep doing the will of God.

64. In the process of building the wall, Nehemiah had to deal with opposition from without (Neh. 4) and conflict from within the group building the wall (Neh. 5)! Through it all, he was an example of a caring, loving individual (Neh. 5:14-18). In that context, he prayed, “Remember me, my God, for good, *according to* all that I have done for this people” (Neh. 5:19). Unlike those involved in the conflict, who were acting in an unloving way to get their needs met, Nehemiah looked to the Lord to meet his needs.

What an example! Don’t use others to get your needs met; meet their needs and let God meet yours. He does a much better job than we do.

65. In Nehemiah 6, the opposition from without comes at Nehemiah again (see Neh. 4). Nehemiah records, “For they all *were trying to* make us afraid, saying, “Their hands will be weakened in the work, and it will not be done. Now, therefore, *O God*, strengthen my hands” (Neh. 6:9) and “My God, remember Tobiah and Sanballat, according to these their works, and the prophetess Noadiah and the rest of the prophets who would have made me afraid” (Neh. 6:14). Nehemiah let the Lord take care of the opposition and he prayed for strength to do what the Lord had instructed him to do, namely build the wall. They finished the wall in record time – “in fifty-two days” (Neh. 6:15) and Nehemiah says, “When all our enemies heard *of it*, and all the nations around us saw *these things*, that they were very disheartened in their own eyes; for they perceived that this work was done by our God” (Neh. 6:16). Hey, this thing called prayer works!

66. The longest prayer in the Bible is basically a prayer of praise (Neh. 9:5-38). The sum of the prayer is stated at the beginning: “Blessed be Your glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise!” (Neh. 9:5). This prayer of praise reviews Israel’s history from Abraham to Nehemiah’s time (Neh. 9:7-37). It concludes with a plea for mercy (Neh. 9:32-33). Even though they had been released from the Babylonian bondage, they were still servants to the king of Persia (Neh. 9:36). Thus, they were heavily taxed (Neh. 9:37) and subject to forced labor and compulsory military service (Neh. 9:37). Therefore, the prayer laments their present condition and begs for mercy. This prayer provides a pattern for prayer, namely, begin with praise before pleading for mercy. Also, note that the vast majority of this prayer is praise, not a plea for mercy. Our prayers are often the opposite, short on praise and long on a plea for mercy.

67. In the last chapter of his book, Nehemiah prays the same prayer four times. In several different situations, he prays, “Remember me, O my God” (Neh. 13:14, 22, 29) and he ends the books with “Remember me, O my God, for good!” (Neh. 13:31). As we have seen throughout this book, Nehemiah was a man of prayer. He was God-conscious. In the final analysis, prayer is constantly being aware of the Lord and repeatedly, in every situation, acknowledging Him and asking for His blessing, wisdom, and strength.

Esther

Esther is the third book of the Bible that does not contain a recorded prayer (see Leviticus and Ruth). It does not even refer to God! All of that is deliberately done to demonstrate the providence of God; that is, that He is working “behind the scenes,” so to speak. Some prayers are like that. We are not aware of them, but they are working. Paul says, “*It is* Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us” (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25). Paul also says that the Holy Spirit makes intercession for us (Rom. 8:26-27). Even when we are not praying, we are being prayed for. We have a living Savior!

Job

68. Job suffered the loss of his wealth, his children, the support of his wife, and his health. With raw emotions, he speaks to the Lord (Job 7:11-21). He pours out his anguish; he complains in bitterness (Job 7:11). Let’s eavesdrop on Job: “I loathe my life” (Job 7:16). Instead of stuffing down our emotions or spewing them all over others, why not share them with the Lord? I am not suggesting that you should not talk to others. There is a place for that (Jas. 5:16). I am saying, why not start with the Lord? He is the best counselor (therapist) I know (Isa. 9:6).

69. Job's prayers are shocking! Listen to him pray: "My soul loathes my life; I will give free course to my complaint, I will speak in the bitterness of my soul" (Job 10:1; 7:11, 16). "Why then have You brought me out of the womb? Oh, that I had perished and no eye had seen me!" (Job 10:18). "Are not my days few? Cease! Leave me alone, that I may take a little comfort" (Job 10:20; for the complete prayer, see 10:1-22). As shocking as these statements are to us, one thing that can be said about Job is that he was honest. He was honest with himself and with the Lord. He did not play games. He poured out his heart to the Lord. Of course, we must be respectful and reverent, but we need to also be ruthlessly honest with the Lord about how we really feel.

70. In his physical and emotional pain, Job questioned everything. In one of his more well-known prayers, he said, "If a man dies, shall he live *again*?" (Job 14:14; for the complete prayer see 14:13-22). Job, of course, knew the answer. Later in the book, he said, "For I know *that* my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth. And after my skin is destroyed, this *I know*, that in my flesh I shall see God" (Job 19:25-26). Nevertheless, Job felt the freedom to express his every thought with the Lord. That is not a bad idea since He knows them anyway. Intimate fellowship is sharing everything with the Lord.

71. Job complains to the Lord and even challenges the Lord, but at the end, he confesses, "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer You? I lay my hand over my mouth. Once I have spoken, but I will not answer; Yes, twice, but I will proceed no further" (Job 40:4-5). Confessing his guilt before God, Job says he will now keep silent before Him. In other words, he will listen. After we pour out our pain to the Lord, we should put our hand over our mouths and open our ears to hear what God has to say to us in His Word.

72. Job endured. The expression the "patience of Job" is taken from the KJV of James 5:11, but the word translated "patience" is actually the word for endurance. The NKJV reads: "Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end *intended* by the Lord; that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful." When Job endured his trial, he saw that the Lord was wise and gracious. At the very end, he prayed, "I have uttered what I did not understand" (Job 42:3) and "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor *myself*, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5-6; for the complete prayer see Job 42:2-6). Whatever you are going through, trust the Lord, endure, and in the end, you will see that the Lord knows what He is doing. All things are not good, but all things *work together* for good to those who love the Lord, that is, those who are trusting, obeying and enduring!

Psalms

In this series on the recorded prayer in the Bible, we have come to the Psalms, a book of praise and prayer. Due to the sheer volume and overlap, not all the prayers in the Psalms will be considered.

73. In Psalm 3, David says those who trouble him have increased (Ps. 3:1). Led by his own son Absalom, the whole nation was up in arms against David. Furthermore, the people say God will not help him (Ps. 3:2). Acknowledging God as his shield, glory (Ps. 3:3) and sustainer (Ps. 3:5), David says, "I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people who have set *themselves* against me all around" (Ps. 3:6). Then, He prays, "Arise, O LORD; Save me, O my God!" (Ps. 3:7). He concludes, "Salvation *belongs* to the LORD" (Ps. 3:8). The Hebrew word translated "salvation" means "deliverance." This is a psalm of salvation; not spiritual salvation, but deliverance from

trouble! When your troubles multiply, praise God for His many provisions and ask Him to deliver you.

74. David's son, Absalom, wanted to sit on his father's throne. So, he gathered an army and prepared to march on Jerusalem. With his friends, fellow-countrymen and his own family against him, David fled. In that situation, he wrote two Psalms, Psalms 3 and 4. In Psalm 4, David cries out to the Lord (Ps. 4:1), counsels his enemies (Ps. 4:2-5; for example: "Be angry and sin not" in verse 4 and "put your trust in the Lord" in verse 5), and expresses his confidence in the Lord (Ps. 4:6-8). He concludes, "I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; for You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety" (Ps. 4:8). When your friends become your enemies, counsel them to trust in the Lord and you do the same. You will have joy and peace, even if they do not.

75. David prayed first thing in the morning: "My voice You shall hear in the morning, O LORD; In the morning I will direct it to You and I will look up" (Ps. 5:3). Psalm 5 is a prayer with four requests: 1) hear me (5:1-7), 2) lead me (5:8-9), 3) judge my enemies, (5:10), and bless all believers (5:11-12). At the beginning of the day, David is asking for direction in righteousness (Ps. 5:8), protection from enemies who wanted to kill him, and the blessing of God on all who trust the Lord. That is a great pattern for a morning prayer. Before you get out of bed, ask God to lead you in righteousness and protect you today, as well as bless others.

76. In Psalm 6, David is speaking about having sinned (the specific sin is not stated) and having the consequences wreak havoc in his life. So he asked the Lord to not chasten him in His hot displeasure (Ps. 6:1), but to have mercy (Ps. 6:2-3) and deliver him (Ps. 6:4-7). David pleads, "Oh, save me for Your mercies' sake!" (Ps. 6:4). The salvation here is not spiritual salvation (going to heaven), but physical *deliverance* from his troubles (Ps. 6:2-3, 5). When we are being disciplined, we should not run *from* the Lord, but *to* the Lord and plead His mercy!

77. When he was slandered (Ps. 7:14), David pleaded: "O LORD my God, in You I put my trust; save me from all those who persecute me; and deliver me" (Ps. 7:1). In Psalm 7, David pleads for God's deliverance (Ps. 7:1-2), protests his innocence and God's inactivity (Ps. 7:3-10) and proclaims God's justice (Ps. 7:11-17). In the previous Psalm, when David is *guilty*, he pleads God's *mercy* (Ps. 6:4). In this Psalm, when he is *righteous* (Ps. 7:8, 10), David pleads God's *justice* (Ps. 7:9, 11, 17). In praying, it is perfectly proper to plead God's attributes, such as His mercy and justice. The more we know about the Lord and the more we know the Lord, the more effective will be our prayer life.

78. Psalm 8 begins and ends with the same statement: "O LORD, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth" (Ps. 8:1, 9). David praises God for His greatness (Ps. 8:1-2) and His grace (Ps. 8:3-8). God's name is great in all the earth not only because of His glory which is revealed in the heavens but also because of His goodness which is extended to mankind. As we venture into this day, like David, reflecting on God's creation and realizing God's goodness, let us make this a day of praising God for His greatness.

79. In the Hebrew text, Psalm 9 and Psalm 10 are linked together by a literary device. Both contain many of the same themes. One of the striking notes of this pair of psalms is David's determination to praise the Lord. Just listen to it: "I will praise You, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will tell of all Your marvelous works. I will be glad and rejoice in You; I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High" (Ps. 9:1-2). To duplicate David's determination, be bent on rejoicing in the Lord, singing praises to the Lord (you do not have to wait until Sunday) and telling others of God's marvelous works.

80. Because of the prevalence of the wicked, David felt that the righteous had disappeared from the earth. He writes, "Help, LORD, for the godly man ceases! For the faithful disappear from

among the sons of men” (Ps. 12:1). In contrast to the words of the wicked (Ps. 12:2-5), David says, “The words of the LORD are pure words, like silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times” (Ps. 12:6). David concludes by commenting on the fact that “The wicked prowl on every side” and “vileness is exalted among the sons of men” (Ps. 12:8), but he is confident that the Lord will guard the godly (Ps. 12:7). In the midst of a world filled with wickedness, the Lord keeps the faithful through His pure Word and prayer. Our prayer should be “Help, Lord” (Ps. 12:1), help us to look to Your pure Word and not listen to the words of the wicked.

81. Have you ever felt that God has forsaken you? What do you do then? To whom do you turn when you feel God is not there for you? When David had that experience, he did not run away *from* the Lord; he *ran* to the Lord, saying, “How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me?” (13:1). In Psalm 13, David laments (Ps. 13:1-2), prays (Ps. 13:3-4), and expresses his total confidence in the Lord, including praising Him (Ps. 13:5-6). We should pray, even when we feel that our biggest problem is the Lord Himself! Tell Him how you feel and remember to trust Him and praise Him regardless of how you feel.

82. In Psalm 16, David prays, “Preserve me, O God, for in You I put my trust” (Ps. 16:1; see all 11 verses for the complete prayer, which includes a prophecy of the resurrection of the Messiah in verse 10). The Hebrew word rendered “preserve” implies danger. David is praying for protection from danger. His claim for such protection is not his own goodness. It is simply that he puts his trust in the Lord. Trust the Lord to protect you from danger today and remind Him that you are trusting Him for His protection.

83. In Psalm 17, David asks God to “hear a just cause” (Ps. 17:1) and says, “Let my vindication come from Your presence” (Ps. 17:2). Then he says, “You have tried me and have found nothing; I have purposed that my mouth shall not transgress” (Ps. 17:3). Concerning his current conflict with some people, David says that he purposed not to sin with his tongue. Paul says what comes out of our mouth should build people up; it should minister grace to people (Eph. 4:29). May I suggest that if you are going to pray about a conflict with someone, you are in a better position with the Lord if first, you have purposed not to sin by what you say about the other person.

84. Psalm 18 is a victory song commemorating David’s overall deliverance from his enemies. It is the fourth longest psalm in the Psalter. In it, David speaks of such things as being afraid (Ps. 18:4), being distressed (Ps. 18:6) and facing death (Ps. 18:5). David says, “In my distress I called upon the LORD” (Ps. 18:6). Note the way David thinks of the Lord: “my strength” (Ps. 18:1), “my rock and my fortress and my deliverer” (Ps. 18:2), “my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold” (Ps. 18:2). When you are in distress, do what David did: call on the Lord, acknowledging that He is the rock on which you stand, the shield and fortress behind which you take cover, and the strength you need to cope with whatever the enemy hurls your way.

85. As a result of seeing the glory of God in the world (Ps. 19:1-6) and the will of God in the Word (Ps. 19:7-11), David prays: “Cleanse me from secret *faults*” (Ps. 19:12), “Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous *sins*” (Ps. 19:13), and “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer” (Ps. 19:14). Secret faults are sins hidden from others or even from the one praying. Presumptuous sins are deliberate sins. When believers see the glory of God and understand the will of God, they want to be cleansed and pleasing to God. Let God’s Word search your heart and seek God’s strength to be pleasing to Him.

86. Both Psalms 20 and 21 are “royal” Psalms; they talk about the king (see also Ps. 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 110, and 144). Portions of them are hyperbolic in relation to David but are literally true of the Messiah/King (Ryrie). For example, Psalm 21 says, “He asked life from You,

and You gave *it* to him; length of days forever and ever” (Ps. 21:4). Hence, the royal psalms are called messianic Psalms. In Psalm 21, David says, “The king shall have joy in Your strength, O LORD.” It is a joy to trust the Lord for His strength to do His will and praise Him in prayer for His strength and His joy.

87. There are times when everything goes wrong. David said, “Trouble *is* near” and “*there is* none to help” (Ps. 22:11). He was “despised by the people” (Ps. 22:6) and ridiculed (Ps. 22:7). He felt he was a “worm” (Ps. 22:6), “poured out like water,” and that “all” his bones “were out of joint” (Ps. 22:14). He said, “My heart is like wax; it has melted within me” (Ps. 22:14). On top of all of that, David felt as if God had forsaken him. He cried, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Ps. 22:1). Although those words expressed David’s experience, they were completely fulfilled (filled to the full) in the experience of Jesus on the cross (Mt. 27:46). What do you do when everything goes wrong, including feeling as if even God has forsaken you? David trusted the Lord (Ps. 22:9) and praised the Lord (Ps. 22:22, 25). God delivered David (Ps. 22:4, 20-21) and resurrected Jesus. So, no matter what happens, trust the Lord, praise the Lord, and wait for Him to work.

88. In Psalm 23, David talks *about* the Shepherd, “*He* restores my soul” (Ps. 23:3, italics added), until he walks through the valley of the shadow of death. Then he talks *to* the Shepherd: “I will fear no evil; for *You* are with me” (Ps. 23:4, italics added). Any time is a good time to talk to the Lord, but in the fearful shadow, remember He is a present help in the time of trouble (Ps. 46:1), waiting with a listening ear and helping hand.

89. Before you read your Bible, pray this prayer: “Show me Your ways, O LORD; teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You *are* the God of my salvation; on You I wait all the day” (Ps. 25:4-5). A teachable spirit and trusting attitude are indispensable to discovering God’s truth in God’s Word.

90. In Psalm 26, David says he has trusted the Lord (Ps. 26:1) and has walked in His truth (Ps. 26:3). Now, he asks for deliverance from the fate of the wicked (Ps. 26:9-11), and promises to bless the Lord *in the congregations* (Ps. 26:12, italics added). Praising God *in His house* is a major point of this Psalm. David declares, “I will wash my hands in innocence; so I will go about Your altar, O LORD, that I may proclaim with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all Your wondrous works. LORD, I have loved the habitation of Your house, and the place where Your glory dwells” (Ps. 26:6-8). David is speaking of the Tabernacle, but the principle applies to us. We should trust the Lord for strength to obey His Word and we should thank Him and tell of His works *in the congregation*.

91. Several Psalms speak of God hiding. For example, in Psalm 27:9, David prays, “Do not hide Your face from me.” In a sense, God *hides* from unbelievers. God gives evidence that He exists (see Ps. 19), but He does not give overwhelming evidence. If He did, unbelievers would be forced to believe. God leaves room for faith. In a sense, God sometimes hides His face from believers. He does not immediately answer their pleas. In both cases, God desires that we trust Him. David understood this. He said, “*I would have lost heart*, unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living” (Ps. 27:13). Hence, David concludes Psalm 27 with this advice: “Wait on the LORD; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the LORD!” (Ps. 27:14).

92. In Psalm 28, David says to the Lord, “Hear the voice of my supplications when I cry to You, when I lift up my hands toward Your holy sanctuary” (Ps. 28:2). Lifting the hands is mentioned often in connection with praying. It is a symbol of recognizing our need (the hands are

empty), reaching out to the Lord, and receiving from the Lord. As Spurgeon says, “We stretch out empty hands, for we are beggars; we lift them up, for we seek heavenly supplies.”

93. In Psalm 30, after acknowledging God’s deliverance (Ps. 30:1-3) and admonishing the saints to give thanks (Ps. 30:4-5), David remembers God’s forgiveness of his past failures (Ps. 30:6-10) and renews His praise (Ps. 30:11-12). He declares, “O LORD my God, I will give thanks to You forever” (Ps. 30:12). Let’s make every day Thanksgiving Day.

94. In Psalm 31, David laments, “I am in trouble; my eye wastes away with grief, *Yes*, my soul and my body!” (Ps 31:9). In the midst of his trouble, he prays, “For You *are* my rock and my fortress; therefore, for Your name’s sake, lead me and guide me” (Ps. 31:3), “You *are* my strength” (Ps. 31:4), and “I trust in You, O LORD; I say, “You *are* my God” (Ps. 31:14). As a result of his experience, David concludes, “Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all you who hope in the LORD” (Ps. 32:24). When you face difficulties, do not be discouraged. Be of good courage. The Lord is a fortress. Trust Him to guide you. Then, as He did for David, the Lord will strengthen your heart.

95. After David committed adultery with Bathsheba and had her husband murdered, he writes that as a result of his sin, “My vitality was turned into the drought of summer” (Ps. 32:4). Then he prayed, “I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,’ and You forgave the iniquity of my sin” (Ps. 32:5). David proclaims, “Blessed *is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered*” (Ps. 32:1). When believers confess their sin, God forgives it (1 Jn. 1:9). Be encouraged. Be blessed. Confess!

96. Do you have someone in your life who hates you without a cause? David did (Ps. 35:19). Here is how David handled it. He prayed, “Plead *my cause*, O LORD, with those who strive with me; fight against those who fight against me” (Ps. 35:1). He turned the whole affair over to the Lord. He let the Lord do the fighting for him. He asked, “Vindicate me, O LORD my God, according to Your righteousness” (Ps. 35:24). In the meantime, David said, “And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD; it shall rejoice in His salvation” (Ps. 35:19), that is, in the Lord’s deliverance. Don’t react to your enemies. Turn them over to the Lord. Let Him deal with them and you rejoice in the Lord.

97. Most of the time, most of our prayers are about us. Perhaps we should spend some time in prayer talking about the Lord. Here is a sample from the prayers of David: “Your mercy, O LORD, *is* in the heavens; Your faithfulness *reaches* to the clouds. Your righteousness *is* like the great mountains; Your judgments *are* a great deep; O LORD, You preserve man and beast. How precious *is* Your lovingkindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings” (Ps. 36:5-7). If we spent more time thinking about the Lord, it would be easier for us to trust Him.

98. Have you ever felt that God was angry with you? Because of his sin (Ps. 38:3), David was disciplined by the Lord (Ps. 38:2). He felt God’s anger. Hence he prayed, “O LORD, do not rebuke me in Your wrath, nor chasten me in Your hot displeasure!” (Ps. 38:2). Like a parent who gets angry because of the disobedience of a child, God gets angry when His children sin. David experienced that, but he also knew that God is merciful. So he also prayed, “Do not forsake me, O LORD; O my God, be not far from me! Make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation!” (Ps. 38:21-22). So when you feel that God is angry with you, confess the sin and seek God’s help to deal with it. He will deliver you (see “salvation” in verse 22).

99. Here is a prayer request that you probably have never heard of or have made. David asked, “LORD, make me to know my end, and what *is* the measure of my days, *that* I may know how frail I *am*” (Ps. 39:4). David asked for the Lord to show him the brevity of his life; at best, it is but

a vapor (Ps. 39:5). Understanding the brevity of life underscores the value of life. The older you are, the easier it is to appreciate this concept. The younger you are, the harder it is to appreciate it until someone you know, who is close to your age, passes away. Let us ask the Lord for insight into the shortness of life so that we make the most of life.

100. Do you need a favor from the Lord? When David had a problem that needed the Lord's intervention, here is the way he approached the Lord. He praised God for past deliverance (Ps. 40:1-4) and offered himself in dedication (Ps. 40:5-10). Then he brought a new problem before the Lord (Ps. 40:11-12), asking again for deliverance (Ps. 40:13-17). David concluded, "I *am* poor and needy, *yet* the LORD thinks upon me. You *are* my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God" (Ps. 40:17). When David needed a favor from the Lord, he approached the Lord as a poor, needy beggar, acknowledging that the Lord is his deliverer and asking the Lord not to delay in the current situation.

101. Have you been betrayed by someone close to you? David expressed his experience, "Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up *his* heel against me" (Ps. 41:9). Jesus, who called Judas a friend (Mt. 26:50), said of his betrayer, "That the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'he who eats bread with me has lifted up his heel against me'" (Jn. 13:18). What David experienced was filled to the full in the experience of Jesus. When David had this experience, he said to the Lord, "You uphold me in my integrity, and set me before Your face forever" (Ps. 41:12). Do not be like your friend, who was not merciful. Be merciful, even during the experience of people not being merciful to you. David says, "Blessed *is* he who considers the poor; the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble" (Ps. 41:1). In other words, "Blessed *are* the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Mt. 5:7).

102. What do you do when you are discouraged? Psalms 42 and 43, which many say were originally one Psalm (see Ps. 42:5, 11; 43:5), describe discouragement as the soul being cast down (Ps. 42:5, 6, 11; 43:5). In that state of mind, the Psalmist did several things. He talked to himself! "Why are you cast down, O my soul? And *why* are you disquieted within me?" (Ps. 42:5). He thought about the Lord: "O my God, my soul is cast down within me; therefore I will remember You from the land of the Jordan, and from the heights of Hermon, from the Hill Mizar" (Ps 42:6). He sought the Lord: "As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God" (Ps. 42:1). He put his confidence in the Lord (Ps. 42:5, 11,) and he praised the Lord (Ps. 42:5, 11). When you are discouraged, there are other things you can do, but what the Psalmist did is a good place to start.

103. With a family member or close friend, we sometimes reminisce, rehearse and review past events. The saints in the Scripture were never weary of reminding themselves of God's power and purposes in the past. For example, the Psalmist prayed, "We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, the deeds You did in their days, in days of old" (Ps. 44:1). The fact that God has worked in the past (Ps. 44:7) inspires praise (Ps. 44:8) and trust (Ps. 44:26) in the present. In your conversations with the Lord, reminisce with Him about things He has done for you in the past. It will serve as the basis for praising Him and reassuring you.

104. After David's adultery with Bathsheba, he penned Psalm 51 (see also Ps. 32). David prays for forgiveness. For example, he prays, "Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions" (Ps. 51:1). Then, he prays, "*Then* I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You" (Ps. 51:13). If you have sinned, confess and be assured that the Lord will use you again to minister to others. He is indeed merciful.

105. Have you ever been in such emotional pain that you just want to go someplace else? Here is how David described that experience: “My heart is severely pained within me, and the terrors of death have fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling have come upon me, and horror has overwhelmed me. So I said, ‘Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest. Indeed, I would wander far off, *and* remain in the wilderness’” (Ps. 55:4-7). Of course, running is not the thing to do (Jas. 1:4). Instead of flying away, David said, “As for me, I will call upon God, and the LORD shall save me” (Ps. 55:16). He exhorts, “Cast your burden on the LORD, and He shall sustain you” (Ps. 55:22). Don’t run away; run to the Lord!

106. What do you fear today? Who do you fear today? David faced fear. People oppressed him (Ps 56:1), fought against him (Ps. 56:2), twisted his words (Ps. 56:5), etc. David realized that the Lord cared deeply about him and his troubles. He said to the Lord, “You number my wanderings; put my tears into Your bottle” (Ps. 56:8). Wow! What a vivid image. David’s formula for facing fear was to say to the Lord, “Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You” (Ps. 56:3), adding, “In God (I will praise His word), in God, I have put my trust; I will not fear. What can flesh do to me?” (Ps. 56:4). As you take on this day, know the Lord cares deeply about all that happens to you today. So replace fear with faith.

107. In the Psalms, people tell of experiencing one problem after another (see also Job 5:7, 14:1). External trouble produces internal turmoil (Jas. 1:8). The ongoing danger in the onslaught of trouble is losing heart. In Psalm 57, David is running from Saul, who wants to kill him. In the midst of yet another difficult situation, David tells the Lord, “My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast; I will sing and give praise” (Ps. 57:7). Granted, it is sometimes hard to do, but it is important that we “establish” our hearts (Jas. 5:8). Before you enter the difficulties of this day, determine that you will, in your heart, steadfastly sing and praise God. Is your heart mixed (Jas. 1:8) or fixed (Jas. 5:8)?

108. What do you do first thing in the morning? Get a cup of coffee? Read the paper? Turn on the TV? David wrote, “I will sing of Your power; yes, I will sing aloud of Your mercy in the morning; for You have been my defense and refuge in the day of my trouble. To You, O my Strength, I will sing praises; for God *is* my defense, my God of mercy” (Ps. 59:16-17). Now there is a great way to start the day—praise God for His mercy and power that have gotten you through the trouble of the past. This is a reminder that it is by His mercy and power we can make it through this day no matter what it brings.

109. If you are growing spiritually, somewhere along the line, you have learned not to lean on your own understanding (Prov. 3:5). We also need to learn to beware of trusting others to help bail us out of trouble. David said to the Lord, “Give us help from trouble, for the help of man *is* useless” (Ps. 60:11). Before taking your own advice or the advice of others, run it through the filter of God’s Word and trust Him to help in the midst of trouble. George Whitfield said, “I have thrown myself blindfolded into the hands of God.”

110. Have you felt overloaded or overwhelmed lately? When David felt that way, he prayed, “Hear my cry, O God; attend to my prayer. From the end of the earth I will cry to You, when my heart is overwhelmed; lead me to the rock that is higher than I” (Ps. 61:1-2). He also said, “So I will sing praise to Your name forever, that I may daily perform my vows” (Ps. 61:8). The disheartened David prayed for strength and security (Ryrie). Don’t stay under the pile; pray for the strength to stand on the rock that is higher and sing God’s praise.

111. The spiritual life is a life of faith; it is a life of constantly trusting God. In Psalm 62, David says he waits on the Lord (Ps. 62:1-7), who is his defense (Ps. 62:2) against those who are attacking him (Ps. 62:3-4). In that situation, David waited silently on the Lord (Ps. 62:5). In

the middle of the Psalm, David turns his attention to others, telling them to trust the Lord (Ps. 62:8), rather than human strength and material resources (Ps. 62:10). At the end of the Psalm, David says to the Lord, “Also to You O Lord, belongs mercy; for You render to each one according to his works (Ps. 62:12). In other words, David praises God for being gracious to those who trust Him. When people attack you, trust the Lord and praise Him for His mercy.

112. In Psalm 63, David seeks the Lord early (Ps. 63:1) while he is still in bed (Ps. 63:6). There is no request. There is a longing for communion with the Lord. “My soul thirsts for You” (Ps. 63:1). There is praise. “I will bless You while I live” (Ps. 63:4). There is joy in the presence of God. Speaking of himself in the third person, David says, “The king shall rejoice in God” (Ps. 63:11), but there is not one word asking for anything. Part of prayer is just talking to the Lord. In the famous Westminster Catechism, the answer to the question, “**What is the chief end of man?**” is “Man’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.” Throughout today, just talk to Lord; enjoy His fellowship. Be like David -- start before you get out of bed. If you did not do that today, why not begin a new holy habit in the morning?

113. Do you have an enemy, someone who is in one way or another plotting against you? How do you handle such situations? David was faced with “the secret plots of the wicked” (Ps. 64:2), who sharpen their tongue like a sword (Ps. 64:3). Are you the object of someone’s sharp tongue? David’s response was, “Hear my voice, O God, in my meditation; preserve my life from fear of the enemy. Hide me from the secret plots of the wicked” (Ps. 64:1-2a). David says the Lord will “make them stumble over their own tongue” (Ps. 64:8). So, when faced with an enemy, who has a sharp tongue, ask God to protect you and let Him deal with their tongue.

114. David begins Psalm 65 with a promise of praise (Ps. 65:1). Among other things, he says, “*As for* our transgressions, You will provide atonement for them” (Ps. 65:3), which reminds us that God has provided atonement for our sins and we should praise Him for it. When “The seventy returned with joy, saying, ‘Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name’” (Lk. 10:17), Jesus said to them, “Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven” (Lk. 10:19-20). Above all else, we should thank God for our salvation. Do not let this day slip by without doing that.

116. To ask God to bless us sounds selfish. That was not the view of the Psalmist, who prayed, “God be merciful to us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us (*Selah*), That Your way may be known on earth, Your salvation among all nations” (Ps. 67:1-2). In this case, the desire for the Lord to bless us was for the purpose of evangelism! The Psalmist concludes this brief Psalm with these words, “God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him” (Ps. 67:7). Let us pray that God will bless us so we can bless others—with salvation.

117. A glance at the heavens, a moment of reflection, lead to the conclusion that God is powerful. In Psalm 68, David “extol(s) Him who rides on the clouds” (Ps. 68:4), yet Who is “a father of the fatherless, a defender of widows” (Ps. 68:5), and “*Who* daily loads us with *benefits*” (Ps. 68:19). God is powerful and He uses His power for us! Hence, speaking of “Him who rides on the heaven of heavens” (Ps. 68:33), David exhorts us to “ascribe strength to God” (Ps. 68:34) and ends by saying God is the One “Who gives strength and power to *His* people. Blessed *be* God!” (Ps. 68:35). Let us depend on the Lord for daily strength, and daily bless His holy name.

118. It is one thing to have a problem. It is another to have multiple problems—all at the same time. In Psalm 69, David said, “Those who hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head” (Ps. 69:4). He said he was in water “up to my neck” (Ps. 69:1) and “the floods

overflow me” (Ps. 69:2). On top of all of that, he was keenly aware of his own sin. He said, “O God, You know my foolishness; and my sins are not hidden from You” (Ps. 69:5). In that situation, David prayed, “Let me be delivered from those who hate me, and out of the deep waters. Let not the floodwater overflow me” (Ps. 69:14-15). He pleaded God’s mercies (Ps. 6:16). No matter how bad your situation, do what David did: confess your sin, ask for deliverance, and plead God’s mercy.

119. Of all the things I could say to the Lord, I do not think I would be comfortable with telling Him to hurry up. David did not share my view. He prayed, “Make haste, O God, to deliver me! Make haste to help me, O LORD! Let them be ashamed and confounded who seek my life; Let them be turned back and confused who desire my hurt. Let them be turned back because of their shame, who say, ‘Aha, aha!’ Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; and let those who love Your salvation say continually, ‘Let God be magnified!’ But I *am* poor and needy; Make haste to me, O God! You *are* my help and my deliverer; O LORD, do not delay” (Ps. 70:1-5). David told the Lord to hurry up four times in the five verses of Psalm 70! Granted, we should not be irreverent, but in what has been called “panic-stricken despair” David ask the Lord to not delay His deliverance. I suspect that if someone was attempting to kill me, I too would pray, “Lord, Help—and hurry!” So I stand corrected. Under certain circumstances, it is appropriate to ask the Lord to please hurry with His help.

120. How often do you pray—during the day? How often do you praise God—throughout the day? How many times do you talk about the Lord—during the day? In Psalm 71, the Psalmist said, “Let my mouth be filled *with* Your praise *and with* Your glory all the day” (Ps. 71:8). “My mouth shall tell of Your righteousness *and* Your salvation all the day” (Ps. 71:15) and “My tongue also shall talk of Your righteousness all the day long” (Ps. 71:24). Paul said, “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17). Have a good day—pray, praise the Lord, and speak of Him at every opportunity.

121. Has the success of the wicked ever bothered you? It did the Psalmist, who wrote about the “prosperity of the wicked” (Ps. 73:3). He complained: “They are not in trouble as other men” (Ps. 73:5), “They have more than heart could wish” (Ps. 73:7), and “They increase *in* riches” (Ps. 73:12). It bothered him, he said, “Until I went into the sanctuary of God; *Then* I understood their end” (Ps. 73:17). In the sanctuary, the Psalmist saw what the Scriptures had to say. It was then that he said to the Lord, “You will guide me with Your counsel” (Ps. 73:24). Don’t just look at the way things are in the world at the moment. Look at the Word to see what God says will be. Get an eternal perspective.

122. In the Bible, people who pray often plead their case before the Lord like an attorney before a judge. They use a variety of “arguments” to build their case. In Psalm 74, the Psalmist argues, “Remember Your congregation, *which* You have purchased of old, the tribe of Your inheritance, *which* You have redeemed—this Mount Zion where You have dwelt” (Ps. 74:2). We too can “argue” that the Lord should answer our prayer because He has redeemed us, we are His inheritance, and He dwells in us. Hey, pray. You have a solid case.

123. In Psalm 75, the Psalmist prays, “To You, O God, we have given thanks, to You we have given thanks; for Your name is near, Your wonderful works declared” (Ps. 75:1). The Psalmist praises God for His wonderful works and immediately goes on to say that among God’s wonderful works is His judging at the “appointed time” (Ps. 75:2, 7). In the midst of a wicked world, the Psalmist praised God for His just judgment. I suspect this is something most of us do not do. When we see wickedness in the news or around us, we denounce it and sometimes become discouraged because of it. This Psalm suggests that we should use it as an opportunity to thank

God that He will judge the wicked and establish the righteous (Ps. 75:10). “In everything give thanks” (1 Thess. 5:18).

124. When the Psalmist felt that God had “forgotten to be gracious” and “shut up His tender mercies” (Ps. 77:9), he said to the Lord, “I will remember Your wonders of old. I will also think on all Your work, and talk of Your doings” (Ps. 77:11-12). In other words, when He did not feel that God was working in the present, He thought about and talked about what God had done in the past! Remembering what God had done reassured the Psalmist concerning what God would do.

125. What do you do when you have suffered a catastrophe that is your own fault? As a result of Israel’s sin, an enemy, probably Babylon, attacked Jerusalem and ransacked the Temple (Ps. 79:1-4). The Psalmist asked the Lord to judge Israel’s unrighteous enemy (Ps. 79:5-7), to forgive Israel (Ps. 79:8), to help Israel (Ps. 79:9-12), and promised to praise the Lord for His deliverance (Ps. 79. 13). The Psalmist prayed, “Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Your name: and deliver us, and provide atonement for our sins, for Your name’s sake” (Ps. 79:9). When you encounter a catastrophe, which is the consequence of your own doing, run to the Lord, not away from Him, and plead for His help—for His name’s sake.

126. Psalm 80 contains two vivid metaphors of God. God is pictured as the Shepherd leading the flock (Ps. 80:1-7) and as the Vinedresser tending to the vines (Ps. 80:8-19). The Psalmist is requesting that Shepherd save the flock (Ps. 80:1-3) and that the Vinedresser “visit this vine” (Ps. 80:14). Three times, he prays, “Turn us again, O God, and cause Your face to shine; and we shall be saved” (Ps. 80:3, 7, 19). The Psalmist is making an appeal for God to return (Ps. 80:14), revive (Ps. 80:18), and save Israel (Ps. 80:3, 7, 19). Like sheep, we tend to wander away from the Lord. Like a vine, we wither when not connected. When that happens, we, too, should cry out for the Shepherd and Vinedresser to return, revive and restore us.

127. Psalm 82 is a most interesting psalm with a most interesting prayer at the end. God is pictured judging unjust judges (Ps. 82:1-2, where “gods” refers to earthly judges). These human judges are accused of being unjust (Ps. 82:2), of not defending the oppressed (Ps. 82:3-4), of not knowing what they are doing (Ps. 82:5). The Psalmist concludes with the prayer: “Arise, O God, judge the earth; for You shall inherit all nations” (Ps. 82:8). The prayer is that God would judge unjust judges. For the most part, as compared to the rest of the world, we have a just judicial system, but there are unjust decisions and unjust judges. You may not have stood before one, but you probably know of someone who has. In that situation, it is appropriate to ask God to judge the judge.

128. Psalm 83 is a plea for God to judge His enemies. The Psalmist names a number of nations (Ps. 89: 6-8) that are “enemies” of God (Ps. 83:2) and His people (Ps. 83:3). These enemies say, “Come, and let us cut them off from *being* a nation, that the name of Israel may be remembered no more” (Ps. 83:4). The Psalmist prays, “O my God, make them like the whirling dust, like the chaff before the wind! As the fire burns the woods, and as the flame sets the mountains on fire, So pursue them with Your tempest, and frighten them with Your storm” (Ps. 83:13-15). This psalm, and others like it, are called Imprecatory Psalms. The word “imprecatory” means “to invoke evil.” Thus, imprecatory psalms invoke evil on evil doers, who are enemies of God. It should be kept in mind that these psalms are not expressing an individual’s desire for revenge, but a believer’s desire for the glory of God. Notice the psalmist also prays, “Fill their faces with shame, that they may seek Your name, O LORD” (Ps. 83:16) and “that they may know that You, whose name alone *is* the LORD, *are* the Most High over all the earth” (Ps. 83:18). In our prayers, we too should be

concerned for God's glory. Jesus taught us to pray, "Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as *it is* in heaven" (Mt. 6:9-10).

129. In Psalm 84, the Psalmist speaks of his longing for the Lord: "My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God" (Ps. 84:2). In those days, the Lord dwelt in the Tabernacle. Thus the Psalmist yearns to be in the courts of the Lord (Ps. 84:1-4) and expresses a desire for a pilgrimage to the house of God (Ps. 84:5-8). He has a passion for the Lord because God is his sun (Ps. 84:11), shield (Ps. 84:9), and strength (Ps. 84:5). He declares; "The LORD will give grace and glory; no good *thing* will He withhold from those who walk uprightly" (Ps. 84:11). No wonder the Psalmist says, "For a day in Your courts *is* better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness" (Ps. 84:10). Of course, today it is not necessary for us to go to a Tabernacle or Temple in Jerusalem to be near to the Lord, but it is still true that the Lord is our sun (light), shield, and strength. "O LORD of hosts, blessed *is* the man who trusts in You!" (Ps. 84:12).

130. When reading the Psalms, it is important to remember that the Hebrew word translated "salvation" means "deliverance, rescue," primarily from present physical danger or trouble. Psalm 85 is an example. It clearly states that God has forgiven (Ps. 85:2), yet the Psalmist prays, "Grant us Your salvation" (Ps. 85:7). In asking for salvation, the Psalmist is asking for "deliverance from our present trouble and calamities" (Barnes), deliverance from "affliction, powerlessness, and unhappiness" (MacDonald). All *humans* need spiritual salvation, deliverance from the penalty of sin, and all *believers* constantly need salvation (deliverance) from all kinds of things. Remember, the Lord is the "God of our salvation" (Ps. 85:4). From what do you need to be saved—today?

131. In Psalm 86, the Psalmist prays, "Teach me Your way, O LORD; I will walk in Your truth; unite my heart to fear Your name. I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart, and I will glorify Your name forevermore. For great *is* Your mercy toward me, and You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol" (Ps. 86:11-13). In other words, the Psalmist is requesting that the Lord teach him about Himself so that he can obey Him, praise Him, and glorify Him forever. That should be our prayer as we read the Scripture and our practice after we have found the Lord's way in His Word.

132. Psalm 88 has been called a "psalm of complaint" (*NKJV Study Bible*) and the "saddest psalm in the Psalter" (Ryrie). Like other lament psalms, Psalm 88 begins with a complaint, but unlike lament psalms, it does not contain a confident confession of trust and praise that is the hallmark of lament psalms. The Psalmist complains to the Lord: "I have cried out day and night before You" (Ps. 88:1), "my soul is full of troubles, and my life draws near to the grave" (Ps. 88:3), "I am like a man *who has* no strength" (Ps. 88:4), "You have laid me in the lowest pit" (Ps. 88:6), "You have afflicted me" (Ps. 88:7), "My eye wastes away because of affliction. LORD" (Ps. 88:9), "I *have been* afflicted and ready to die from *my* youth" (Ps. 88:16), "I am distraught" (Ps. 88:16), etc. Note: the Psalmist complains to the Lord. We get on the phone to complain to others. Don't go to the phone; go to God's throne.

133. Psalm 89 begins with the Psalmist praising God for His faithfulness: "I will sing of the mercies of the LORD forever; with my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all generations" (Ps. 89:1). The bulk of the psalm focuses on God's covenant with David (Ps. 89:1-4; 19-37) and God's character (Ps. 89:5-18), but a repeated theme is the faithfulness of God, which is mentioned six times (Ps. 89:1, 2, 5, 8, 24, 33). Even when his children are unfaithful (Ps. 89:30-

32), God remains faithful (Ps. 89:33). As the hymn writer says, “Great is thy faithfulness!” Today, thank the Lord for His faithfulness.

134. Psalm 90 is the only psalm attributed to Moses in the Book of Psalms. In it, the man who lived to be 120 reminds us of the brevity of life. Remember those famous lines? “The days of our lives *are* seventy years; and if by reason of strength *they are* eighty years, yet their boast *is* only labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away” (Ps 90:10). In light of the fact that our years are soon cut off, Moses prays, “So teach *us* to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom” (Ps. 90:12) and “Oh, satisfy us early with Your mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days!” (Ps. 90:14). This day is the first day of the rest of our lives. May we number what we have left and use those numbered days to be satisfied with God’s mercy and to seek God’s wisdom.

135. Psalm 92 is a Sabbath song. It was used on the Sabbath. Listen to its music: “*It is good to give thanks to the LORD, and to sing praises to Your name, O Most High; to declare Your loving-kindness in the morning, and Your faithfulness every night, on an instrument of ten strings, on the lute, and on the harp, with harmonious sound*” (Ps. 92:1-3). The Psalmist told the Lord that He would sing, not just say, praises to the Lord. Paul mentions singing to the Lord (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). For us, praying includes telling the Lord we will sing to Him with musical instruments in the congregation of His people on Sunday.

136. Many of the Psalms praise God for one thing or another. Some of the psalms praise God for His sovereign rule. These have been called royal psalms, enthronement psalms, and theocratic psalms. They were used by Israel to praise God and they were prophetic pictures of the coming rule of the Lord on earth through the Messiah. Psalm 93 is such a psalm. It begins with the words “the Lord reigns” (Ps. 93:1). The Psalmist speaks directly to the Lord saying, “Your throne *is* established from of old; You *are* from everlasting” (Ps. 93:2) and “Your testimonies are very sure” (Ps. 93:5). From God’s Word we take comfort that the Lord is in control and we learn to praise Him for His present and future reign. Now go take on the day knowing that the Lord reigns.

137. Psalm 97 is a hymn, not a prayer, but it contains a statement addressed directly to the Lord: “For You, LORD, *are* most high above all the earth; You are exalted far above all gods” (Ps. 97:9). Part of prayer and praise is acknowledging the sovereignty of God over everything, which includes our life. Beginning the day by recognizing Who is in control makes it easier to accept what the day holds.

138. In Psalm 101, David tells the Lord he is determined to do what is right. In eight verses, David says “I will” nine times. For example, he says, “I will sing of mercy and justice; to You, O LORD, I will sing praises. I will behave wisely in a perfect way. Oh, when will You come to me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. I will set nothing wicked before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; it shall not cling to me” (Ps. 101:1-3). The note in the *NKJV Study Bible* captures the thought of the psalm well: “David, the king, declares his purposes and asks for God’s help in maintaining righteousness.” We need to be determined to do what is right and seek God’s help through prayer.

139. Have you ever asked the Lord for something and wanted to say, “And hurry up!”? Well, the Psalmist did just that! He prayed, “In the day that I call, answer me speedily” (Ps. 102:2). The Psalmist was not being disrespectful; he was in “trouble” (Ps. 102:2). In the words of one commentator, “He was overwhelmed and was in desolate straits because of the enemy’s reproach” (Ross, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*). When the situation warrants it, do not hesitate to ask God to send His assistance ASAP.

140. Psalm 104 is a psalm of praise of God as Creator. It parallels Genesis 1, praising God for creating the heavens (Ps. 104:1-4) and the earth (Ps. 104:5-9), as well as forming the earth for all living creatures (Ps. 104:10-23). Contemplating the creation, the Psalmist proclaims, “O LORD, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all. The earth is full of Your possessions” (Ps. 104:24). The Psalmist also says, “May my meditation be sweet to Him” (Ps. 104:34). Today, as you gaze in the sky and notice trees and flowers, if you praise God for His creation, your meditation will be sweet to Him.

142. When we get into trouble, we often dig in—to dig out of the difficulty. When we discover we cannot do it alone, we sometimes turn to others for advice and/or help. Then, there are those situations when nothing works. The Psalmist found himself there and cried to the Lord, “Give us help from trouble, for the help of man is useless” (Ps. 108:12). When no human help helps, remember that God will hear and save with His right hand (Ps. 108:6).

143. What do you do when someone deliberately tells a lie about you? The Psalmist had that experience. He records, “For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful have opened against me; they have spoken against me with a lying tongue. They have also surrounded me with words of hatred, and fought against me without a cause. In return for my love they are my accusers” (Ps. 109:2-4a). The Psalmist responds by praying. He says, “But I *give myself to prayer*” (Ps. 109:4b). He prays that God would not be silent (Ps. 109:1-5), that God would justly judge his enemies (Ps. 109:6-20) and that God would be merciful to him (Ps. 109:21-30), “For I *am* poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me” (Ps. 109:22). He closes with a determination to praise the Lord (Ps. 109:30-31). When others use their mouths to lie about you, use yours to pray and praise the Lord.

144. In Psalm 115, the Psalmist told the Lord, “Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but to Your name give glory, because of Your mercy, because of Your truth” (Ps. 115:1). Instead of patting ourselves on the back for our accomplishments, we should give credit, honor and glory to the Lord for His mercy and His truth. By His mercy, He delivers us from difficulty, danger and damnation. By His truth, He enlightens, encourages, and edifies us. For His mercy and truth and all of His blessings, we should, like the Psalmist, say, “We will bless the LORD from this time forth and forevermore. Praise the LORD!” (Ps. 115:18).

145. As we have examined the recorded prayers in the Psalms, we have found the Psalmist in trouble over and over again. In Psalm 116, he is in serious trouble—again. He writes, “The pains of death surrounded me, and the pangs of Sheol laid hold of me; I found trouble and sorrow” (Ps. 116:3). Whatever the trouble, it produced pain and sorrow. In response, the Psalmist talked to the Lord—and to himself! To the Lord, he said, “O LORD, I implore You, deliver my soul!” (Ps. 116:4). To himself, he said, “Return to your rest, O my soul, for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you” (Ps. 116:7). When trouble is so serious it brings unrest to our soul, it is easy to talk to the Lord and still be disturbed in our soul. Like the Psalmist, when we are in soul-disturbing trouble, we need to talk to the Lord and remind ourselves to “return” to our rest in the Lord.

146. Embedded in Psalm 118 are several reasons why we should praise the Lord. The Psalmist wrote: “You *are* my God, and I will praise You; *You are* my God, I will exalt You” (Ps. 118:28) and “I will praise You, for You have answered me” (Ps. 118:21). Praise the Lord because He is a prayer-answering God. The Psalmist also said, “The LORD *is* my strength and song” (Ps. 118:14), and “the LORD helped me” (Ps. 118:13). Praise the Lord because He is a strength-giving God. No wonder the Psalmist begins and ends with the same statement, “Oh, give thanks to the

LORD, for *He is* good! For His mercy *endures* forever” (Ps. 118:1, 29). Let us say with the Psalmist, “This *is* the day the LORD has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it” (Ps. 118:24).

147. Psalm 119 is famous for mentioning God’s Word in virtually every one of its 176 verses (the exceptions are verses 90, 122, and 132), but it also records the Psalmist talking to the Lord. Except for a few verses (1-3, 115), it is addressed to the Lord. One of the most important verses in the Bible concerning Bible reading and/or study is Psalm 119:18, which says, “Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law.” Before you lift your hand to open the Scripture, lift your heart to the Lord, asking Him to give you insight into His Word. Over my lifetime, I have probably prayed this biblical prayer more than any other. Looking to the Lord for understanding and looking at the context for the Author/author’s intended meaning are two of the greatest means of determining the meaning of Scripture.

148. Psalms 120-134 are called “Songs of Ascents.” These are hymns pilgrims sang as they were going to Jerusalem for the annual feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles, like us singing Christmas songs on the way to the Christmas service. Hey, there’s an idea: Sing hymns on the way to church! At any rate, in the first of these “Songs of Ascent,” the Psalmist prays, “Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips *and* from a deceitful tongue” (Ps. 120:2). He is not talking about his own lying lips; he is talking about others who are lying about him. In an earlier psalm, when the Psalmist had the same problem, he wrote, “*I give myself to prayer*” (Ps. 109:4).

When someone is spreading lies about you, one of the things you need to do is give yourself to prayer during which time you give it to the Lord. Be encouraged. The Psalmist says, “In my distress I cried to the LORD, and He heard me” (Ps. 120:1).

149. In Psalm 123, the Psalmist complains that others looked at him and other Israelites with contempt (Ps. 123:3b-4), a reference to the scorn they suffered under their arrogant Babylonian captors. He tells the Lord, “Unto You, I lift up my eyes, O You who dwell in the heavens. Behold, as the eyes of servants *look* to the hand of their masters, as the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes *look* to the LORD our God, until He has mercy on us. Have mercy on us, O LORD, have mercy on us!” (Ps. 123:1-3a). When others look at you with contempt, don’t look at them; look to the Lord. When others look down on you, look up to the Lord.

150. Psalm 130 is another “pilgrim psalm” (also called a “Song of Ascents”), that is, one of the hymns pilgrims sang as they were going to Jerusalem for the annual feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. In this case, the Psalmist acknowledges his sin, saying, “If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?” (Ps. 130:3; how true!), and expresses the expectation of God’s forgiveness, saying, “But *there is* forgiveness with You, that You may be feared (Ps. 130:4; note: the result of forgiveness is fear, that is, reverence). What the Psalmist is doing in this psalm is similar to us acknowledging our sins and God’s forgiveness on our way to church.

151. On his way to the Temple, David prayed, “LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor my eyes lofty. Neither do I concern myself with great matters, nor with things too profound for me. Surely I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with his mother; like a weaned child *is* my soul within me. O Israel, hope in the LORD from this time forth and forever” (Ps. 131:1-3). In the three verses of this short Psalm, David expresses his humble trust in the Lord (Ps. 131:1) and his childlike contentment in the Lord (Ps. 131:2), and he exhorts Israel to do the same (Ps. 131:3). When we go to church, we should express our trust and contentment in the Lord and encourage others (Heb. 10:24-25).

152. In Psalm 132, the Psalmist prays, “LORD, remember David” (Ps. 132:1). In other words, the Psalmist reminds the Lord of His covenant with David, that David’s son would sit on

David's throne (Ps. 132:11), and a promise that is fulfilled in the Messiah. From the standpoint of a prayer, it is interesting that the one praying is reminding God of what He promised. In a number of the recorded prayers in the Bible, the one praying reminds God of what God promised. It is the person praying, saying, "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." The purpose of prayer is not to get my will on earth done in heaven but to get God's will in heaven done on earth. So, when you pray, begin by asking, "What does the Lord say in His Word He wants to accomplish in this situation?" and ask Him to do it. For example, in a trial, God want us to learn and grow. So instead of just asking for *deliverance* from the trial, ask for *wisdom* to learn from the trial (Jas. 1:5).

153. Psalm 135 begins and ends with an invitation to praise and bless the Lord. Only once in this psalm does the Psalmist pray directly to the Lord. He says, "Your name, O LORD, endures forever, Your fame, O LORD, throughout all generations" (Ps. 135:13). The context of this Psalm is about God delivering Israel from Egypt. Because of what God did, His name and His fame will spread throughout all generations and endure forever. The Psalmist is praising God for saving Israel. This reminds us that we should praise the Lord for saving us (Lk. 10:20). When was the last time you just simply thanked the Lord for saving you?

154. Have you lost your spiritual song? Those who suffered the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 BC and were carried captive into Babylonian did. One of them wrote, "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept when we remembered Zion. We hung our harps upon the willows in the midst of it" (Ps. 137:1-2) and "How shall we sing the LORD's song in a foreign land?" (Ps 137:4). Those experiencing the chastening of the Lord are not in a singing mood. This Psalmist also prayed, "Remember, O LORD, against the sons of Edom the day of Jerusalem" (Ps. 137:7). The author is seeking reprisals against Edom and Babylon for their destruction of Jerusalem. The point for us is that even when we don't feel like singing God's praise, we should pray.

155. In Psalm 138, David praises God for answering his prayer. He says, "In the day when I cried out, You answered me, and made me bold with strength in my soul" (Ps. 138:3). Receiving an answer to prayer made David bold and strengthened him. Some recipients of God's grace are quick to pray and slow to praise. In one incident during the ministry of the Lord, only one out of ten said, "Thanks" (Lk. 17:12-18). Don't be among the nine; be the one. Praise God for His blessings.

156. In one sense, Psalm 139 is about God's attributes. In another, it is very much about David. In the final analysis, it is about how God's attributes relate to David (and us). God knows us (Ps. 139:1-6), God is present with us no matter where we go (Ps. 139:7-12), and God created us at the moment of conception and thinks about us (Ps. 139:13-18). David concludes with the plea, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if *there is any* wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps. 139:23-24). God knows us better than anyone. Who better to have search us and our anxieties and lead us down the path of life that is everlasting? Apart from God's work in our lives (left to our own devices) we travel the road of ruin. Get on the right road, ask God to search your heart and guide you down the right road, which would include prayer for God to "strengthen me" (Judges 16:28) and "send me" (Isa. 6:8).

157. Have you ever had the experience of someone being "out to get you?" When that happened to David, he prayed, "Deliver me, O LORD, from evil men; preserve me from violent men" (Ps. 140:1) and "Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked; preserve me from violent men, who have purposed to make my steps stumble" (Ps. 140:4). When Paul had this experience, he did the same thing and asked others to pray as well. He wrote, "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run *swiftly* and be glorified, just as *it is* with you, and that we may

be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith” (2 Thess. 3:1-2). When it happens to you, pray and ask others to pray for your deliverance.

158. Do you have a problem with speaking when you should keep silent? David’s solution to that problem in his life was to pray, “Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips” (Ps. 141:3). A man who was reared in a Christian home said he remembers growing up reading a small sign in his house that read, “Lord, put your arm on my shoulder and your hand over my mouth.” Enough said!

159. Some people going through trouble feel that no one cares. David felt that way. In Psalm 142, he prayed, “Look on *my* right hand and see, for *there is* no one who acknowledges me; Refuge has failed me; no one cares for my soul” (Ps. 142:4). Keep in mind David said this in a prayer! In the same prayer, he also said, “I pour out my complaint before Him; I declare before Him my trouble” (Ps. 142:2). So he acknowledged that while no *human* seemed to care, He still had the Lord. In fact, he said, “When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then You knew my path” (Ps. 142:3), “You *are* my refuge, My portion in the land of the living” (Ps. 142:5), and “The righteous shall surround me, for You shall deal bountifully with me” (Ps. 142:7). He not only had the Lord, he took his trouble to the Lord and had confidence that the Lord would bless him, including surrounding him with righteous people. When you feel alone, remember that if you know the Lord, you are never alone and if you trust Him, He will bless you, even with righteous friends.

160. Why should God answer prayer? The recorded prayers in the Bible indicate that people who prayed pleaded such things as God’s mercy and God’s righteousness. In Psalm 143, David pleaded God’s mercy (Ps. 143:11) and God’s righteousness (Ps. 143:1, 12), but he also did something that was not done as often; he pleaded God’s *faithfulness*, saying, “Hear my prayer, O LORD, Give ear to my supplications! In Your faithfulness answer me, *and* in Your righteousness” (Ps. 143:1). God is faithful to His promises. For example, He is faithful to forgive when we confess our sins (see 1 Jn. 1:9; see also 1 Cor. 10:13). So when we pray, we should keep God’s promises in mind and remind Him of His faithfulness.

161. Have you felt so insignificant that you questioned why God should pay any attention to you? You may have thought He was too busy to bother with you. No less than King David felt something similar and said so—to the Lord! He prayed, “LORD, what *is* man, that You take knowledge of him? *Or* the son of man, that You are mindful of him? Man is like a breath; his days *are* like a passing shadow” (Ps. 144:3-4). Yet David believed God was not too busy to bother, for he prayed, “Stretch out Your hand from above; rescue me and deliver me out of great waters, from the hand of foreigners” (Ps. 144:7). He also believed God would answer, for he goes on to describe the blessing for which he would sing praises to God (Ps. 144:9), including blessing of his children (Ps. 144:12) as well as his barns and animals (Ps. 144:13-14). David concludes, “Happy *are* the people whose God *is* the LORD!” (Ps. 144:15). In other words, what was true for him is true for all who feel unworthy but who insist on trusting the Lord to work in their lives.

162. In Psalm 145, David says, “I will meditate on the glorious splendor of Your majesty, and on Your wondrous works” (Ps. 145:5). His meditation resulted in praising God: for His greatness (Ps. 145:1-3), His wonderful works (Ps. 145:4-6), His goodness (Ps. 145:7, 9), His righteousness (Ps. 145:7, 17), His graciousness (Ps. 145:8, 17), His compassion (Ps. 145:8), His mercy (Ps. 145:8), and His everlasting kingdom (Ps. 145:11-13). Like David, we need to meditate on who God is and what He has done (instead of just our problems) and praise Him accordingly. Be like David, who says, “My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD” (Ps 145:21).

Proverbs

163. The only prayer in Proverbs says, “Two *things* I request of You (deprive me not before I die): remove falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches— feed me with the food allotted to me; lest I be full and deny *You*, and say, ‘Who *is* the LORD?’ Or lest I be poor and steal, and profane the name of my God” (Pro. 30:7-9). There are two requests here. The first request is that God would remove falsehood and lies from Agur, the author. The second request is that God would give him neither poverty nor riches long as he lives (the phrase “before I die” means “until I die”).

Many pray to be delivered from poverty, but not many people pray to be delivered from wealth! Only spiritually-minded people, aware of the temptation involved, would pray such a prayer. The temptation in being rich is to forget the Lord (“Who is the Lord?”). Hence the prayer is to be preserved in the middle state between riches and poverty. In other words, he prayed, “Give me this day my daily bread” (see Mt. 6:11).

We should pray for God to give us this day our daily bread and to deliver us from temptation.

Ecclesiastes

Ecclesiastes is the fourth book of the Bible that does not contain a recorded prayer (the others are Leviticus, Ruth, and Esther). The subject of the book is: “Vanity of vanity, all is vanity, says the preacher.” It begins and ends with that (Eccl. 1:2; 12:8). Vanity does not mean “foolish pride.” The Hebrew word translated “vanity” means “breath, vapor, emptiness.” Transitory, frail, unsatisfying is the idea. After experiencing and examining the futility of life, Solomon (the author) exclaims: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Fear God, and keep His commandments. For this *is* the whole *duty* of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it is* good, or whether evil.” (Eccl. 12:13-14). The experiences of life drive us to the Lord, which includes driving us to our knees.

The Song of Solomon

The Song of Solomon is the fifth book of the Bible that does not contain a recorded prayer (Leviticus, Ruth, Esther, and Ecclesiastes are the others). In fact, like Esther, there is not even a reference to God! The subject of the Song of Solomon is love. The question is, the love of whom for whom? Many (such as Matthew Henry) say that the book symbolically portrays the love of God for Israel or the love of Christ for the church (many commentaries). Some says the Song depicts the love of a man for a woman and stops short of seeking a deeper meaning. On the face, the book is about the love of a man for a woman “and we should not disparage a book that presents such ideal love” (Bullock). At the same time, Paul says marriage mirrors the relationship between Christ and the church (Eph. 5:21-33). Reflecting on love, God’s love for us and our love for one another should cause us to thank God for love (1 Thess. 1:2-3).

Isaiah

164. When Isaiah had a vision of the Lord (Isa. 6:1-4), he cried, “Woe *is* me, for I am undone! Because I *am* a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts” (Isa. 6:5). When we compare ourselves to others, we conclude that we are righteous. When we see ourselves as compared to the Lord, we confess our sinfulness. Isaiah’s confession resulted in cleansing (Isa. 6:6-7). It was then that he heard the Lord say, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us? (Isa. 6:8). In response, Isaiah prayed, “Here *am* I! Send me” (Isa. 6:8) and the Lord said, “Go, and tell this people” (Isa. 6:9). Would you like for the Lord to use you to minister to others? Do what Isaiah did. Confess your sin, ask God to send you, and go tell it on the mountain!

165. The study of prayer in Isaiah is interesting. There are recorded prayers to be prayed in the future (Isa. 12, 25, 26). Some of the greatest encouragements to pray are in this book: “He gives power to the weak, and to *those who have* no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, but those who wait on the LORD Shall renew *their* strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint” (Isa. 40:29-31). “Fear not, for I *am* with you; be not dismayed, for I *am* your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand” (Isa. 41:10). When you feel that you are without the strength to face your situation, remember: the Lord is with you and as you do not fear, but wait on Him; He will renew your strength.

166. There are several reasons God does not answer prayer. Isaiah puts his finger on one of the major ones. He tells the Lord, “For our transgressions are multiplied before You, and our sins testify against us; for our transgressions *are* with us, and *as for* our iniquities, we know them” (Isa. 59:12). In the same chapter, Isaiah explains how this affects our prayer life. He says, “Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God and your sins have hidden *His* face from you so that He will not hear” (Isa. 59:1-2). The problem is not that God cannot hear our prayer; it is that because of our sin, He hides His face and favor and *will* not answer (see also Ps. 66:18). The solution is to confess and forsake our sins (Prov. 28:13), so we can once again be on good praying ground with the Lord.

167. In Isaiah 63-64, Isaiah has an ongoing conversion with the Lord. Isaiah asks a question and the Lord answers (Isa. 63:1; 63:2-6). In the course of this extended passage, Isaiah mentions the fact that Israel had rebelled and “grieved His Holy Spirit” (Isa. 63:10; Eph. 4:30). Isaiah also asks the Lord to “lead Your people” (Isa. 63:14). He calls God “our Father” (Isa. 63:16; 64:8). He prays for judgment on Israel’s enemies “that the nations may tremble at Your presence” (Isa. 64:2). He acknowledges Israel’s sin, saying, “We have sinned. In these ways we continue; and we need to be saved” (Isa. 64:5). This is the passage where Isaiah says, “all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags” (Isa. 64:6). “Filthy rags” refers to garments stained during menstruation, which made a woman ceremonially unclean. In other words, Isaiah is saying they were unfit for God’s presence (*NKJV Study Bible*). Their *righteousness* did not qualify them to enter God’s presence. The saddest line in this long conversation is, “There is no one who calls on Your name” (Isa. 64:7). Talk to the Lord. Like Isaiah, talk long and about all kinds of things. Don’t be like those who did not talk to Him at all.

Jeremiah

168. When the Lord told Jeremiah, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations” (Jer. 1:5; note: Jeremiah was a person before he was born!), Jeremiah replied, “Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I cannot speak, for I *am* a youth” (Jer. 1:6). No one knows for sure how old Jeremiah was at the time. He was probably in his late teens or early 20s. The point is that he told the Lord He was inexperienced; he felt ill-prepared to be God’s ambassador to the nations. The Lord told him not to make excuses (Jer. 1:7) and not to be afraid of their faces (Jer. 1:8) because He would be with Him (Jer. 1:8). When it comes to giving God’s message to people, we all feel inadequate and perhaps fearful of what they will think, say or do. The next time that happens to you tell the Lord how you feel and remember His answer to Jeremiah: don’t look at them; look to Me; I will be with you.

169. When God tells Jeremiah He will judge Jerusalem, Jeremiah says to the Lord, “Ah, Lord GOD! Surely You have greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, ‘You shall have peace,’ whereas the sword reaches to the heart” (Jer. 4:10). Is Jeremiah charging God with deception? No. In the context of the book of Jeremiah, it is obvious that Jeremiah is talking about false prophets who were at the time promising peace (Jer. 6:14; 14:13-14; 23:16-17; see also the Jewish paraphrase of this verse in the Targum). False prophets deceived Israel; Jeremiah is complaining that God has allowed them to do it. Later Jeremiah records that God says prophets who prophesy lies (Jer. 23:26) will be punished (Jer. 23:34). When you think God is allowing something that, in your opinion, He should not, remember God is just and faithful. He is also very patient. He will do what He says He will do—in His time. Trust Him.

170. Jeremiah prays, “O LORD, I know the way of man *is* not in himself; *it is* not in man who walks to direct his own steps. O LORD, correct me, but with justice; not in Your anger, lest You bring me to nothing. Pour out Your fury on the Gentiles, who do not know You, and on the families who do not call on Your name; for they have eaten up Jacob, devoured him and consumed him, and made his dwelling place desolate” (Jer. 10:23-25). The Hebrew word translated “correct” means “to discipline, correct.” This is a prayer that God would judge with justice: justice in disciplining His people and justice in judging those who have treated God’s people unjustly. There is a time to pray for God’s mercy and there is a time to pray for God’s justice. Part of Godly wisdom is knowing when to do which one.

171. Has the success of an evil person bothered you? It did Jeremiah. He took the issue to the Lord: “Righteous *are* You, O LORD, when I plead with You; yet let me talk with You about *Your* judgments. Why does the way of the wicked prosper? *Why* are those happy who deal so treacherously?” (Jer. 12:1). In Jeremiah’s case, God said, “If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, then how can you contend with horses?” (Jer. 12:5). In that particular situation, God was using the Babylonians to discipline His people, so He said things would get worse before they got better. God sometimes uses the wicked to discipline the righteous, which is a major point in the book of Habakkuk. The ultimate answer is in Psalm 73:17, where the Psalmist says that he too was bothered by this question until he looked at God’s Word in the Temple and understood the end of the wicked. In the end, the righteous God of the world will do what is right (Gen. 18:25). When you are bothered by such questions, do not hesitate to ask the Lord about what bothers you (like Jeremiah), look in the Word for answers (like the Psalmist), and trust the Lord to do what is right in the end (like Habakkuk).

172. Jeremiah lived during the time when God had had enough of Israel’s living in sin. “Thus says the LORD to this people: ‘Thus they have loved to wander; they have not restrained

their feet.” Therefore the LORD does not accept them; He will remember their iniquity now, and punish their sins” (Jer. 14:10). Jeremiah’s response was to pray for backslidden Israel: “O LORD, though our iniquities testify against us, do it for Your name’s sake; for our backslidings are many, we have sinned against You. O the Hope of Israel, his Savior in time of trouble, why should You be like a stranger in the land, and like a traveler *who* turns aside to tarry for a night? Why should You be like a man astonished, like a mighty one *who* cannot save? Yet You, O LORD, *are* in our midst, and we are called by Your name; do not leave us!” (Jer. 14:7-9). Jeremiah interceded for backsliders with great passion, boldly addressing God as one behaving like a traveler who had no concern for the country throughout which he was traveling, like a man taken by surprise, like a warrior who was powerless. Let us pray for backsliders we know, with the passion of Jeremiah.

173. Jeremiah 15 contains another dialogue between Jeremiah and the Lord. In the course of the conversation, Jeremiah says, “Your words were found, and I ate them, And Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; for I am called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts” (Jer. 15:16). Prayer and God’s Word go hand in hand. Jesus said, “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you” (Jn. 15:7). God delights in answering prayers that are according to His will. The Word of God reveals the will of God. Therefore, one of the most effective ways to pray is to see what God says in His Word He wants to do and in prayer, ask Him to do it.

174. In a brief prayer recorded in Jeremiah 16, Jeremiah addresses the Lord using three figures to describe his relationship to Him. “O LORD, my strength and my fortress, My refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come to You from the ends of the earth and say, ‘Surely our fathers have inherited lies, worthlessness and unprofitable *things*’” (Jer. 16:19). Jeremiah calls the Lord his strength, fortress and, and refuge. Fortress and refuge are replaces of safety. In the day of affliction, Jeremiah found his strength and safety in the Lord. Jeremiah goes on to say that although Judah had turned to the false gods of the Gentiles, in the day of affliction for Judah, the Gentiles would turn to the God of Israel, saying that their fathers had told them lies about worthless and unprofitable idols. While others around us trust in other “gods,” let us who know the Lord trust Him to be our strength and safety and pray that He will bring others to know Him as well.

175. Twice in a prayer recorded in Jeremiah 17, the prophet calls God his “hope.” He says, “O LORD, the hope of Israel, all who forsake You shall be ashamed” (Jer. 17:13) and “You *are* my hope in the day of doom” (Jer. 17:17; see also 14:8; 50:7). The English word “hope” implies doubt (“I hope so”). In the Bible, “hope” does not convey doubt; it is more the idea of “confidence” (Strong). In fact, the Greek word means “expectation.” When we pray, we should have hope, confidence, and even expectation that the Lord is able and willing to keep His promises and save us in the day of doom. The writer to the Hebrews says, “Do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward” (Heb. 10:35).

176. Because of their sin, God decided to discipline Israel. When Jeremiah proclaimed that message, the people responded, “Come and let us devise plans against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come and let us attack him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words” (Jer. 18:18). The people refused to accept God’s declaration of doom, they attacked God’s messenger with their tongue, and they plotted his death (see “dug a pit” in verse 20). Jeremiah prayed, “Shall evil be repaid for good? For they have dug a pit for my life. Remember that I stood before You to speak good for them, to turn away Your wrath from them” (Jer. 18:20). He was praying for their good, while they were planning his death! Like Jeremiah praying for backslidden Israel, we need to intercede for backsliders, even when they do not listen and attack us. By the way, Jeremiah goes

on to pray for God to discipline them. Jeremiah was not being vengeful; He simply realized that they had not just rejected him. They had rejected the Lord. God has to deal with them. Jeremiah prayed and proclaimed God's message. After that, it was all up to the Lord

177. Jeremiah complained to the Lord that when he preached His message, "Everyone mocks me" (Jer. 20:7). Upon reflection, Jeremiah said, "But the LORD *is* with me as a mighty, awesome One. Therefore my persecutors will stumble and will not prevail. They will be greatly ashamed, for they will not prosper. *Their* everlasting confusion will never be forgotten" (Jer. 20:11). Then he prayed, "But, O LORD of hosts, You who test the righteous, *and* see the mind and heart, let me see Your vengeance on them; for I have pleaded my cause before You" (Jer. 20:12). When people mock you for speaking God's truth, remember that the Lord is with you and let the Lord deal with them.

178. Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, had surrounded Jerusalem (Jer. 32:1-2). Jeremiah was in prison because he predicted that Jerusalem would fall (Jer. 32:2-5). Then the Lord told Jeremiah to buy a piece of land that had already been captured by the Babylonians (Jer. 32:6-8). Why should Jeremiah buy a worthless piece of land that was in the hands of a foreign power? The answer is that it was a symbolic way of saying that although God would use the Babylonians to punish the Jews by taking them out of the land, He would someday restore them to the land. Believing God, Jeremiah bought the land (Jer. 32:9-12) and prayed, "Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for You" (Jer. 32:17). No matter how dark the day, God is able to keep His promise. Regardless of how hopeless the situation is, there is hope—in the Lord.

Lamentations

179. The book of Lamentations is a lament over the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. The term "lamentations" comes from a Greek word that means "to cry aloud." The book has been called the "wailing wall of the Bible." For example, Jeremiah prays, "See, O LORD, that I *am* in distress; my soul is troubled; my heart is overturned within me, for I have been very rebellious. Outside the sword bereaves, at home, *it is* like death. They have heard that I sigh, *but* no one comforts me" (Lam. 1:20-21). When Jeremiah says, "I have been very rebellious," he identifies with the sins of his people. In this prayer, he is expressing his broken-heartedness over the consequences of the sins of Israel, which have now resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem. When we are overwhelmed with grief, we, too, should pour out our hearts to the Lord.

180. In one of the saddest passages in the Bible, Jeremiah describes the devastation as the Babylonians destroy Jerusalem and the Temple (Lam. 2:19-22). He pours out his heart to the Lord, who is judging Israel, "See, O LORD, and consider! To whom have You done this? Should the women eat their offspring, the children they have cuddled? Should the priest and prophet be slain in the sanctuary of the Lord?" (Lam. 2:20). He also invites others to join him in prayer: "Arise, cry out in the night, at the beginning of the watches; pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord. Lift your hands toward Him for the life of your young children, who faint from hunger at the head of every street" (Lam. 2:19). What Jeremiah is doing, in the words of Habakkuk, is asking God to "in wrath remember mercy" (Hab. 3:2). Even in the midst of devastating spiritual discipline, we should run to the Lord for mercy, and not be driven away from Him by what is happening.

181. In the midst of a long chapter (66 verses) during which Jeremiah speaks to the Lord and about the Lord, Jeremiah says, “Fear and a snare have come upon us, desolation and destruction” (Lam. 3:47). He is literally watching Jerusalem and the Temple being destroyed by the Babylonians. It could not get any worse for Israel. We have all been in that place when we thought it could not get any worse. What do you do then? Jeremiah prayed, “I called on Your name, O LORD, from the lowest pit” (Lam. 3:55). Whether you are in the lowest pit, on the highest mountain, or somewhere in between, it is time to call on the name of the Lord.

182. In Lamentations 5, Jeremiah prays, “Remember, O LORD, what has come upon us; look, and behold our reproach!” (Lam. 5:1). Jeremiah then describes in detail the destruction of Israel by the Babylonians (Lam. 5:2-20). He concludes: “Turn us back to You, O LORD, and we will be restored; renew our days as of old” (Lam. 5:21). Again, no matter how bad it gets, no matter how much it is our fault, it is time to turn to the Lord. Seek restoration and renewal.

Ezekiel

183. As a symbolic message, God gave Ezekiel detailed instructions concerning baking a loaf of bread, including how much to cook and how to cook it (Ezek. 4:9-12). It was to be baked over “fuel of human waste” (Ezek. 4:12). The point of this symbolic act was “to impress the people with the coming famine during the siege of Jerusalem and the people’s subsequent pollution in exile among the heathen” (Feinberg). Ezekiel objected, “Ah, Lord GOD! Indeed I have never defiled myself from my youth till now; I have never eaten what died of itself or was torn by beasts, nor has abominable flesh ever come into my mouth” (Ezek. 4:14). His point is that he had never eaten any defiled food. The Lord responded by saying he could use “cow dung instead of human waste” to prepare the food (Ezek. 4:15). In this incident, Ezekiel objected to obedience. Others, including no less than Moses, did the same, but both Moses and Ezekiel objected in prayer and the Lord supplied a way for them to be obedient. When you do not want to do something the Lord has commanded us to do, talk to Him. He will supply a way for the willing heart.

184. Overwhelmed by what appeared to be the complete annihilation of Israel at the hands of the Babylonians, Ezekiel fell on his face “and cried out, and said, ‘Ah, Lord GOD! Will You destroy all the remnant of Israel in pouring out Your fury on Jerusalem?’” (Ezek. 9:8). The word “ah” expresses a gasp of pain; he was horrified by what he saw. Ezekiel is praying for his countrymen, despite the gravity of their sin. He is also pleading God’s promise to preserve a remnant in Israel. This ought to encourage us in our intercession for sinning saints. The intercessor does not focus on the gravity of the sin, but on the grace of God.

185. When I tell you that the next recorded prayer in Ezekiel is, “Ah, Lord GOD! Will You make a complete end of the remnant of Israel?” (Ezek. 11:13), your first reaction might be that I am repeating the same prayer mentioned last time. Such is not the case, but at first glance, it might seem like it. The prayer in Ezekiel 9:8 and the one in Ezekiel 11:13 are virtually identical. Perhaps the lesson is that intercessors need to be persistent in their intercession (Lk. 18:3-8).

Daniel

186. You can pray like Daniel! As a result of reading Jeremiah (Dan. 9:2), Daniel began to pray. In a long prayer recorded in Daniel 9, he praised God (Dan. 9:4), confessed the sins of Israel (Dan. 9:5-14) and made a request (Dan. 9:15-19). He concludes with, “O Lord, hear! O Lord,

forgive! O Lord, listen and act! Do not delay for Your own sake, my God, for Your city and Your people are called by Your name” (Dan. 9:19). From Jeremiah, Daniel learned that Israel’s captivity in Israel would last seventy years. Daniel’s plea is for God to re-gather Israel, restore the temple, and re-institute the sacrifices, which is what Jeremiah said God would do anyway. His request is based on God’s mercy (Dan. 9:17, 18, 19) and God’s will. You can pray like Daniel if you begin with praise, confess your sins and make your request based on God’s Word and will.

187. Daniel was supernaturally given prophetic information, but he did not understand all that it meant. So he prayed, “Although I heard, I did not understand. Then I said, ‘My lord, what *shall be* the end of these *things?*’” Note: when Daniel did not understand what the Lord told him, he asked the Lord to explain. What a great lesson for us. When we do not understand what the Lord says in His Word, we need to ask the Lord to give us understanding (Ps. 119:18).

Hosea

188. Hosea prayed, “Give them, O LORD—What will You give? Give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts!” (Hosea 9:14). He prayed that “because they [the children of Israel] did not obey Him” (Hosea 9:18). This is something like us praying for the Lord to do something to get a backslider’s attention.

Joel

189. Moses wrote that if Israel disobeyed the Lord, He would judge them with a locust plague (Deut. 28:38, 39, 42), which is what happened during Joel’s lifetime (Joel 1:4-18). When Joel saw the overwhelming devastation caused by the locust, He prayed, “O LORD, to You I cry out; for fire has devoured the open pastures, and a flame has burned all the trees of the field. The beasts of the field also cry out to You, for the water brooks are dried up, and fire has devoured the open pastures” (Joel 1:19-20). Joel is saying that the damage done by the locust leaves things as though they were scorched by fire. When everything was destroyed, Joel turned to the Lord. When all hope is gone, hope in the Lord. As Barnes says, “This is the only hope left, and contains all hopes. From the Lord was the infliction; in Him is the healing.” At the end of your rope, turn loose and fall in the loving arms of the Lord.

190. After the judgment of locusts, Joel urged the priests to pray. “Let the priests, who minister to the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar; let them say, ‘Spare Your people, O LORD, and do not give Your heritage to reproach, That the nations should rule over them. Why should they say among the peoples, “Where *is* their God?”’” (Joel 2:17). Joel is telling the priests to tell God He needs to intervene because His reputation is at stake. The argument is that if God does not act, His heritage would be a reproach among the nations. The nations would say Israel’s God was not able to save them. A few verses later Joel says, “The LORD will answer and say to His people, ‘Behold, I will send you grain and new wine and oil, And you will be satisfied by them; I will no longer make you a reproach among the nations’” (Joel 2:19). God responds to prayers that are based on His character (mercy), promises, and even His reputation. The more you know about the Lord from His Word, the better your prayer life.

Amos

191. After receiving visions concerning coming judgment, Amos prayed, “O Lord GOD, forgive, I pray! Oh, that Jacob may stand, for he *is* small!” (Amos 7:2) and “O Lord GOD, cease, I pray! Oh, that Jacob may stand, for he *is* small!” (Amos 7:5). Amos intercedes for Israel to be forgiven and spared. Amos speaks in such a way as to touch the heart of God, pointing out that Jacob was small. Amos appeals to God’s pity. As a result of this prayer, the Lord canceled the judgment. Amos records, “So the Lord relented concerning this. ‘It shall not be,’ said the Lord.” (Amos 7:3). One of the great and glorious truths of the Bible is that God will forgive and judgment can be averted.

Obadiah

Obadiah is the sixth book of the Bible that does not contain a recorded prayer (Lev.; Ruth; Esther; Eccl.; and the Song of Solomon). Instead of recording Obadiah speaking to God, this, the shortest book in the Old Testament, records God speaking to Edom through Obadiah. As one author remarks, “Without prayer, Obadiah could not have received such a vision” (Lockyer). Let us pray and receive God’s message from His Word so that we may be a channel of His message to others.

Jonah

192. You know the story. When the Lord told Jonah to go the Nineveh, Jonah boarded a boat going in the opposite direction. To get Jonah’s attention, the Lord sent a storm (Jonah 1:4). Terrified, the sailors did everything they could to save the ship and themselves, including praying to their gods (Jonah 1:5-6). In desperation, they cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah (Jonah 1:7). The backslidden Jonah was forced to testify; He told them about the Lord (Jonah 1:8-9). When the sailors asked Jonah what they should do, he told them to toss him overboard (Jonah 1:10-12). Ignoring Jonah’s suggestion, they rowed harder, but to no avail (Jonah 1:13). Finally, they cried out to the LORD, “We pray, O LORD, please do not let us perish for this man’s life, and do not charge us with innocent blood; for You, O LORD, have done as it pleased You” (Jonah 1:14), threw Jonah overboard (Jonah 1:15), “feared the LORD exceedingly,” “offered a sacrifice to the LORD and took vows” (Jonah 1:17). These new converts learned quickly that when you are in a jam, you should pray for God’s deliverance and obey His Word.

193. As a result of divine discipline for disobedience, Jonah finds himself in the belly of a fish. All ten verses of Jonah 2 are the prayer Jonah prayed from inside that fish. In the prayer, Jonah describes his experience in the sea (Jonah 2:3-7). He was in deep trouble! Even though his situation was his own fault, Jonah cried out to the Lord. He prayed, “When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the LORD; and my prayer went *up* to You” (Jonah 2:7). He also told the Lord, “I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving” (Jonah 2:9). When in deep trouble, even life-threatening trouble that is your fault, you need to cry out to the Lord for deliverance and praise Him when it comes.

194. Have you ever wanted to die? Moses (Num. 11:11-15), Elijah (1 Kings 19:4), and Jonah did. In Jonah’s case, he was angry at God for saving the people of Nineveh (Jonah 4:1). So

he prayed, “Ah, LORD, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You *are* a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm. Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for *it is* better for me to die than to live!” (Jonah 4:2-3). In response, the Lord began to reason with Jonah (Jonah 4:4-11). It worked. Jonah did not die; he lived to write the book that bears his name. So when you want to die or when you are angry at God, tell Him how you feel and listen to what He has to say.

Micah

Micah is the seventh book of the Bible that does not contain a recorded prayer (Lev.; Ruth; Esther; Eccl.; the Song of Solomon; Obadiah). As in the other cases, that does not mean that Micah did not pray. In fact, he says things that indicate his dependence on the Lord, which surely included prayer. For example, Micah said, “Truly I am full of power by the Spirit of the LORD, and of justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin” (Micah 3:8). The issue is not that other people hear our prayers. It is that the Lord hears us pray.

Nahum

Nahum is the eighth book of the Bible that does not contain a recorded prayer (Lev.; Ruth; Esther; Eccl.; the Song of Solomon; Obadiah; Micah). Just because Nahum wrote a prayerless book, does mean that he lived a prayerless life. In what Nahum wrote, we hear God speaking and we hear him speaking for God. People do not need to hear us pray. They do need to hear us speak for the Lord.

Habakkuk

195. When Habakkuk surveyed the situation in Israel, he saw the sin of the people and the silence of God. He prayed, “O LORD, how long shall I cry, And You will not hear? Even cry out to You, ‘Violence!’ And You will not save. Why do You show me iniquity and cause *me* to see trouble? For plundering and violence *are* before me; there is strife, and contention arises. Therefore the law is powerless, and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; therefore perverse judgment proceeds” (Hab. 1:2-4). Habakkuk saw iniquity, injustice and the inactivity of God. The sins he saw included violence, strife, and contention. What troubled him most was that God was not doing anything. When people get upset at what God is doing or not doing, they often get angry and run *from* the Lord. Habakkuk took his complaint *to* the Lord, which is what we need to do. God informed His servant that He *was* doing something. He told Habakkuk to “Look among the nations and watch—be utterly astounded! For *I will* work a work in your days *which* you would not believe, though it were told *you*” (Hab. 1:2-5). God was raising up the Babylonians to discipline Israel. Habakkuk could not see it, but God was working. God’s message to Habakkuk and to us is, “Trust Me. I am working whether you think so or not.”

196. First, Habakkuk told the Lord he did not like the fact that He *was not* doing anything about the sin in Israel (Hab. 1:2-5). Then, when the Lord informed Habakkuk that He was raising up the Babylonians to discipline Israel, Habakkuk complained that he did not like what the Lord

was doing. So he prayed, “*You are* of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness. Why do You look on those who deal treacherously *and* hold Your tongue when the wicked devours a *person* more righteous than he?” (Hab. 1:13). In other words, Habakkuk is asking how God can do what He is doing, namely use the ungodly, wicked Chaldeans to punish sinning Israel and be the eternal, unchanging, holy, pure, faithful God of Israel. In short, God seems to be unrighteous because He is using an unrighteous instrument. God’s message to Habakkuk and to us is, “Trust Me. I know what I am doing” (Hab. 2:4). As He goes on to explain, He will judge the Chaldeans too (Hab. 2:6-20).

197. Habakkuk 3:2-15 is a prayer in response to the Lord telling Habakkuk that since His judgments are righteous, Habakkuk needed to trust Him. Habakkuk pleads for God’s mercy (Hab. 3:2) and praises the Lord for His just judgment (Hab. 3:3-15). Habakkuk prays, “O LORD, I have heard Your speech *and* was afraid; O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years! In the midst of the years make *it* known; in wrath remember mercy” (Hab. 3:2). When we see backslidden believers about to experience God’s just judgment, we should pray that God would revive His work and remember to be merciful even in the midst of His judgment.

Zephaniah

Zephaniah is the ninth book of the Bible that does not contain a recorded prayer (Lev.; Ruth; Esther; Eccl.; the Song of Solomon; Obadiah; Nahum; Micah). In fact, it teaches that there are times when it is too late to pray! Zephaniah says, “Be silent in the presence of the Lord GOD; for the day of the LORD *is* at hand” (Zeph. 1:7). Don’t wait until it is too late. Pray—now!

Haggai

Haggai is the tenth book of the Bible that does not contain a recorded prayer (Lev.; Ruth; Esther; Eccl.; the Song of Solomon; Obadiah; Nahum; Micah; Zephaniah). The remnant that returned from the captivity began building the Temple and then stopped. For sixteen years, they neglected the Temple. When we do not pray, we neglect the Lord and His work.

Zechariah

Zechariah is the eleventh book of the Bible that does not contain a recorded prayer (Lev.; Ruth; Esther; Eccl.; the Song of Solomon; Obadiah; Nahum; Micah; Zephaniah; Haggai), but it does record an interesting observation about spiritual things, which includes prayer. The people sent men to the Temple to pray (Zech. 7:2) and to ask the priest if they should keep the fifth month fast as they had done for many years (Zech. 7:3). In response, the Lord said, “When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh *months* during those seventy years, did you really fast for Me—for Me? When you eat and when you drink, do you not eat and drink *for yourselves*? Should you not *have obeyed* the words which the LORD proclaimed through the former prophets?” (Zech. 7:5-7). MacDonald explains, “Both their fasting and their feasting were for themselves, not for God. Before the destruction of Jerusalem, the former prophets had warned the people that God wants righteousness and reality rather than ritual.” It is possible to be totally selfish in our spiritual

activities, including praying (Jas. 4:3). Let us obey the Word of God and pray according to the will of God.

Malachi

Malachi is the twelfth book of the Bible that does not contain a recorded prayer (Lev.; Ruth; Esther; Eccl.; the Song of Solomon; Obadiah; Nahum; Micah; Zephaniah; Haggai; Zechariah). Malachi contains a series of God's accusations against Israel (1:2, 1:6; 2:14, 2:17; 3:7-8; 3:13). These are followed by questions supposedly asked by the audience but actually stated by the author. While these questions are responses to God's accusations, they are not prayers as such. The closest some people get to praying is questioning God's message delivered by His messenger. Let us draw near to the Lord with a humble heart to seek His blessing.

Matthew

198. What is known as the Lord's Prayer (Mt. 6:9-13) is not a prayer the Lord prayed. The actual Lord's prayer He prayed is recorded in John 17. The so-called "Lord's Prayer" is really the "Disciple's Prayer;" it is a pattern of prayer for us. It consists of two parts, each containing three petitions. As in the Ten Commandments, the first part refers to God and the second to people. The first part concerns God the Father (His glory, kingdom, will; that is, His person, program, and purpose) and the second is about us (our need for provision, pardon, and protection). The first petition is "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name" (Mt. 6:9). Addressing God as our Father in heaven indicates that this prayer is prayed by His children, those who have trusted His Son for eternal life. The idea is that His name be venerated, revered. This petition is a warning against self-seeking in prayer. We are not to begin with our wants, not even with ourselves; we are to begin with God. In his catechism, Luther asks, "How is God's name hallowed among us?" His answer is, "When both our life and doctrine are truly Christian." Let us begin our prayer with concern for God's glory.

199. The second petition concerning God in the Disciple's Prayer is, "Your kingdom come" (Mt. 6:10b). The Talmud says, "That prayer in which there is no mention of the Kingdom of God is not a prayer." This request is "an appeal for God's sovereignty to be absolutely manifested on earth" (McNeile). Again, we should begin our prayers with concern for God's glory.

200. The third petition concerning God in the Disciple's Prayer is, "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Mt. 6:10c). Notice the order of things to pray for concerning God. First, we are to pray that His name be hallowed and that His kingdom come. Then, we are to pray for His will. "We must know God's character before we know what He wills" (Plummer). Most people pray to get their will done in heaven as it is on earth. The purpose of prayer is to get God's will done on earth. Barclay says, "God is first given His supreme place, and then, and only then, we turn to ourselves and our needs and desires. It is only when God is given His proper place that all things fall into their proper places."

201. The first petition concerning us in the Disciple's Prayer is, "Give us this day our daily bread" (Mt. 6:11). "Bread" represents "all necessary temporal needs" (Walvoord). God wants us to trust Him for our daily physical needs. "The enjoyment of temporal goods is always enhanced by the recognition that they are God's gifts" (Plummer). We are not to be anxious about the unknown future (Mt 6:33). An elderly man once told me that he had prayed this prayer every day

for decades and he had never lacked for his daily provisions. He attributed that to God answering this prayer.

202. The second petition concerning us in the Disciple's Prayer is "and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Mt. 6:12). Sins are viewed as debts to God that need to be wiped away. Luke's version of the sample prayer, which was no doubt taught by Jesus more than once and in more than one form, uses the word "sins" (Lk. 11:4) instead of "debts." The debt of sin is forgiven under two conditions: confession (Mt. 6:12; 1 Jn. 1:9) and a forgiving spirit (Mt. 6:12). The petition "forgive us our debts" is confession and the phrase "as we forgive our debtors" means that we should also have a spirit of forgiveness. Part of prayer is being forgiven and forgiving. A four-year-old boy prayed, "Forgive us our trash baskets as we forgive those who put trash in our baskets."

203. The third petition concerning us in the Disciple's Prayer is "and do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one" (Mt. 6:13a). James says that God does not tempt believers with evil (Jas. 1:13). So what does it mean to ask God not to lead us into temptation? If we don't ask, is God going to lead us into temptation? This could be what grammarians call a litotes—stating something negatively in order to say something positive. For example, two ladies were having lunch. One was describing to the other the young man her daughter was going to marry. He had completed medical school and had a good practice. He came from a very good family, and she would marry into prestige and wealth. The other woman listened to all of this and said, "He's not objectionable, is he?" No, he wasn't objectionable. Stating negatively, she was saying positively, "Boy, she's got a good catch." In other words, this prayer is an understatement, asking God to *deliver* us from temptation. The point is that instead of praying to be delivered from temptation *at the moment* of temptation, we should pray that we will be delivered *before* the temptation.

204. The conclusion of the Disciple's Prayer, "For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen" (Mt. 6:13b), is not found in some manuscripts, but it is in the majority of manuscripts and also in Luke. The word "for" indicates the reason for "the whole prayer" (Alexander). In the final analysis, prayer is for God's work and will, for His greatest and glory, in His power. The word power is a reference to God's ability to answer these petitions. God's children should be dependent on Him for their daily physical provisions and for power to do His will.

205. Jesus exhorted His disciples: "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" (Mt. 7:7). The point is, be perseverant in prayer. Do not stop praying, just because there is no apparent answer at first. There is a rising intensity in the three verbs ask, seek, and knock. Citing some who call this "beggar wisdom," France explains, "If the beggar although harshly repulsed at first, knows that persistent appeals will open the hands of his hard-hearted fellow men, how much more certain should you be that your persistence in prayer will open the hands of your heavenly Father." This is the attitude of Jacob, who said, "I will not let You go unless You bless me!" (Gen. 32:26). Jesus explains ("for"), "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened" (Mt. 7:8). If you do not ask, you do not receive (Jas. 4:2). If you do not seek, you will not find and if you do not knock, no one will open the door. Be active, not passive, in prayer.

206. Matthew records, "And behold, a leper came and worshiped Him, saying, 'Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean'" (Mt. 8:2). The Greek word translated "worshiped" means "to make obeisance, do reverence to, worship." In other words, the leper knelt (Mk. 1:40) and fell on his face before the Lord (Lk. 5:12). The leper requested cleansing. Leprosy was regarded as incurable by human means (2 Kings 5:7). Thus, by asking Jesus to cleanse him, the

leper was exercising faith. Furthermore, this is the first instance of Jesus healing a leper, which makes the faith of the leper even more remarkable. In response to such extraordinary faith, “Jesus put out *His* hand and touched him, saying, ‘I am willing; be cleansed.’ Immediately his leprosy was cleansed” (Mt. 8:3). Jesus does the same today. He answers the prayers of people who believe He will do what He said He will do (see also Mk. 1:40-45; Lk. 5:12-16).

207. When a Gentile centurion pleaded with Jesus, “Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented,” Jesus said he would come and heal the servant (Mt. 8:6-7). The centurion responded, “Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this *one*, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does *it*” (Mt. 8:8-9). Jesus marveled and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!” (Mt. 8:10). “Then Jesus said to the centurion, ‘Go your way; and as you have believed, *so* let it be done for you.’ And his servant was healed that same hour” (Mt. 8:13). When you pray, remember that it is believing prayer that God delights to answer (see also Lk. 7:1-10). As you believe, so let it be done for you.

208. Matthew 8 contains one of the “emergency” prayers of the Bible. While the disciples were in a boat in the middle of the sea, a great storm arose. “The boat was covered with the waves” (Mt. 8:24). The disciples prayed, “Lord, save us! We are perishing!” (Mt. 8:25). After Jesus rebuked the disciples (“Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?”), the winds and the sea were stilled, and there was a great calm instead of a great storm (Mt. 8:26). In many ways, the disciples’ prayer is the ideal prayer. It recognizes who He is (Lord), who we are (those in need of His help), and the situation (help!). It is also short. Storms test our faith. In this case, the presence of fear was an indication of the absence of faith.

The next time you are about to perish, remember the emergency prayer, “Lord, save us” (see also Mk. 4:35-41; Lk. 8:22-25) and also remember to trust the Lord to calm the storm in your soul.

209. It might strike some as strange, but Matthew 8 records the prayer of demons! They asked Jesus, “If You cast us out, permit us to go away into the herd of swine” (Mt. 8:31) and Jesus granted their request (Mt. 8:32; see also Mk. 5:1-20; Lk. 8:26-27). Matthew includes this “prayer” to demonstrate the authority of Jesus even over demons. It reminds us that we pray to One who has all power in all the universe (Mt. 28:18).

210. A ruler said to Jesus, “My daughter has just died, but come and lay Your hand on her and she will live” (Mt. 9:18; see also Mk. 5:22-24, 35-43; Lk. 8:40-42, 49-56). Jesus went to the house “took her by the hand, and the girl arose” (Mt. 9:25). He who can raise the dead has the power to give life to your “dead” situation. As you pray today, remember the power of God can do the humanly impossible.

211. Two blind men prayed, “Son of David, have mercy on us!” (Mt. 9:17). When Jesus said to them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” they said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord.’ Then He touched their eyes, saying, ‘According to your faith, let it be to you’” (Mt. 9:28-29). These physically blind men had spiritual sight to see that Jesus was the Messiah (“Son of David”) and spiritual sense to ask for mercy. When you cannot see the solution to your situation, have the spiritual sense to ask for mercy.

212. Matthew records a prayer Jesus prayed: “I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and *the one* to whom the Son wills to reveal *Him*” (Mt. 11:25-27). Addressing the

Father as the Sovereign of the universe, Jesus acknowledges that God the Father hides spiritual truth from those who consider themselves wise and He reveals spiritual truth to babes, that is, those who are His children. Among other things, we should thank God for revealing spiritual truth to us.

213. Even if you have trusted the Lord to save you, there will be times when you will still need to be saved. Peter is an illustration of this truth. When the Disciples, who were in a boat, saw Jesus walking on water, Peter said, “Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water” (Mt. 14:28). Responding to the Lord’s invitation for Peter to come to Him, Peter walked on the water, “but when he saw that the wind *was* boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, ‘Lord, save me!’” (Mt. 14:30). Jesus saved Peter and rebuked him, telling him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” (Mt. 14:31). Like Peter, when we fear instead of exercising faith, we fail. Also, like Peter, when we are sinking in deep water, we should ask the Lord to save us. Obviously, Peter was not asking the Lord to save Him from damnation, which is the way we usually use the word “save.” He was asking the Lord to save him from damage and/or death. The next time you are sinking fast, remember, the prayer to pray is simply, “Lord, save me!”

214. When Jesus journeyed to the region of Tyre and Sidon, He encountered a Gentile woman (Mt. 15:21-28; Mk. 7:24-30). She cried out to Him, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed” (Mt. 21:22). At first, Jesus did not answer her and when He did, He told her He had been sent to Israel (Mt. 15:23-24). Her response was “Lord, help me!” (Mt. 15:25). Again, Jesus rejected her plea, saying, “It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw *it* to the little dogs” (Mt. 15:26). Her response to that was, “Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table” (Mt. 15:27). Then Jesus said, “O woman, great *is* your faith! Let it be to you as you desire” (Mt. 15:28). Matthew adds, “Her daughter was healed from that very hour” (Mt. 15:28). Persistence in prayer pays.

215. Pleading with the Lord, a man prayed, “Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him” (Mt. 17:15-16; see also Mk. 9:14-29; Lk. 9:37-43). After the Lord healed the child by casting out a demon, “the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, ‘Why could we not cast it out?’” (Mt. 17:19). Jesus told them, “Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting” (Mt. 17:20-21). Notice that the son was not healed because the *disciples* did not have faith. Faith healers who claim people are not healed because the sick person does not have faith are simply wrong. Jesus said it was because the *healer* did not have faith! Also, note some situations are so severe they require prayer and fasting, which takes time.

216. Reviewing the recorded prayers of the Bible reveals many prayers the Lord answered and a few He did not answer. For example, “The mother of Zebedee’s sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him. And He said to her, ‘What do you wish?’ She said to Him, ‘Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom’” (Mt. 20:20-21; see also Mk. 10:35-45). Jesus did not grant her request (Mt. 20:23). James warns us, “You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend *it* on your pleasures” (Jas. 4:3). The prayers the Lord answers are prayers according to the will of God for the glory of God, not the ones that are according to our will for our glory.

217. As Jesus passed by them, two blind men cried out, “Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!” (Mt. 20:30; see also Mk. 10:46-52; Lk. 18. 35-43). When the crowd told them to be quiet, “they cried out all the more, saying, ‘Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!’” (Mt.

20:31). Resisting the peer pressure of their contemporaries, recognizing that Jesus is the Messiah (“Son of David”), and having the spiritual sight to see Jesus had the ability to heal them, these two blind men asked for mercy. Moved by compassion, Jesus did just that (Mt. 20:34). Resist the doubts of the crowd. Bring your humanly impossible situation to the compassionate One who is able to perform miracles.

218. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You *will*” (Mt. 26:39-44; see also Mk. 14:32-42; Lk. 22:39-46). He prayed this prayer three times (Mt; 26:42). As numerous commentators have pointed out, the cup is not a reference to His physical death. In the Old Testament, the metaphor of “the cup” described divine judgment on sin (Taylor). So the cup is the horrifying cup of vicarious suffering (France); it is dying for the sins of the world on the cross. It was not possible for Jesus to be the Messiah and to avoid drinking this cup (Cole). His desire to bypass the cup of the cross was a natural human desire, which underscores His humanity and His willingness to bear the sin of the world is the response of the divine Son. From this, we learn that sometimes God says “No” to our requests and we, like Jesus, should submit to the will of the Father. We should also be deeply grateful He died for our sins.

219. On the cross, Jesus cried, “My God, My God, Why have You forsaken Me?” (Mt. 27:46). This is the only time in the Synoptic Gospels that Jesus addresses God without calling Him “Father.” While hanging on the cross, Jesus uttered seven sayings. His first utterance was, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Lk. 23:34). The seventh utterance was, “Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit” (Lk. 23:46). In other words, in the opening and closing words, Jesus said, “Father,” but in the central utterance, the fourth, he said, “My God, My God.” At this precise moment, Jesus regarded His relationship with God as a judicial one. He saw Himself primarily as a man before God, not as the Son before the Father. Theologians explain that God judicially forsook Jesus, who was bearing the sins of the whole world. In the words of Isaiah, He was wounded for our transgressions (Isa. 53:5). In the words of John the Baptist, The Lamb of God took away the sin of the world (Jn. 1:29). In the words of Paul, He was made sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21); He was made a curse for us (Gal. 3:13). Believers have felt forsaken by God. When they do, they, like Jesus, should take their concerns to the Lord in prayer (see Ps. 13).

Mark

220. Mark relates: “Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, saying, ‘Let *us* alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!’ But Jesus rebuked him, saying, ‘Be quiet, and come out of him!’ And when the unclean spirit had convulsed him and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him. Then they were all amazed, so they questioned among themselves, saying, ‘What is this? What new doctrine *is* this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him’” (Mk. 1:23-27). The demons acknowledged Jesus’ humanity (“Jesus of Nazareth”) and His deity (“the Holy One of God”). The people recognized the power of Jesus. We pray in Jesus’ name, remembering who He is and what He can do.

221. When they brought a deaf man to Jesus, “He took him aside from the multitude, and put His fingers in his ears, and He spat and touched his tongue. Then, looking up to heaven, He sighed, and said to him, ‘Ephphatha,’ that is, ‘Be opened.’ Immediately his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke plainly” (Mk. 7:33-35). Customarily

when we pray, we bow our heads and close our eyes. In this case, Jesus prayed with His head lifted up and with His eyes wide open. When it comes to prayer, the issue is not the closed eyes; it is the mind's eye open to God's Word. It is not the bowed head; it is the bowed heart.

222. The rich young ruler asked Jesus, "Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" (Mk. 10:17; see Mt. 19:16-30; Lk. 18:18-30). Jesus answered the question with a question, "Why do you call Me good? No one *is* good but One, *that is*, God" (Mk. 10:18). In other words, Jesus is asking the man if he recognizes who He (Jesus) is. When there was no response, Jesus said, "You know the commandments" (Mk. 10:19) and quoted the last six of the Ten Commandments (Mk. 10:19). In order to obtain eternal life, we must know who Jesus is and who we are. Jesus is the Son of God and we are sinners, that is, people who have broken God's Law. The young man did not get it! He said, "Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth" (Mk. 10:20). He did not understand that Jesus is the Son of God ("teacher"), nor did he comprehend that he was a sinner (he said he kept all the commandments from his youth!). So Jesus told him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me" (Mk. 10:21). Is Jesus saying that we must sell everything to obtain eternal life? Of course not (Jn. 3:16). As He explains to the disciples, it is hard "for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God!" (Mk. 10:24 NKJV). Since the young man was trusting his riches, Jesus told him he had to get rid of them so he would trust Him (Jesus) and not his money. The way to obtain eternal life is to "believe on Him for eternal life" (1 Tim. 1:16), that is, trust Jesus Christ for the *gift* of eternal life (Rom. 6:23).

Luke

223. Ten lepers prayed, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" (Lk. 17:13). Jesus healed all ten, but only one returned to thank Him (Lk. 17:14-16). Jesus asked, "Were there not ten cleansed? But where *are* the nine?" (Lk. 17:17). Based on this case study, only 10% thanked the Lord for His answered prayer. Let us be part of the 10%, not part of the 90%.

224. Jesus told Peter, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift *you* as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to *Me*, strengthen your brethren" (Lk. 22:31-32). We should pray for backslidden believers to not only return to the Lord but also to serve the Lord when they do.

225. When they crucified Jesus, He prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Lk. 23:34). He prayed. He did not remain silent. He did not speak against them. He did not seek revenge. He prayed. He prayed for their forgiveness, not for relief, not for retaliation, but for their remission. If you wish to be like Jesus, when people stab you in the back, pray for their forgiveness, even when they do not understand what they have done.

226. On the cross, Jesus prayed, "Father, into your hands I commit My spirit" (Lk. 23:46). This prayer is a quotation from Psalm 31:5. It expresses a voluntary submission to the Father. The death of Jesus was a voluntary death. He did not die of exhaustion or crucifixion. He voluntarily laid down His life (Jn. 10:17-18). In the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross, Jesus voluntarily submitted to the Father in prayer. He is our example (1 Pet. 2:21).

John

227. When Jesus told the woman at the well, “Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life” (Jn. 4:14), she replied, “Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw” (Jn. 4:14). Jesus responded by telling her, “Go, call your husband, and come here” (Jn. 4:15). Jesus knew that she was living with a man who was not her husband (Jn. 4:17-18). He was telling her that in order to have eternal life, she needed to know she was a sinner. Later in the conversation, when she said she knew the Messiah was coming (Jn. 4:25), Jesus told her, “I who speak to you am *He*” (Jn. 4:26). The woman at the well then told the people in the town, “Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?” (Jn. 4:29). She got it; she believed and so did they. They said, “We believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard *Him* and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world” (Jn. 4:42). From this conversation, it is obvious that in order to have eternal life people must know who they are (sinners) and who Jesus is (the Messiah) and they must trust Him for eternal life.

228. A nobleman’s son was so sick he was “at the point of death” (Jn. 4:47). The nobleman prayed, “Sir, come down before my child dies!” (Jn. 4:49). When Jesus told him, “Go your way; your son lives’... the man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he went his way” (Jn. 4:50). Notice the text says the man believed *the word Jesus spoke to him*. Later, when the nobleman found out that his son had been healed at the very time Jesus spoke to him, the text says “he himself believed, and his whole household” (Jn. 4:53). Notice the text does not say what the man believed. Many commentaries says the difference between the two statements concerning the man’s faith is that the first one simply says that the man believed what Jesus said about healing and the second statement is the man’s belief in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God (Jn. 20:31; see Westcott, Morris, etc.). There is a difference in believing in something Jesus said and believing in Jesus for eternal life. There is a difference in believing Jesus can heal (give physical life) and believing Jesus can save (give eternal life). There is a difference in believing what Jesus can do for someone else and believing what Jesus can do for you.

229. Standing before the tomb of Lazarus, Jesus prayed, “Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said *this*, that they may believe that You sent Me” (Jn. 11:41-42). This prayer is a simple, short prayer of thanksgiving. There is no request, although that may be implied. At any rate, we should always remember to thank our heavenly Father. When was the last time you thanked the Father just for listening to your prayers? That’s what Jesus did.

230. Before He prayed that famous prayer in Gethsemane, Jesus prayed, “Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, ‘Father, save Me from this hour?’ But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name” (Jn. 12:27-28). Jesus’s agony over His coming death was not confined to Gethsemane. He felt it and expressed it almost a week before. As He struggled with that suffering, two alternatives occurred to Him. First, the Father could save Him from death. Later, in the Garden of Gethsemane, He would pray, “O My Father, if it is possible let this cup pass from me” (Mt. 26:39). The second possibility, of course, is that He would die. Since that was the reason Jesus had come into the world and to this hour, He submissively prays, “Father, glorify your name.” Pain is not pleasing; death is not a delight. Jesus is not blind to its anguish; He trembles at the sight of the cross. At the same time, He sees its necessity and is fully aware that in the calculations of heaven, suffering, properly responded to, leads to glory. It is perfectly

permissible, yes, it is preferable, to express your pain in prayer. Don't bury your head in the sand. Look reality in its ugly face. Then, commit yourself to God being glorified in your agonizing situation.

231. Matthew 6 records the "Disciples Prayer," the one Jesus taught disciples to pray. John 17 records the "Lord's Prayer," the one He prayed. In His prayer, Jesus prayed for Himself (Jn. 17:1-5), for the disciples (Jn. 17:6-19), and for all believers (Jn. 17: 20-26), that is, for their unity (Jn. 17:20-23) and their future glory (Jn. 17:24-26). It is beyond the scope of these brief comments on the recorded prayers in the Bible to examine everything in John 17, but one statement stands out to me, namely, "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth" (Jn. 17:17). The Lord desires that His disciples be sanctified set apart to Him, by the transforming truth of His Word. For this to be accomplished, Jesus must intercede for us and we must cooperate with His work in us.

Acts

232. In Acts 1, Peter made a speech to 120 of the faithful followers of the Lord, seeking their cooperation concerning the replacement of Judas (Acts 1:15-22). In his speech, He quoted two passages from the Psalms, applying them to Judas (Acts 1:20). The group selected two men (Acts 1:23) and prayed, "You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place" (Acts 1:24-25). Then, they cast lots (Acts 1:26)! Was this a special case or does this mean that we should cast lots to determine the will of God?

Casting lots was never meant to be a universal principle. In the Old Testament, the casting of lots determined the offices and duties in the Temple (Barclay). The practice disappeared after Pentecost. This was a special case. They cast lots because they were replacing an apostle. Apostles were chosen by the Lord, not humans. Casting lots allowed the Lord to make the choice of the replacement of Judas (Prov. 16:33).

What they did that can be applied to us is they 1) looked at the Scripture, 2) prayed, and 3) agreed as a group. The Lord had opened their minds to understand the Scripture (Lk. 24:45) and the Lord had breathed on them, imparting to them the Holy Spirit until Pentecost (Jn. 20:22). In other words, Peter was guided into truth of the Word of God by the Spirit of God. In determining the will of God we should search the Scripture and seek God's grace in prayer. Also, remember that "in the multitude of counselors *there is safety*" (Prov. 11:14).

233. After being arrested (Acts 4:3), told to "not speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus" (Acts 4:18), and being "severely threatened" (Acts 4:17, 21), Peter and John returned to a small group of believers (Acts 4:23), who prayed with one accord. In their prayer, they acknowledged that God rules and overrules, quoted Scripture applying it to their situation, and they requested, "Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus" (Acts 4:24-30). They requested that they be granted "all boldness" to speak God's Word, that is, they desired the highest degree or every kind of boldness. They wanted to have the courage to proclaim their message without fear or favor (Bruce). If you have felt timid or intimidated to speak for Christ, the solution is prayer. More specifically, it is group prayer. Pray with others for the courage to speak for the Lord.

234. As Stephen was being stoned, he prayed, “‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not charge them with this sin.’ And when he had said this, he fell asleep” (Acts 7:59-60). Like the One he called Lord, Stephen prayed for those who were killing him (Lk. 23:34). In so doing, he died a victor, not a victim (Lockyer). What an example for us to do what Jesus taught: “Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you” (Mt. 5:44)!

235. When the Lord appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus, Paul asked, “Who are You, Lord?” (Acts 9:5). Hearing the answer and realizing the One who had been crucified was standing before him alive, Paul “trembling and astonished, said, ‘Lord, what do You want me to do?’” (Acts 9:6). In other words, when Paul realized who Jesus is, he asked what the Lord wanted him to do. Perhaps we need to think more about who Jesus is. We definitely need to ask the Lord what He wants us to do before, during, and after our encounter with Him in His Word.

Romans

236. In a sense, the prayers in the epistles are some of the most important prayers in the Scripture, because they are examples of what we should be praying for. Paul told those at Rome, “First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world” (Rom. 1:8). Though they were not his converts, nevertheless, Paul rejoiced that they had faith and that their faith was everywhere published. This is a remarkable glimpse into Paul’s spiritual attitude. Their faith was not the result of his ministry; he had never met them. Yet, upon hearing of their faith, he spontaneously thanked God for them. Most believers today would do well to praise God for their family and friends who come to Christ, as well as those they have never seen. The next time you hear of someone trusting Christ, use it as a reason to pause to praise God.

237. Paul told the Romans, “First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, making request if, by some means, now or at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you. For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established—that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me” (Rom. 1:8-12). In his prayers, Paul thanked God for the Roman believers and asked God for an opportunity to minister to them. Like Paul, we should thank God for other believers. Paul said he did this “without ceasing.” Should we not do it at least once in a while? Like Paul, we should also pray for opportunities for ministry, at least the ministry of encouragement.

238. After exhorting the strong to bear with weaker believers (Rom. 15:1-2) and using Christ as an example of One who did not please Himself (Rom. 15:3-4), Paul expresses a “prayer wish” for his readers: “Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind *and* one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 15:5-6). Acknowledging that God is the source of endurance (the meaning of the Greek word translated “patience”) and comfort, Paul prays for the unity of the community of believers. Unity provides united praise to God. The mouth and mind of each believer are unified and believers are unified as they glorify God in word, prayer, and song. If believers are divided over some issue, God will not be glorified by the unified whole. Let us pray for unity.

239. In the conclusion to the book of Romans, Paul's characteristic benediction, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you," appears twice (Rom. 16:20, 24). Chrysostom says, "Like a true teacher, he helped not only with counsel but with prayers." Like Paul, let us pray for the blessing of grace upon believers. The brethren at Antioch "commended" Paul and Silas to the grace of God (Acts 15:40). The Greek word translated "commended" means to "to give over to, commit, deliver up." In prayer, deliver the saints you know to the grace of God.

240. The Book of Romans concludes with a doxology of praise: "Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith—to God, alone wise, *be* glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen" (Rom. 16:25-27). In other words, Paul praises God for His power and wisdom. Our wise and powerful God is able to establish us (see Rom. 1:11), which He does through the preaching of His Son Jesus Christ. Take a moment to praise God for His wisdom, power and work in your life.

1 Corinthians

241. Paul told the Corinthian believers, "I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus" (1 Cor. 1:4). In spite of the many problems in the church at Corinth, Paul was grateful to God for the grace given to them. This grace was given to them "by Christ Jesus," literally translated "in Christ Jesus." Those who are in Christ, have had God's grace bestowed upon them. We need to thank God for believers we know, even believers filled with problems, like the Corinthians. We can at least thank God that they have experienced the grace of God.

242. If the benedictions at the end of the books in the New Testament are considered prayers, and they should be, 1 Corinthians ends with a prayer, namely, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you" (1 Cor. 16:23). Grace is a *big* issue in Paul's epistles. He habitually opens and closes his epistles, speaking about grace; he frequently mentions grace in his writings. It was constantly on his mind. Our prayers should be filled with requests for God's grace on God's children.

2 Corinthians

243. Paul begins 2 Corinthians with a benediction: "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God" (2 Cor. 1:3-4). Praise God for His comfort in tribulation. He comforts us that we may be able to comfort others who are going through what we have experienced. So, praise God for the comfort he has given you and look for opportunities to comfort others with what you have learned.

244. Paul closes 2 Corinthians with a benediction: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit *be* with you all. Amen" (2 Cor. 13:14). Paul invokes the blessing of the triune God. The blessing of God the Son is grace, which includes the power to do the will of God (2 Cor. 12:9). The blessing of God the Father is His love. The blessing of God the Holy Spirit is His "communion," a Greek word that means "fellowship." The

Holy Spirit gives believers fellowship with God and with each other. Paul's desire for the church is that they experience grace, which is the means of discovering love and love, which is the basis for fellowship. Believers should love and enjoy each other, not fight and battle with each other. They need grace, not self-seeking; love, not anger; communion, not contention. Praise God for His grace and love that makes fellowship with Him and the brethren possible.

Galatians

245. Paul concludes his letter to the Galatians with the benediction: "Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with your spirit" (Gal. 6:18). How appropriate for him to conclude his discussion of law and grace with a desire that the Galatian believers experience grace, not law, putting the focus on the internal ("with your spirit"), not the external. Pray for believers to be strengthened in the "inner man" (Eph. 3:16), not just to be obedient to external law.

Ephesians

246. Paul prays for the Ephesians: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him" (Eph. 1:17). He goes on to say, "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened" (Eph. 1:18). Paul is praying for them to have a deeper understanding of things pertaining to God. Beginning in the middle of verse 18, he explains the three specific things he wants them to understand, namely, the "hope of His calling" (Eph. 1:18), "the riches of the glory of *His* inheritance in the saints" (Eph. 1:18; italics added), and "the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe" (Eph. 1:19). Paul prays that they would understand their calling (to be in Christ in the church), inheritance (believers are God's inheritance!) and power (resurrection power). Now there is a prayer list that ought to be used in a church prayer meeting! If you are praying for believers you want to see grow, pray that they will have increased understanding of their calling, inheritance, and power.

247. Paul's second prayer for the Ephesians is, "That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man" (Eph. 3:16). Paul piles one word on top of another to emphasize the power he desires believers to experience. "Strengthened with might" means "to wax strong with power." This power is to be in the inner man through the Holy Spirit. When we pray for believers, this request should be at the top of our prayer list.

248. Paul records two prayers for the Ephesians. Both include a prayer for power, power he describes as exceedingly great and mighty (Eph. 1:19). It is the power that raised Christ from the dead (Eph. 1:20) and comes from the indwelling Holy Spirit (Eph. 3:16). Is Paul asking for too much? In Ephesians 3, he posts a doxology that answers that very question. He says God is "able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20). God is able. He is exceedingly able. He is exceedingly abundantly able. He is exceedingly abundantly able beyond all we ask. He is exceedingly abundantly able above all we can imagine. Furthermore, He is able to do this in us, for Paul adds, "according to the power that works in us" (Eph. 3:20b). The power of God through the Holy Spirit works in us to bring us to spiritual maturity. Since God is able, "To Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Eph. 3:21). Since God is able to do those kinds of spiritual things in the believer, believers ought to pray for one another as Paul prayed. Our prayers for each other are often shallow. Paul's prayer reached

the roots and soared to the heights. Instead of just praying, “Lord, bless ‘em,” or “Lord, heal ‘em,” or “Lord, speak to them,” pray like Paul: “Lord, strengthen them that Christ might dwell in them” (see Eph. 3:17).

249. Paul ends his letter to the Ephesians with the benediction: “Grace *be* with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity” (Eph. 6:24). The Greek word translated “sincerity” can mean either “incorruptibility” or “immortality” (see “with a love incorruptible” in the NASB and “with undying love” in the NIV). Some take it to be a reference to a pure love (“sincerity” in the NKJV; Barnes; JFB; Hoehner) and others as a reference to love that lasts (A. T. Robertson; MacDonald). John Wesley, as well as others, combines both: “without any mixture of corrupt affections. And that with continuance, till grace issue in glory.” Paul’s prayer is that believers who genuinely love the Lord Jesus may experience grace. Let us pray for one another to experience the grace of God today.

Philippians

250. Paul told the Philippians, “I thank my God upon every remembrance of you” (Phil. 1:3). In other words, he is saying, “Every time I think of you, I thank God for you.” He adds, “Always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy” (Phil. 1:4). The expression “in every prayer of mine” seems to suggest that Paul had a set time for prayer and when he prayed during these times he prayed for the Philippians. Paul explains, “For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now” (Phil. 1:5). Paul thanked God for the fellowship of the Philippians in the gospel, because the Philippians sent money to Paul when he first left Philippi and went to Thessalonica (Phil. 4:15-16) and now they have sent him support in Rome (Phil. 4:10, 18). No wonder Paul thanked God for them—they sent him money! Paul also thanked God for believers who did *not* send him money (1 Cor. 9:15, 18) and who were having all kinds of problems besides (1 Cor. 1:4). In the case of the Philippians, Paul is thanking God for what he saw the believers at Philippi do. We, too, should thank God for what we see believers do, especially what they do to further the gospel.

251. Paul writes, “And this I pray that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment” (Phil. 1:9). Paul prays their love will increase, which indicates their love already exists. He also prays that their love will increase in knowledge and discernment. A person could have a great deal of love that is misdirected. The Word of God gives one the knowledge needed to have the kind of love Paul has in mind. For example, the Word tells a believer is to not love the world (1 Jn. 2:15), but to love God. Discerning love discriminates between good and evil. Paul goes on to say, “That you may approve the things that are excellent” (Phil. 1:10a). The things that are excellent are spiritual things over the material, internal things over the external, and eternal things over the temporal (2 Cor. 4:16-18). Paul adds “that you may be sincere and without offense until the day of Christ” (Phil. 1:10b). The purpose of approving things that are excellent is being sincere and without offense. Finally, Paul says, “Being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God” (Phil. 1:11). The result of abounding, knowledgeable, and discerning love is being filled with all kinds of fruit which are righteous acts (Jas. 3:18). The root is love; the fruits are righteous deeds (Rom. 6:16). To sum up, like Paul, we should pray that believers will grow in love so they will approve of the things that are excellent and be fruitful.

252. Paul closes Philippians with his characteristic benediction: “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all” (Phil. 4:23). Don’t just say grace at meals. Don’t just pray for grace for yourself (Heb. 4:12). Pray for all the believers you know, that they might experience the grace of God today.

Colossians

253. Although he had never seen the Colossians (Col. 2:1), Paul thanked God for them. “We (Paul and Timothy; see Col. 1:1) give thanks to God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love for all the saints, because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven” (Col. 1:3-5a). Paul and Timothy always thanked God for the Colossians, whenever their prayers included them. Now, they have heard from Epaphras (Col. 1:7) three things about the Colossians that prompted them to thank God for them. They thanked God for the faith of the Colossians. This is a reference to walking by faith. They also thanked God for their love for all the saints. Not all saints are lovable. Yet, they thanked God for the love for *all* the saints. They thanked God for the hope of the Colossians. The Greek word translated “hope” means “expectation,” not merely a wish. The Colossians were expecting coming glory (Col. 1:27). When you hear about saints walking by faith, acting in a loving way, or living in light of their expectation of heaven, thank God for them.

254. Paul says, “For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” (Col. 1:9). Since the day that Paul and Timothy (Col. 1:1) had heard from Epaphras (Col. 1:7) of the Colossians’ growth in faith and love, they had not ceased to pray for them. Their prayer was that the Colossians would be filled with the knowledge of God’s will. Knowledge of the will of God comes from the Word of God. Their desire was that this knowledge of God’s will would be “in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” The word “insight” sums up the essence of these words. In other words, Paul is not just praying for information but insight. This insight is to be spiritual, that is, it is to be the insight into the will of God, which comes from the Holy Spirit. It is possible to have information about the will of God and not have insight into how to apply that knowledge. Paul goes on to say that the result of having spiritual insight would be that they would walk “worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him” (Col. 1:10a). He then itemizes some of the elements that constitute a life pleasing to the Lord (Col. 1:10b-12). In the Greek text, these are expressed by four participles rendered in English by: 1) being fruitful, 2) increasing in the knowledge of God, 3) being strengthened with all might, 4) giving thanks. This prayer should be a priority in every church prayer meeting. Pray that the saints will have insight into God’s will.

255. Paul concludes Colossians with the benediction, “Grace *be* with you” (Col. 4:18). This is the shortest possible form of Paul’s customary concluding benediction. The essence is “May the Lord grant you grace.” It is brief, but it is rich. A. T. Robertson writes: “There is no richer word than the word ‘grace.’” “It is God’s favor in Christ to the undeserving, transforming their hearts and lives and leading them on to glory” (*Baker’s NT Commentary*). Pray for the Lord to grant grace to the believers you know. We all need grace to be transformed into Christlikeness.

1 Thessalonians

256. In 1 Thessalonians, Paul thanked God for the Thessalonians: “We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father” (1 Thess. 1:2-3). *Work* of faith, *labor* of love, and *patience* of hope all relate to their effort. Their faith produced work. Their love produced labor. Their expectation before God that Jesus Christ is coming back produced endurance. When Paul saw their work, labor, and endurance, he thanked God for them. Believers today should follow Paul’s example of yesterday and thank God for people’s efforts.

257. Paul prayed, “Now may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way to you” (1 Thess. 3:11). In 1 Thessalonians, Paul expressed the desire to return to them, but said Satan hindered him, putting some unidentified obstacle in his way. Here Paul asked God to direct, that is, make straight—remove the obstacle—so that he could once again visit the Thessalonians. This is not the only time Paul prayed that he would be able to see people (see also Rom. 1:9-10; 1 Cor. 4:19; also Acts 18:21). In the case of the Thessalonians, Paul wanted to visit them to “perfect what is lacking in [their] faith” (1 Thess. 3:10). Thus, in essence, Paul is praying for the development of their faith. Paul’s second request in this prayer is, “And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you” (1 Thess. 3:12). The purpose of Paul’s prayer was “that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints” (1 Thess. 3:13). So, in this prayer, Paul prayed for two things: 1) that he could come to them, 2) that they would increase in love. And yet, there is more here than that. He wanted to come to them so he could complete that which was lacking in their faith. Thus, Paul prayed for their growth in faith and love. Believers today consistently pray for problems. Prayers in the New Testament constantly concern spiritual growth. Let us also pray for spiritual growth, growth in faith and love.

258. At the end of his first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul prays for them again: “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. 5:23). This prayer consists of two requests. The first request is for complete sanctification. The word “sanctify” means “to set apart for God.” “Many are satisfied with a partial Christianity. Some parts of their life are still worldly” (Lenski). The second request is for blameless preservation. It is a restatement of the first request from another point of view. The entire preservation of which Paul speaks is defined as preservation in “spirit, soul, and body” (1 Thess. 5:23). Every part of the believer needs to be set apart to the Lord and preserved blameless. This should be our prayer, not just for backsliders and babes, but for everyone who names the name of Christ.

259. As in all of his epistles, Paul concludes 1 Thessalonians with a benediction. “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you. Amen” (1 Thess. 5:28). The grace Paul has in mind comes through Jesus Christ. We are saved by grace and we are sustained by grace. Therefore, we should pray for grace for ourselves (Heb. 4:16) and for others (1 Thess. 5:28).

2 Thessalonians

260. Paul begins by saying, “We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as is fitting because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of everyone of you all abounds toward

each other” (2 Thess. 1:3). In 1 Thessalonians, Paul expressed fear about their faith (see 1 Thess. 3:5, 10), but now he was no longer apprehensive concerning their faith. It was growing exceedingly. That does not mean that they did not have problems; they did. That’s why Paul wrote this letter! They were being persecuted (ch. 1), they were perplexed concerning prophetic points (ch. 2) and they had a practical problem with some idle busybodies (ch. 3), but in the midst of their problems, they were growing spiritually. They were also growing in love. They were not only growing and growing exceptionally well, they were doing it under persecution. Paul could say, “for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure” (2 Thess. 1:4). Their endurance was not of the grin-and-bear-it variety, for a while they were enduring, they were growing exceedingly in faith and abounding in love toward everyone. When we see believers with problems, we pray for the problem, and we should. Paul saw believers with problems and thanked God for their progress. We should do that too.

261. Paul prays, “Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of *His* goodness and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess. 1:11-12). This prayer consists of two basic requests (“that” in verse 11 and “that” in verse 12). The first request asks God to do three things, all of which amount to spiritual growth, namely that they would grow in their calling to the point that God would count them worthy of it, that they would grow in goodness, and that they would grow in works. The second request is that they would glorify the Lord. “To glorify” means “to manifest, reflect, display.” So, to glorify the name of the Lord Jesus is simply to manifest all that He is. When we pray for each other, let us pray that we grow and glorify the Lord.

262. In the middle of 2 Thessalonians, Paul prays, “Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given *us* everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work” (2 Thess. 2:16-17). Paul’s prayer is that Jesus Christ Himself and God the Father, Who have worked in their lives in the past, might “comfort” their hearts. This looks back to 2 Thessalonians 2:2 where they were shaken and troubled. Paul also prays that they might be “established... in every good word and work” (2 Thess. 2:17). This goes back to verse 3, where he told them not to be deceived and to verse 15 where he told them to hold fast to traditions. If they held fast to the truth, it would have the practical effect in their lives of producing good works instead of instability. Add spiritually unstable believers to your prayer list. Pray that they be established in the faith.

263. For the third time in 2 Thessalonians, Paul prays for the believers in Thessalonica (see also 1:11-12; 2:16-17). “Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ” (2 Thess. 3:5). This is one of the rare instances of a prayer addressed directly to Jesus. Paul prays that the Lord would direct their hearts into the love of God. In Revelation 2:4, the Lord Himself laments that the Ephesians had left their first love. In 1 John 2:15, John commands the believers in Ephesus not to love the world. It is possible for believers to lose their love for the Lord and latch onto some love for the world. Or, to say the same thing another way, an undue attachment to things on this earth soon chills our affection for God. For us, the ever-present danger of materialism can do that. For the Thessalonians, persecution could have done that. If we are to grow in our love for the Lord, we must not allow possessions or persecution to cause us to fail. Let us pray for believers we know to fall in love with the Lord and patiently wait for His return without flirting with another possible lover.

264. Before he closes the book of 2 Thessalonians, Paul prays for them again. “Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with you all” (2

Thess. 3:16). This is the fourth prayer in this epistle (see also 1:11-12; 2:16-17; 3:5). Praying for peace was an appropriate prayer in their situation. Paul's desire was that they have inner tranquility of soul in the midst of their persecution, and for their troubled heart over the misunderstanding concerning prophecy. Beyond that, he requests that the Lord be with them in every circumstance. The conclusion "the Lord be with you *all*," indicates that he does not exclude those walking in a disorderly way. Peace is a gift from the Lord, but it is mediated through His personal presence. When you pray for believers, pray that they will experience the peace and presence of the Lord.

265. Paul concludes 2 Thessalonians with his usual benediction of, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen" (2 Thess. 3:18). This is the same benediction that occurs at the end of 1 Thessalonians (1 Thess. 5:28), except he adds the word "all." He had a special reason for inserting that here. He did not want to run the risk of seeming to exclude those members whose conduct he had rebuked. Let us pray for all believers to experience the grace of God, even those who need to be corrected and rebuked by the Lord. Come to think of it, they really need grace—just like the rest of us.

1 Timothy

266. In 1 Timothy, Paul expresses gratitude to Jesus Christ for enabling him: "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting *me* into the ministry" (1 Tim. 1:12). The enablement for which Paul thanks God is not just his alone. In saying "our" Lord, Paul indicates that Timothy shared this experience. Moreover, Paul thanks God for His enablement in ministry. When it comes to service, the issue is not just ability but availability and dependability. We should pray for grace (Heb. 4:16) and daily thank God for His grace that enables us to serve Him and others.

267. In 1 Timothy, Paul bursts out in praise, "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, *be* honor and glory forever and ever. Amen" (1 Tim. 1:17). God is to be praised as the eternal King. He is not a temporary ruler, who will be replaced by another after He is gone. He is the eternal King. There will be no other to replace Him. God is to be praised as the immortal King. The Greek word translated "immortal" means "imperishable." God is "exempt from wear and waste and final perishing" (Trench). God is to be praised as the invisible King. The invisible God is in contrast to the visible creation. God is to be praised for His wisdom. God does not have to be taught anything; He knows all things. As the eternal, immortal, invisible, wise King, God is worthy of honor and glory forever. God is glorified when believers reflect His attributes (Jn. 16:14). Take a moment to just praise God for who He is, not just for what He has done for you.

268. Paul concludes 1 Timothy with the benediction, "Grace *be* with you. Amen" (1 Tim. 6:21). This is one of the shortest benedictions in Paul's epistles. The grace Paul has in mind here is not the grace of salvation. Timothy already had that grace. Paul desires daily sustaining grace for Timothy. All believers need a daily dose of grace. Let us pray for each other to daily experience God's sustaining, strengthening grace.

2 Timothy

269. Paul tells Timothy "I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day, greatly desiring

to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy, when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also” (2 Tim. 1:3-5). Paul thanks God for Timothy’s genuine faith. Everything between “I thank God” and “genuine faith” is a sort of parenthesis. The Greek text reads, “having received a reminder,” suggesting that something happened to reminded Paul of Timothy’s faith. Perhaps, Paul had just heard news about Timothy (Bengel) or something happened at Rome to remind Paul of Timothy’s faith (Hiebert). At any rate, when we hear of a believer trusting the Lord, instead of just thinking, “That’s good,” we should thank God.

270. One of Paul’s prayers for others is for God to grant them mercy: “The Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain, but when he arrived in Rome, he sought me out very zealously and found *me*. The Lord grant to him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that Day; and you know very well how many ways he ministered *to me* at Ephesus” (2 Tim. 1:16-18). When Paul was in a Roman dungeon, Onesiphorus refreshed him. The refreshment probably included material things (4:13), food, drink, literature (Hendriksen), fellowship (Guthrie), and spiritual solace (Kent). Apparently, Onesiphorus is now dead and Paul prays that his family will receive mercy. No doubt, Onesiphorus’ ministry to Paul included expense, effort, and personal risk, which affected his family. Paul also prays that the Lord will have mercy on Onesiphorus at the Judgment Seat of Christ! Paul would not be able to repay the kindness of Onesiphorus. So he prays that the Lord will repay Onesiphorus for the mercy given to Paul. The Lord promises to show mercy to those who have shown mercy (Mt. 5:7; Jas. 2:13). When people show mercy to us, we should ask the Lord to show mercy to them and their families.

271. Paul closes 2 Timothy with two benedictions: “The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Grace be with you. Amen” (2 Tim. 4:22). In the Greek text, “your” is singular and “you” is plural. The first benediction is Paul’s personal benediction upon Timothy. “Be with your spirit” implies “the spirit of Timothy needs to be strengthened so that he will fully discharge his ministerial task and in the fulfillment of his duties will even be able to endure suffering for the sake of Christ, and this without protest” (Hendriksen). The second benediction includes Timothy and all the believers at Ephesus, meaning that this epistle was intended for the church at Ephesus as well as for Timothy personally. This is a reminder to pray for your pastor, as well as the members of the congregation.

Titus

272. At the end of his letter to Titus, Paul says, “Grace *be* with you all. Amen” (Titus 3:15). As in 2 Timothy, in the Greek text, “you” is plural, indicating that Paul is addressing a broader audience than just Titus. “Paul closes the letter on the theme that dominated his life—the grace of the Lord” (MacDonald). Undeserved divine favor should dominate our prayer life.

Philemon

273. As in his other letters, Paul closes his letter to Philemon with a benediction: “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with your spirit. Amen” (Phlm. 25). One author has counted 26 benedictions in the New Testament (Lockyer). Commenting on this one, another has said, “Life

can hold no greater blessing than the unmerited favor of the Savior as one's moment-by-moment experience" (MacDonald). Let us bless others by praying for them to experience daily grace.

Hebrews

274. The writer of Hebrews prays for the recipients of Hebrews: "Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen" (Heb. 13:20-21). The request is that based on an everlasting covenant, may the God of peace, who raised Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd who laid down His life for the sheep (Jn. 10:15), make the sheep complete in doing God's will and in pleasing Him, which would glorify the great Shepherd forever. We should pray for one another that God's will be done in us and that God's work be done through us, so that God will be pleased and Jesus Christ will be glorified.

275. The writer of Hebrews closes with a benediction: "Grace *be* with you all. Amen" (Heb. 13:25). It was customary to conclude with a prayer that God's grace would be with the readers, but in light of what had been said about grace in this letter, it is particularly appropriate. Consider: Christ experienced death by God's grace (Heb. 2:9). Believers should come boldly to the throne of grace to find mercy and grace to help in time of need (Heb. 4:16). The heart of believers should be established (strengthened) by grace (Heb. 13:9). Believers should look carefully, lest they fall short of God's grace (Heb. 12:15). Believers should beware of insulting the spirit of grace (Heb. 10:29). Needless to say, grace is a very important subject in Hebrews and throughout the New Testament. We have been reminded over and over to pray for grace. Do not fall short of grace by not praying for grace.

James

James is the first book in the New Testament (the 13th in the Bible) that does not contain an actual prayer. However, it exhorts believers experiencing trials to pray for wisdom (Jas. 1:5). It also speaks about not praying (Jas. 4:2), praying amiss, only for your pleasure (Jas. 4:3), and of elders praying for the sick (Jas. 5:14). When you pray for the sick, ask the Lord to give them physical healing and spiritual wisdom during their trial.

1 Peter

276. Peter proclaims, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pet. 1:3). Peter praises God, who has by His mercy begotten us. God did not make us His children because of our merit, but according to His mercy, which is abundant. In fact, when making us His children, God did not consider our merit or demerit but His mercy. Moreover, the new life God has given us is a living hope. As God's children, we have a living expectation, the meaning of the word "hope." Our expectation is alive because the resurrection of Christ in the past gives believers a bright expectation for the future! In your prayers today, thank God for your salvation now and your expectation in the future.

277. Peter closes his first letter with, “But may the God of all grace who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus after you have suffered a while perfect, establish, strengthen and settle you. To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen” (1 Pet. 5:10-11). Peter prays that because God the Father is the God of all grace who has called us to eternal glory, He would perfect, establish, strengthen and settle believers who have suffered. Notice, first, there is suffering. Then, there is glory. In the meantime, our gracious God who has called us to glory will perform four works in us as we obey Him (see 1 Pet. 5:5-9). He will perfect (a word that means “equip, complete”) us, establish us, that is, make us stable and steadfast, strengthen us, and settle us. The sequence suggests God equips, makes stable, gives strength, and then grounds us. “The believer who is established will not be moved by persecution or led away by false doctrine (3:17)” (Wiersbe). The concluding doxology, “To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen” (1 Pet. 5:11) is a slightly abbreviated form of the doxology found in 1 Peter 4:11. The Greek word translated “dominion” means “strength, power, might.” Realizing God has called us to glory and will work to prepare us for glory (1 Pet. 5:9) prompts Peter to praise God for His glory and power forever (1 Pet. 5:11). Let us so pray for all who are suffering.

2 Peter

278. Peter close his second letter with a doxology, “To Him *be* the glory both now and forever. Amen” (2 Pet. 3:18). In the context of 2 Peter 3, the closing doxology is appropriate. The false teachers detracted from Christ’s glory now by their wicked lives and from His glory later by denying His return. Growth in grace and knowledge glorifies Jesus Christ in time and eternity. So beware of being led astray because if you are led astray, you will not grow. God is glorified when His children grow in grace. In your prayers today, praise God for His glory now and in eternity.

1 John

First John is the second book (Jas.) in the New Testament (the 14th in the Bible) that does not contain a recorded prayer. However, it speaks of confessing our sins (1 Jn. 1:9) and tells us not to pray! After expressing great confidence that if we pray according to God’s will, He hears and answers our prayers (1 Jn. 5:14-15), John says, “There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that” (1 Jn. 5:16). Wow! What is the sin unto death? For centuries, commentators have debated the sin unto death. Suggestions include more serious sins (idolatry, blasphemy, and adultery), willful, deliberate sins, and renunciation of the faith. This much is clear: There is a sin unto death (Acts 5:1-11). The sin unto premature physical death is the flagrant violation of the sanctity of the Christian community (see 1 Cor. 3:17; 11:30). Well, what does John mean by not praying for such sinning saints? In light of the context, namely, confidence in answered prayer, John is not forbidding intercession in those cases. He is simply saying there is no guarantee that God will restore believers who are committing a sin unto death. The point of prayer in 1 John is we should confess our sins and pray for sinning saints, realizing that there are no guarantees of answers for prayers for saints committing a sin unto death.

2 John

Second John is the third book (Jas.; 1 Jn.) in the New Testament (15th in the Bible) that does not contain a recorded prayer. It does not even mention prayer. John does say, “Having many things to write to you, I did not wish *to do so* with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, that our joy may be full” (2 Jn. 12). In this short note, he wrote that it was better that he talk about some things in person. It is one thing to pray for people; it is another to pray with them.

3 John

279. In 3 John, John mentions praying for prosperity and health: “Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers” (3 Jn. 2). John prays that all may go well for Gaius and that he would be as healthy physically as he was spiritually. Gaius was doing very well spiritually (verse 3), but was having some problems physically. So John prays that Gaius would be as healthy physically as he was spiritually. (If the reverse was true and the prayer was answered, some physically healthy believers would have to be admitted to intensive care.) We need to pray for the sick.

Jude

280. Jude concludes with a benediction: “Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present *you* faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen” (Jude 24-25). After urging believers to keep themselves and rescue others (Jude 20-23), Jude praises God that *He* is able to keep them. God is not only able to keep believers from falling, He is able to make them stand before His glorious presence and do so with exceeding joy. Furthermore, as Savior, God is the only one who is truly wise. He demonstrates His wisdom by delivering His people as they call upon Him. Once rescued, it becomes obvious that God’s way is the wise way. Praise God for keeping you from stumbling.

Revelation

281 In Revelation, the recorded prayers are mostly prayers prayed in heaven. If prayers in heaven count as prayers on earth today, the “new song” in Revelation 5:9-10 should be considered a prayer (“Praise the One who is worthy to open the seals”) as well as the praises in Revelation 7:9-11, Revelation 11:17-18, and Revelation 19:1-10. There is a lot of praise in heaven. In Revelation, believers on earth ask, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” (Rev. 6:10). There are a lot of questions on earth, which should be directed to the Lord in prayer. The book ends with a prayer and a benediction. The prayer is, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus!” (Rev. 22:21) and the benediction is, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen” (Rev. 22:22). What an appropriate way to end the Bible. Hurry up Lord; and, in the meantime, grant us grace to endure the mess on earth until You get here.

