

## Praying Like the Psalmists: Have the Same Goal

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### Introduction:

You can't have a relationship with someone if you never talk to him. In the same way, we all recognize we can't have a relationship with God if we don't talk to Him. Most of us recognize that without a strong prayer life we're walking through life alone and we'll never make it. However, we struggle to improve our praying. As we've learned over the last year, the Psalms provide a great source of help and strength to do just that. If we are going to have a strong relationship with God, it stands to reason we can learn from these writers who had a strong relationship with Him. We've looked at the God in whom they believed, how they viewed themselves, how they viewed prayer, and how they prepared for prayer. But what was their purpose in prayer? What was the goal of their praying? If we want to have the relationship with God that they had, if we want to pray as they did, we must have the same goal in mind that they had.

### Discussion:

- I. The Psalmists' Goal: That everything be to the praise of God's glory.
  - A. There is no doubt that if we look at the individual prayers in the psalms, we might find particular petitions: deliverance, forgiveness, mercy, protection, etc. However, these are merely the goals of particular prayers. When we take the psalms as a whole, we see one overarching theme. We find one overshadowing goal. It is the same goal we find in **Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14**, that everything be to the praise of God's glory.
  - B. We can't help but see this in the psalms of praise:
    1. **Psalm 8:1**—"Oh LORD, our lord,/how majestic is your name in all the earth!/You have set your glory above the heavens."
    2. **Psalm 115:1**—"Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name give glory,/for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness!"
    3. **Psalm 146:1-2**—"Praise the LORD!/Praise the LORD, O my soul!/I will praise the LORD as long as I live;/I will sing praises to my God while I have my being."
    4. **Psalm 150:1-2**—"Praise the LORD!/Praise God in his sanctuary;/praise him in his mighty heavens!/Praise him for his mighty deeds;/praise him according to his excellent greatness!"
  - C. However, even in the laments and petitions for life, deliverance, and protection we see that the great goal of the psalmists was for God's continued praise and glorification.
    1. **Psalm 6:5**—"For in death there is no remembrance of you;/in Sheol who will give you praise?"
    2. **Psalm 30:9**—"What profit is there in my death,/if I go down to the pit?/Will the dust praise you?/Will it tell of your faithfulness?"
    3. **Psalm 88:10**—"Do you work wonders for the dead?/Do the departed rise up to praise you?"
    4. **Psalm 115:17**—"The dead do not praise the LORD,/no do any who go down into silence."
    5. **Psalm 118:17**—"I shall not die, but I shall live/and recount the deeds of the Lord."
    6. **Psalm 119:175**—"Let my soul live and praise you..."
  - D. If we want to be like the psalmists, no matter what we are praying, no matter what kind of prayer we are offering, the overriding goal must be God's glory.
- II. Accomplishing this goal.
  - A. *Praise God.*
    1. Clearly, if you want to make the goal of your praying be the praise of God's glory, then make actual adoration a key part of your praying. We've already seen how praise was a key part of the psalms. Notice that it was key for praying in general.
    2. Consider Jesus' model prayer in **Matthew 6:9-13**. Notice how the prayer begins. Before seeking anything from God, the prayer begins with praise. "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name." According to some manuscripts it also ends with praise. "For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever."

3. If you want your praying to be to the praise of God's glory, offer some prayers that are merely about the praise of God's glory. For the other prayers, let the anchor, the beginning, and the end be about praising God.
- B. *Be more concerned about God's will than your own.*
1. As we've seen, even when the psalmists were seeking deliverance, they were more concerned about the benefit to God than their own benefit. Consider some other prayers.
  2. A great example of this is Hezekiah's prayer in **II Kings 19:15-19**. He was seeking deliverance from Assyria for Judah. But what was his main concern? Was it his life? Was it his city? No, it was God's will and glory. He wanted God to see how He, God, had been mocked, not how Hezekiah had been mocked. He wanted God to deliver so the world would know that Jehovah was God alone, not so folks would leave Jerusalem alone. He was concerned about God and His will.
  3. Consider Jesus' model prayer again in **Matthew 6:9-13**. Jesus began with praise. But the first request was not about our will. Rather, the first request was about submission to God's will. "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." This says what we are most concerned about is that God's will and rule spread throughout the world, not that we get our whims and wants.
  4. Finally, think about Jesus' own prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane in **Matthew 26:39**. "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will." What Jesus essentially says is, "God, here is what I want. But what I want more than that is what You want." We need that attitude in our prayers.
- C. *Trust God's answers.*
1. Some people pray and pray and then when things don't go the way they asked, they abandon God. That makes our prayers about our will, not His. Instead, we need to trust God's answers. He loves us and is working all things together for our ultimate good (**Romans 8:28**).
  2. **Matthew 7:7-11** says our Father wants to give us good gifts. His gifts are good. Even when we can't see in the moment how good they are, we can trust that God sees more than just this moment and provides what is best for us and for His glory. We simply need to trust Him.
  3. Consider Paul's prayer in **II Corinthians 12:7-10**. God denied Paul's request to remove his thorn in the flesh. Paul was able to see the benefit of this denial. He trusted God that allowing to continue the thorn in the flesh was actually good for him.
  4. We need to have that same trust. Otherwise, our prayers will be about getting God to bend to our will instead of us bending to His and glorifying Him.
- D. *Praise God whether you get what you want or not.*
1. Perhaps one of the greatest statements about prayer is found in **Job 1:21**. "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."
  2. We are often very willing to praise God when He does what we want. However, when He denies our requests or does things differently than we expected, we find it harder to praise Him. We need to have Job's mindset. Whether we get what we want or not, whether we get what we asked for or not, whether the Lord gives or takes away, we need to bless the name of the Lord.
  3. If the goal of our praying is to get what we want, then we won't have the relationship with God or the depth of prayer the psalmists had. However, if the goal is the glory of God, then we'll be able to bless God no matter His answers. We'll be happy when God performs His will over ours, because what we wanted more was what God wanted.

### **Conclusion:**

The psalmists certainly asked for things. They sought deliverance and blessing. However, these momentary goals were all subordinate to one overarching principle of prayer. Prayer is about bending us to God's will, not bending Him to ours. As such, the goal of their praying in general was the praise of God's glory, not the seeking of our own wills. May we strive to grow in this. May we ever bless the name of God whether He gives or takes away. May we praise God because He is worthy. May we humble ourselves before Him and surrender our lives and our prayers to Him.