

Ask: Written Prayers of Petition

When we ask things of God in prayer, praying with and through God's Word helps us be in line with God's will. Though in some traditions it appears “fake” to have a written prayer that isn't “straight from the heart,” many Biblical examples of petitions before God show careful structure and deliberate thought. While God certainly hears our prayer whether we speak stream-of-consciousness or take the time to write our prayer, pleading our case with more intentionality, using patterns of prayer from Scripture can guide our thoughts and instruct us toward a healthy posture before God. Like preparing your thoughts before an important conversation with a friend, written prayers of petition can help us ask God to move in specific ways according to His nature and character.

Although no child of the Father is “heard for their many words,” and although “your Father knows what you need before you ask” (Matt. 6:7-8, ESV), we're also encouraged to “in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” (Phil. 4:6, ESV). Whether you pray verses of Scripture word-for-word, or use this form to bring other specific requests before Him, allow Scripture to inform and shape your prayers.

A FEW EXAMPLES

Written by Rebecca Olsen

PRAYER AGAINST DESPAIR

(Based on Daniel 9:17-19)

O God, hear your servant's prayer!

Listen as I plead.

For Your own sake, Lord, smile again on me.

I feel so desolate when I come to worship You.

O my God, lean down and listen to me.

Open Your eyes and see my despair.

See how all my hopes and dreams for what my life would look like now lie in ruins.

I make this plea, not because I deserve help, but because of Your mercy.

O Lord, hear. O Lord, forgive. O Lord, listen and act!

For Your own sake, do not delay, O my God, for I am one of Your people

and as a follower of Christ, I bear Your name.

PRAYER AGAINST A CULTURE OF DEATH

(Based on 2 Kings 19:15-19)

O Lord, God of Israel, you are enthroned between the mighty cherubim!

You alone are God of all the nations of the earth.

You alone created the heavens and the earth.

Bend down, O Lord, and listen!

Open your eyes, O Lord, and see!

Listen to the words of defiance against you, the living God,

as so many advocate for a culture of death,

promoting abortion and medical aid in dying.

Now, O Lord our God, rescue us from the rush to end life

so that all of the earth will know that you alone, O Lord, are God.

PRAYER FOR HELP IN DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES

(Based on 2 Chronicles 20:6-12)

O Lord, God, you alone are the God who is in heaven.

You are ruler of all the kingdoms of the earth.

You are powerful and mighty; no one can stand against you!

I know you see my circumstances,

and you've always said that we can cry out to you to save us, and you will hear us and rescue us.

But now look at what is happening!

O God, won't you stop it?

I am powerless against this threat to my safety and wellbeing.

I do not know what to do, but I am looking to you for help.

GETTING STARTED

1. Find another example of a written prayer of petition in Scripture and spend a few minutes with it (Psalm 85, 86, or 102 could be a good place to start).
2. Think about an area in your life or issue in this world that breaks your heart or overwhelms you.
3. Find Scripture that speaks of God's character. Begin your prayer of petition by asking God to show Himself in a similar way to what the Bible passage shows ("Lord, I long for You to..." "Your Word tells me that..." "I'm asking You to...").
4. Using the examples above or other Scriptural prayers, pray about the area or topic by writing from the heart, one thought at a time.
5. Consider inviting someone else to pray your written prayer with you.

