

Jesus do? **He preached God's word, cast out evil spirits, and healed people.** Those were the things that could be done in God's name. So if we pray to God for the spirit to do these things, this is asking for something that is in the name of Jesus. The things in the above list of things we can pray for are all spiritual things that are in the name of Jesus. If we ask for these things in faith, with the right motive, God will see to it that we get them.

Are there any particular words we should say?

Many have been taught specific prayers to say at particular times. These are fine, as long as we're asking for the spiritual things God can give and are praying with the right motive. Jesus taught his disciples a sample prayer which has come to be known as "The Lord's Prayer." However, before he gave this prayer, he also said, "when ye pray, use not vain repetitions"(Mat.6:7). Any prayer (including this one) can become a vain repetition when said merely out of habit, with no thought or feeling. On the other hand, "The effectual *fervent* prayer of a righteous man availeth much."(Jam.5:16)

Do I have to be in a certain place to pray, such as a church?

Do I have to bow my head or kneel in order to pray?

No, scriptures say to "pray without ceasing"(1 Th.5:17) and to "continue instant in prayer"(Rom.12:12). We can be continually praying, no matter where we are or what we are doing. We may be doing housework, walking to class, working, or playing sports, but our thoughts can be on God, praising him and asking him for more of his spirit, *without ceasing!*

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

Luk.11:9,10



THE WORD church



Prayer Questions and Answers

People have many questions about prayer. This is not odd, because even Jesus' own disciples wanted to be taught how to pray (Luk.11:1).

Who should we pray to?

God? Jesus? A departed relative? When Jesus taught his disciples to pray, he said, "*When ye pray, say, Our Father* which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name"(Luk.11:2). Who did Jesus himself pray to? Jesus makes a lengthy prayer in Joh.17, all of it addressed to his Father. In Mat.26:39,42 "And he...prayed, saying, O my Father..." Jesus prayed to God the Father, and Jesus is our example.

One may ask, "**Can't we also pray to Jesus?**" Jesus himself said, "*In that day ye shall ask me nothing... Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you*"(Joh.16:23). Jesus said his followers would not pray to him, but to the Father. We have no commandment to pray to Jesus or to any other being, but we do have commandments to pray to God the Father.

Someone may say, "**Isn't Jesus God?**" so that it would be right to pray to Jesus. But *Jesus is not God the Father.* Jesus himself said, "My Father is greater than I"(Joh.14:28), so Jesus could not be God the Father. Jesus consistently called God his "Father," so they are two different persons, since no one can be his own father.

Someone may say "**I have prayed to Jesus, and my prayers were answered. Doesn't that show it's okay to pray to Jesus?**" God may have answered prayers to Jesus or to others, because he knew we were only doing as we were taught. Act.17:30 "And the times of this ignorance God winked at: but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." It may have been okay in the past, but now that we know who to pray to, we can pray to God the Father.

Why are some prayers not answered?

There could be many reasons a particular prayer isn't being answered as a person hopes.

One of the clearest scriptural requirements is that *we must ask in faith.* Jam.1:5-7 "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering ... For he that wavereth ... let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.” If we don’t believe God will give us what we ask for, then He can’t give it. Our faith is essential if we are to receive what we’ve asked for.

Perhaps God didn’t answer the prayer when we thought it should be answered, but that doesn’t mean it won’t be answered. If we prayed to know more about God, it will be answered. Dan.10:12 “Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand...thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words.”

If our motive is wrong for wanting the thing we are praying for, God cannot give it to us. Jam.4:3 “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.” When we pray because we need spiritual help, God can hear this prayer. If the prayer is for self-gain or to make others jealous of us, God can’t hear that prayer.

Also God might not answer a prayer asking for something that God cannot give, or does not have to give. For example, often people pray for *material things*, such as cars, homes, money, etc. God does not have a car or a physical house or money to give us. Jesus came to bring life to mankind (Joh.10:10), but he also said, “Take heed; and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth”(Luk.12:15). God wants to give us eternal life, which consists of spiritual things (Joh.6:63, 2Pt.1:3). If we pray, with the right motive, for more of God’s spirit, God can and will answer this prayer. Luk.11:13 “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?”

Some may say, “**Jesus said we could pray for the Father to give us our daily bread (Mat.6:11). Isn’t that asking for something material?**” No. God doesn’t have physical bread to give us. God wants us to ask for his *spiritual bread*, which is his doctrine (Mat.16:12). Jer.3:15 “And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.”

What other things do scriptures say we can ask for?

Wisdom, Jam. 1:5	Life, 1Jo.5:16
Utterance, Eph.6:18,19	Love, Php.1:9
Mercy, Luk.18:13,14	Faith, Luk.22:32
Holy Spirit, Luk.11:13	Healing, Jam.5:14-16
To have our thoughts forgiven, Act.8:22	
To be forgiven of our sins and delivered from evil, Luk.11:4	
For God’s will to be done and his kingdom to come, Luk.11:2	

What About praying for other people?

Scriptures encourage us to do so. Paul said to pray for all men, and “for kings and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life”(1Ti.2:1,2). We can pray for our ministers and others in our congregation (1Th.5:25, Eph.6:18,19). Jesus said to “pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you”(Mat.5:44).

Some might say, “**I’ve prayed for others, but it never does any good. Why doesn’t God answer those prayers?**” Often such prayers can’t be answered because *God cannot change anyone’s will*. We may pray for a parent or loved one to be spiritually saved, or freed from an addiction, or for a married couple to not get divorced. We may pray for world peace, or for world leaders to govern righteously. We may want these things, and certainly God wants these things, but they all involve another person’s choices. God made people free moral agents with the mental **ability to choose** what to do and to be. “I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore *choose life*, that both thou and thy seed may live”(Deu.30:19). “*Choose you* this day whom ye will serve”(Jos.24:15).

We need to pray for others, but we also must realize that **even God cannot override a person’s choice**. Our prayers and our faith can send God’s angels to try to influence another person, but that person’s decisions are always his own. If someone does not want to do what is right, no amount of prayer can change this. In fact, there are times when believers were told to not pray for a person. “If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it”(1Jo.5:16). Jer.7:16 “Therefore pray not thou for this people...”

Should we end each prayer by saying “in the name of Jesus?”

Jesus did say, “whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you” (Joh.16:23). But **this does not mean simply saying “in the name of Jesus”** at the end of our prayer. In Act.19:13-16 the seven sons of Sceva used this phrase without success! Jesus doesn’t use this phrase in the prayer that he taught his disciples (Mat.6:9-13, Luk.11:2-4), so it must not be essential.

What does it mean to ask “in the name of Jesus?”

Jesus said, “I am come *in my Father’s name*” (Joh.5:43), so the name Jesus had was his Father’s. Also he said “**the works that I do in my Father’s name**, they bear witness of me” (Joh.10:25). What works did