

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a white t-shirt and blue jeans, is sitting in a field of green grass and yellow flowers. She has her hands clasped in prayer and her eyes are closed. The background is a bright, overcast sky. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Praise Him in Prayer

"For this shall everyone that
is godly pray unto thee
in a time when thou
mayest be found."
—Psalm 32:6

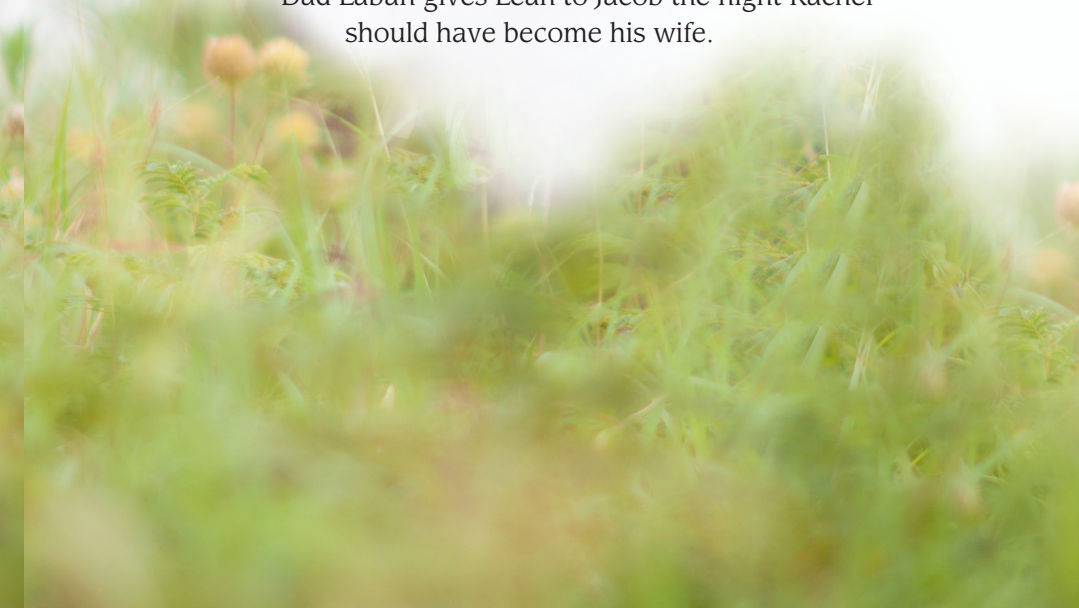
Webster defines *prayer* as “entreat; implore; plea; make request in a humble manner; an earnest request.” Seventy-seven times in the Hebrew Old Testament, we find the word *Tephillâh*, which is translated prayer, also meaning entreaty, supplication, or intercession. Another word, *Qârâ*, is used 689 times in the Hebrew Old Testament, meaning “to cry out or to call aloud.” The psalms are filled with references to prayer, supplications, and crying out to God. Psalm 32:6 admonishes we who are godly to pray in a time when God may be found. James reminds us “the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16). The principle of coming to the Lord with a repentant heart to find forgiveness is found in 2 Chronicles 7:14.

Whose Prayers Are Heard?

The psalmists confirm that God hears the prayers of the humble (10:17), the righteous (34:15), and those who know His name (9:10-11). God also hears the prayer of the poor (69:33) and the destitute (102:17). He does not hear those who ask amiss (James 4:3). Psalm 80:4 implies God was angry with and did not answer the prayers of His unfaithful people.

The relationship between Leah and Rachel, sisters married to the same man, was difficult at best. I think problems existed long before Jacob arrived on the scene. Genesis 29:17 states, “Leah was tender-eyed; but Rachel was beautiful and well favored.” You know the scenario. One sister is drop-dead gorgeous, and the other is not.

Dad Laban gives Leah to Jacob the night Rachel
should have become his wife.



Leah's position is awkward. She knows she is not wanted nor deserved, but she has no choice. By morning, Jacob confirms her thoughts when he asks Laban, "Wherefore then hast thou beguiled me?" Jacob was required to complete Leah's week before he could have Rachel. But the Lord saw that Leah was hated, [and] he opened her womb (Genesis 29:31). Leah's choice of names for her sons portrays her spiritual walk toward praise.

Reuben: surely the Lord has looked upon my affliction (29:32).

Simeon: because the Lord hath heard that I was hated, He has therefore given me a son (29:33).

Levi: this time my husband will be joined to me, because I have given him three sons (29:34).

Judah: now I will praise the Lord (29:35).

Gad: a troop cometh (30:9).

Asher: happy am I for the daughters call me blessed (30:13).

Issachar: God hath given me my hire (30:11).

Zebulon: God hath endued me with a good dowry (30:20).

Then Dinah, the only daughter, was born. Can you sense the various emotions Leah experienced: rejection, loneliness, competition, destitution, praise, etc. Yet we see her spiritual growth as she pours her heart out to God and finds her worth in Him.

Reflective Questions

Why does God give guidelines for hearing our prayers?

What did James want us to understand about "asking amiss"?

Can you find other biblical references to God's response to the humble versus the proud? What should we learn from these references?

Where Are Prayers Directed?

The psalmists state God is worthy to be praised (18:3), and thus they call upon the Lord. He is our Rock (28:1), our Help (70:5), the God of our lives (42:8), and He is for us (56:9). We can cry out of the depths (130:1), with our whole hearts (119:14), asking God to be near us (22:19). We must recognize He will answer in an acceptable time (69:13). His timetable is not our own (2 Peter 3:8). He sees a much bigger picture than we ever could. We must trust and wait patiently.

Reflective Questions

Why are we impatient regarding answers to prayer?

What is the first of the Ten Commandments, and how does that apply?

Does HE Hear?

Yes, He does. He is our God (140:6). Multiple passages simply say "He heard me" or something similar. Psalm 4:1 says He heard me in my distress. Psalm 6:8-9 and 39:12 state He heard my weeping and supplication. He did not turn away (66:19-20) nor hide from me (55:1). How do these psalms affect you?

He Heard Me in the Psalms					
18:6	40:1	66:19	86:6	102:1	141:1
28:2, 6	54:2	77:1	88:2	130:2	142:1
21:22	61:7	84:8	99:6	140:6	

Hannah is a poignant example that God does hear our prayers. She prayed to the Lord and wept bitterly (1 Samuel 1:10). Eli thought she was drunk and reprimanded her (1:14). Hannah told the priest she “had poured out her soul before the Lord” (1:15).

When Hannah returned home after worshiping with Elkanah, the Lord remembered her (1:19). God answered her prayers and little Samuel was born. His name would be a constant reminder, “I asked him of the Lord” (1:20).

Fast forward. Hannah fulfilled her part of the vow, bringing Samuel to Eli (1:25). Listen carefully to this mother’s heart in verses 27-28: “For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him. Therefore also I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord. And he worshipped the Lord there.”

Chapter 2 records Hannah’s song of praise beginning with “my heart rejoiceth in the Lord” (2:1). What was Samuel’s response (2:11)? How many times his mother had told him of the events surrounding his birth and her vow?

Reflective Questions

God remembered both Leah and Hannah. Is He this interested in our personal situations?

How should this fact impact my prayer life? The type of requests I make?

What Did the Psalmists Ask for?

Much like our own prayers, the psalmists asked for help in the present time of trouble or distress (56:7; 81:7; 107:6; 109:4; 118:5). They asked for healing (30:2), and deliverance from fears (34:4). But they also prayed for the peace of Jerusalem (122:6).

Reflective Questions

How much of our prayer time is allotted for physical needs?

Do our prayers reveal our heart for the world? Can missionaries count on us to uphold their arms, as Aaron and Hur did for Moses?

Will we give our own children to go—obeying God’s call? Will they have our blessing and support? Or will their obedience bring our displeasure?

Is a Certain Position or Time Best?

Interestingly, the psalmists mention various postures: head bowed to the chest (35:3); lifting up holy hands (28:2); hands stretched out (88:9), and kneeling (95:6). There are references to praying at evening, morning, noon, and midnight (55:7; 88:13; 119:55, 62). Daily prayers are mentioned in 86:3 and 88:1. These references remind us of Paul’s admonition in 1 Thessalonians 5:17, “Pray without ceasing.” We are to pray, to talk to God, and share our hearts and burdens with Him. Matthew Henry wrote this in reference to Psalm 141:2: “Prayer is a spiritual sacrifice; it is the offering up of the soul, and its best affections to God. Prayer is a sweet-smelling savor to God, as incense.”

Reflective Questions

Do you tend to focus too much on the time or position of prayer? What *should* be your focus?

How would our prayer lives be affected if we viewed them as “spiritual sacrifice?”

What Are the Results?

The psalmist says he loves the Lord because his prayer was heard (28:6; 116:1). He will sustain (55:22) and strengthen (138:3). He performs all things, fulfilling His purpose (57:2). The psalmist mentions He hears us even knowing our sins and foolishness (69:5).

When we think that Almighty God hears and answers prayers of mere women, should our hearts not break forth in praise? Praise is a repetitive theme in the psalms.

We should also give thanks (35:18; 147:7), but how often do we just ask and not praise (50:23a; 71:8; 104:33)?

Reflective Questions

Prayer and praise together is an unbeatable combination; the shortcut to endless possibilities God has for us (Program Plan Book, page 56). Discuss the thought of “prayer and praise as an unbeatable combination” giving specific examples to support one’s position.

We Should Praise Him for...

Himself	His Name	His Word	His Righteousness	His Marvelous Works	His Power	His Goodness
33:1-2	9:2	56:4	7:17	9:1	21:13	23:6
34:1	22:22	56:10	35:29	52:9	62:11	33:5
42:4, 11	44:8	119:171	48:10	69:34		34:8
43:4-5	48:10	138:2	119:7	89:5		52:1
51:15	54:6		164	103		135:3
57:7, 9	61:8			107:8		145:9
63:3, 5	66:2			107:15		
79:13	69:30			107:21		
100	86:12			107:31		
108:3	99:3			139:14		
109:30	145:2			145:4, 10		
146:1, 2	145:21			148		
147:1				150		

Do we devote enough time and energy in our prayer lives? Why or why not?

Name specific hindrances to our prayer lives. Ask God to help us conquer them one at a time.

About the Writer: Elizabeth Hodges is executive director of Women Nationally Active for Christ, overseeing all ministries and office operations.