

Prayers for Everyone

Four kinds of prayer from 1 Timothy 2:1, and how to pray each one

Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men.

1 TIMOTHY 2:1

AT A GLANCE

BIG IDEA	Paul names four kinds of prayer: requests for our needs, prayers that honor God, intercession for others, and thanksgiving. Together they make a balanced prayer life, and they're meant to be prayed for everyone.
SCRIPTURE	1 Timothy 2:1-6 · Luke 11:2-4 · 1 Chronicles 4:9-10 · Romans 1:21 · Philippians 4:6
LENGTH	About 20 minutes, plus practice
BEST FOR	Middle school and high school
YOU WILL NEED	Bibles and four sheets of paper labeled <i>Requests, Prayers, Intercession, Thanksgiving</i>

Start here: one-note prayers

Imagine a song that only uses one note. You'd get bored fast. A lot of our prayers are like that: "Help me... give me... fix this..." Asking is good, but God invites a fuller kind of prayer. Paul names four kinds in one verse: "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks... for all men" (1 Timothy 2:1).

Read 1 Timothy 2:1, then Jesus' pattern in Luke 11:2-4, and the short prayer of a man named Jabez in 1 Chronicles 4:9-10. Then let's look at each kind.

1 Requests: "Bless me"

"Supplications" are requests for our personal needs and concerns. God wants us to ask! "In everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God" (Philippians 4:6).

Jabez is a great example. In the middle of a long list of names, the Bible pauses to tell us he prayed: "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" (1 Chronicles 4:10). "So God granted him what he requested."

A good way to pray this kind of prayer: **"Lord, bless me, and use me to serve others."** We ask for God's blessing not to hoard it, but so we can pass it on.

BACKGROUND FOR THE LEADER

Jabez's name sounds like the Hebrew word for "pain," because his mother bore him in pain (1 Chronicles 4:9). His prayer asks God to bless him, expand his influence, stay with him, and keep him from harm "that I may not cause pain." The point isn't a magic formula for success; it's a picture of a man who brought his whole life to God, and God answered.

2 Prayers: "Bless God"

The general word "prayers" focuses on God Himself: worship, and the things that concern Him. Jesus' pattern begins this way: "Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done" (Luke 11:2). This is where we praise God for who He is and ask Him to shape us into people who honor Him.

A good way to pray this kind of prayer: **"Lord, help me to walk in Your ways, and keep me from evil."**

3 Intercession: "Bless people"

To intercede means to step in and plead on someone else's behalf. This is praying for other people's needs and concerns. Take the requests you prayed for yourself and ask God to do the same for others: bless them, use them, guide them, protect them.

Notice who Paul says to pray for: "all men," including "kings and all who are in authority" (2:1-2). Why? Because God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2:4). Pray for friends, family, teachers, leaders, people you disagree with, and people who don't know Jesus yet.

4 Thanksgiving: "Thank God"

Giving thanks is an attitude of gratitude spoken out loud to God. It may be the most overlooked kind of prayer, and Paul shows why it matters so much. Describing how people drift away from God, he writes:

"Because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts." **ROMANS 1:21**

The first step away from God is failing to thank Him. And the opposite is true too: true worship is full of thanks. A thankful heart stays close to God.

TRY IT TOGETHER

Post the four sheets around the room. Have students walk to each one and write a one-line prayer of that kind (they can stay anonymous). Then read some aloud as a group prayer, moving from *Requests* to *Prayers* to *Intercession* to *Thanksgiving*.

Requests

"Bless me, and use me to serve others."

Prayers

"Help me walk in Your ways; keep me from evil."

Intercession

"Lord, do the same for them."

Thanksgiving

"Thank You, God, for..."

TALK IT OVER

1. Which of the four kinds of prayer do you pray most often? Which do you pray least?
2. Why do you think it's good to ask God to bless us and also use us to serve others?
3. Why does Paul tell us to pray for "kings and all who are in authority," even leaders we may not like?
4. According to Romans 1:21, what happens when people stop thanking God? Why?
5. Who is one person you will intercede for every day this week?

TAKE IT HOME

This week, use the four kinds of prayer every day: one request for yourself, one prayer of worship, one prayer for someone else, and three things you're thankful for. Write them in a notebook and watch how God answers.

Bless me. Bless God. Bless people. Thank God.

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