

THE ROLE OF PRAYER IN 2026

Ephesians 3.14-21

Many of us find prayer challenging. Is this because we do not see its value in a results-based world? Is it because we feel we are too busy? Is it because we are embarrassed? Do I have a small view of God?

Prayer is about cultivating a relationship with the living God. He invites us to speak to Him as our loving and attentive Father.

He gives us:

His voice (Scripture)

His ear (Prayer)

His body (the Church) – Mathis, Habits of Grace

We can think of prayer as a means of grace, a channel that provides deeper communion with God. We can respond to God's invitation to put ourselves in the path of His grace.

Jesus practiced and emphasized prayer

The fact that Jesus prayed frequently shows us it is less about getting what we want and more about intimacy with God the Father. Jesus prayed before naming the twelve disciples (Luke 6.12-15). He prayed after full days of ministry (Matthew 14.23; Cf. Mark 1.35; Luke 5.16). He prayed in Gethsemane when under great pressure (Matthew 26.36, 42, 44).

He taught His followers how to pray (Matthew 6.9-13).

The first Christians prayed

We know from Acts that the first recorded meeting after Jesus' ascension was centered on prayer (Acts 1.14). Prayer is often mentioned before major decisions and breakthroughs (Acts 2.1-4; 4.31; 13.2-3). Paul included prayers in his letters (Ephesians 1.15-23; 3.14-21, Colossians 1.9-14).

Scripture invites us to pray privately and corporately.

We Pray for God's mission through our church

God advances His mission through the local church. "Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored" (2 Thessalonians 3.1; Cf. Matthew 9.37-40; 2 Corinthians 1.11; Colossians 4.2 Ephesians 6.18).

We pray for one another in the circumstances of life

Christians pray for the sick (1 Thessalonians 5.17; Acts 28.8). We come to God with our burdens and cares (Philippians 4.6; 1 Thessalonians 5.17; Ephesians 6.18).

Fasting helps us focus

Fasting is a voluntary abstention from food (or something else) with the aim of growing spiritually.

Fasting exposes our dependence, acts as a check on created things controlling us, and teaches us to delight in God alone as the source of all good things.

We invite the congregation to fast for 24 hours sometime during the weeks of:

January 18-24, 2026

April 19-25, 2026 - Prayer & Worship Night on April 22

July 19-25, 2026 - Prayer & Worship Night on July 22

October 12-18, 2026 - Prayer & Worship Night on October 14.

Practical Considerations

Pray the promises of Scripture. Pray through the Psalms.

Develop a personal prayer list for 2026.

Move through Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication.

Pray with your family at mealtimes and before bed.

Make use of prayer books to guide your thoughts.

Attend a Wednesday evening prayer meeting at church, 7-8 p.m.

Women's prayer is on the 2nd and 4th Friday mornings 9:30-10:30 a.m.

Key Idea: Let's commit to faithful prayer in 2026.

Application Questions:

Why should a Christian pray privately?

How does corporate prayer create church unity?

What happens when we see prayer only as God giving us the things we ask for?

Select Bibliography on Prayer:

Begg, A. *Pray Big: Learn to Pray Like an Apostle*

Mathis, D. *Habits of Grace: Enjoying Jesus through the Spiritual Disciplines* (Introduction & Part 2, pp. 91-142)

Miller, P. *A Praying Church: Becoming a People of Hope in a Discouraging World*

Miller, P. *A Praying Life: Connecting with God in a Distracting World*

Onwuchekwa, J. *Prayer: How Praying Together Shapes the Church*

Skoog, R. & P. Greer, C. Doolittle, *Lead with Prayer: The Spiritual Habits of World-Changing Leaders*