



# Great Prayers of the Bible

Prayers from the Old & New Testaments  
for Scripture study and *Lectio Divina*.

*An installment in the series:*  
Orthodox Anglicans Studying Scripture

## Lesson 1: The Prayer of Kings

### INTRODUCTION

#### The Foundation of Prayer in the Scriptures

*“And Abram builded an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord.”* (Genesis 12:8)  
Christians of all maturity levels should recognize that prayer is essentially communication between man and God in a supernatural encounter. Its form can be a dialogue that is formal or informal, or just meditation and/or contemplation—more about being present in the reflection & energies of mind and heart, rather about than using words.  
We should also remember that there are types of prayer expressed through these various forms. An easy memory tool for these forms is the acrostic A.C.T.S. (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication). Moreover, this acrostic illustrates a sequence. As we find recorded in the greatest and most memorable of the Scripture, prayer is most basically the creation’s act of worship (adoration) toward the Creator, while petitions for ourselves and others (supplication) should conclude our priorities.

Undoubtedly, this is why many seminal instances of prayers in the Bible occur around the interface of an altar. At the center of this is the connection between the Passover lamb on the Old Covenant altar and Christ on the New Covenant crucifixion altar. But, moreover, man and God meeting at the altar bookend the entire revelation of the Bible, from the patriarchs in Genesis to the heavenly saints in Revelation.

*“And another angel stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar”* (Revelation 8:3)

QUESTION – Can you think of examples of A.C.T.S. in our Anglican Book of Common Prayer?

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How do we especially see the adoration of and thanksgiving to God assuming a central place?

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#### The Great Prayers of Hebrew Kings

Consider the following prayers of three of Israel’s greatest kings recorded in the Old Testament. When reading them, observe how the contexts, the content, and the form of these prayers represent good models for our own prayer to emulate.

*David’s Prayer* (2 Samuel 7:18-29)

*Solomon’s Prayer* (1 Kings 8:12-53)

*Hezekiah’s Prayer* (2 Kings 19:14-21a, 29-34)

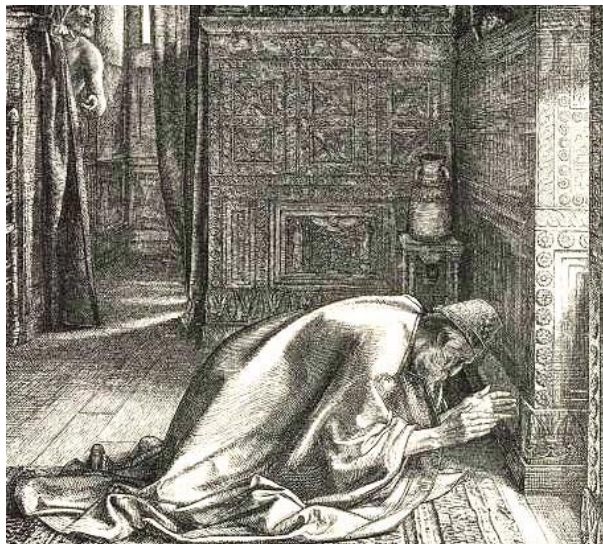
QUESTION – What types of prayer do you note in these prayers, and why were they so significant, given the person who was offering the prayer and circumstances in which they were given?

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As Anglicans, how do we discern that theology is also being expressed and developed liturgically-speaking through these prayers?

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Time-allowing, re-read the prayers using the spiritual practice of *Lectio Divina*, following the traditional four-step process of *Lectio*, *Meditatio*, *Oratio*, and *Contemplatio* (see essay for help). For your own edification, make a note of the spiritual fruits gained from pondering these passages.



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## **Lesson 2: Prayers of Confession/Supplication**

### **REVIEW**

#### **Prayers of Confession in the Scriptures**

*I acknowledged my sin unto thee,  
and mine iniquity have I not hid.*

*I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the  
Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.*

(Psalm 32:5)

The second type of prayer in the acrostic A.C.T.S. (**A**doration, **C**onfession, **T**hanksgiving, and **S**upplication) is man's way of expressing contrition for his individual sin or that of his community. In the Scriptures, prayers of confession usually include the admission of sin and guilt, and the desire for forgiveness from the act of repentance.

From the Old Testament, we usually think first of King David's very personal articulations of sin, especially in the Psalms. The form and flow of his famous compositions continue to inspire Christian penitential prayers, whether they be used in sacramental confession or in select offices of the Book of Common Prayer.

**QUESTION** – Which of David's Psalms begins the Penitential Office in the Anglican Book of Common Prayer? When do we ordinarily use it?

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However, not all confession prayers in the Old Testament are merely by individual for himself. More often, they are given by a spiritual leader on behalf of a group (sometimes the entire nation). This reality emphasizes that our relationship with God is covenant and corporate, and we must be sensitive to show remorse for all, not only ourselves.

### **Prayers of Confession/Supplication in the OT**

Consider the prayers by two Jewish prophets of the trans-exilic period when the descendants of Judean captives were first being allowed to return to Jerusalem. See how their prayers illustrate the covenantal nature of the People's relationship with God, and that broken loyalty is the nature of their sin and the cause of the punishment they received. Note how both Nehemiah and Daniel invoke salvation history and law, but also their source for hope in forgiveness and renewal if the Jews repent and change their ways to please God once again.

*Daniel's Prayer (Daniel 9:3-19)*

*Nehemiah's Prayer (Nehemiah 1:4-11)*

**QUESTION** – How did the Jews break God's covenant, but in what do both prophet's trust as sources of hope for their restoration?

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As in the last lesson, consider the content and the form of these prayers for they represent good models for our own prayer to emulate. How can we utilize prayers like these to pray for our own communities—our parish and our nation?

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Time-allowing, re-read the prayers using the spiritual practice of *Lectio Divina*, following the traditional four-step process of *Lectio*, *Meditatio*, *Oratio*, and *Contemplatio* (see essay for help). For your own edification, make a note of the spiritual fruits gained from pondering these passages.



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## Lesson 3: Intercessory Prayer

### REVIEW

#### Intercessory Prayer in the Scriptures

*“And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt... Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever.” (Exodus 32:11a,13)*

The fourth type of prayer in the acrostic A.C.T.S. (**A**doration, **C**onfession, **T**hanksgiving, and **S**upplication) is divided into two related, but different types of prayer. Supplication can take the form of *petition* for either a personal or a general request, such as asking for God to meet a specific need, intervene in a situation, or just accomplish an action / fulfill a promise according to His will. Supplication becomes *intercession* when we mediate on behalf of another person, a group, the world (or a selected segment of it). Intercessory prayer is a priestly action, one of Christians’ highest callings of our spiritual vocation (*Revelation 1:6; 5:10; 20:6*). The Church prays for others in emulation of Jesus Christ, the Great High Priest who intercedes for us.

QUESTION – As the source and guide for our corporate liturgical prayer, the Anglican Book of Common Prayer is filled with examples of intercessory prayer. Can you cite examples from specific liturgies when we ordinarily use it?

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#### Intercessory Prayer in the OT & NT

Christians should offer intercessions, not just for the good or those whom we like, but also for the fallen away, the wicked, our enemies for whom Jesus taught us to pray (Matthew 5:44), and even for those with whom we have no acquaintance. The Old Testament is full of intercessory prayer for Israel (especially from Moses & Prophets), but one of the most famous is that of Abraham, which he made to the Angel of the Lord on behalf of Sodom.

*Abraham’s Prayer (Genesis 18:16-33)*

QUESTION – What do we learn from the persistence of Abraham’s intercession, and about the longsuffering of God?

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In the Church, we are commanded to pray for one another as part of “bearing one another’s burdens” because, in Christ, we love the brethren. We often intercede for one another when one of us is struggling with an affliction; but we should always be interceding for the Church, the parish, a fellow Christian for growth in Christ, His grace and gifts.

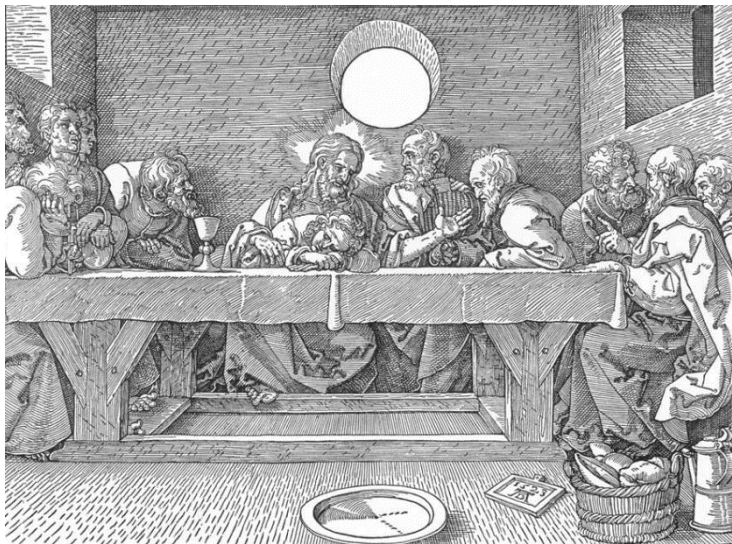
*St. Paul’s Prayer (Ephesians 1:15-23; 3:14-21)*

QUESTION – How did these passages help you to more effectively intercede for your parish?

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Time-allowing, re-read the prayers using the spiritual practice of *Lectio Divina*, following the traditional four-step process of *Lectio*, *Meditatio*, *Oratio*, and *Contemplatio* (see essay for help). For your own edification, make a note of the spiritual fruits gained from pondering these passages.





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## Lesson 4: Christ's Priestly Prayer

### The Prayers of Jesus in the Gospels

*"These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee...And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."* (St. John 17:1, 5)

The four Gospels are full of the prayers of Our Lord Jesus—or, episodes of Him in prayer, at least—from His Temptation in the wilderness to His last prayer to the Father on the Cross. Although sinless, and with no need to make confession, He perfectly illustrates the other three types of prayer in the acrostic A.C.T.S. (adoration, thanksgiving & supplication). And, in most cases, Jesus' prayers exemplify a *complete* model of prayer: not just for their form and content, but also for their approach in attitude and in environment. Jesus shows us that what we say, how we say it, and where we say it, in prayer, are all important for authenticity and fruitfulness.

QUESTION – What are some other examples in the Gospels where Jesus is recorded demonstrating the essential qualities of prayer? Are there any included in our Anglican Book of Common Prayer?

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When He prayed, Jesus also showed us what our communion with God is like in prayer. Christians might think that His prayer must be so different from our own since He *is* God, and His relationship with the Father and the Spirit are so different. It is true that, in His Divinity, the Son of God enjoys an intimacy with the other Persons of the Godhead that

are a unique to His eternal nature and personality. What He always has by Nature, Christians are only given by grace. However, in His full Human Nature, Jesus still experienced what it is like to approach God the Father as a Man part of the created order, and to be filled with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. These are both spiritual positions that every Christian knows, which are likewise enjoined with Christ's mediatorship as the Church's heavenly High Priest.

### Christ's Priestly Prayer

Jesus' prayer at the conclusion of the Last Supper which St. John records in chapter 17 of his Gospel is Christ's priestly prayer *par excellence*. Not only does it magnificently and movingly articulate His advocacy for us our great High Priest and our Divine Savior, it perfectly demonstrates the height of adoration, thanksgiving & supplication in prayer. Jesus teaches us in this prayer both *how* to pray in this manner and also *what* to pray for, especially based on what He entreats the Father for us.

*St. John 17*

QUESTION – As He intercedes for His Church, what are four key spiritual virtues for which Jesus supplicates the Father that we may have?

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## Lesson 5: The Prayers of Christ

### The Prayers of Jesus in the Gospels

*“Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name.”*

(St. John 12:27-28)

The four Gospels are full of the prayers of Our Lord Jesus—or, episodes of Him in prayer, at least—from His Temptation to His last prayer to the Father at Calvary. He perfectly illustrates three types of prayer in the acrostic A.C.T.S. (adoration, thanksgiving & supplication). And in, most cases, they exemplify a *complete* model of prayer: not just for their form and content, but also for their approach in attitude and in environment. Jesus shows us that what we say, how we say it, and where we say it, in prayer, are all important for authenticity and fruitfulness.

When He prayed, Jesus also showed us what our communion with God is like in prayer. Christians might think that His prayer must be so different from our own since He *is* God, and His relationship with the Father and the Spirit are so different. It is true that, in His Divinity, the Son of God enjoys an intimacy with the other Persons of the Godhead that are a unique to His eternal nature and personality. What He always has by Nature, Christians are only given by grace. However, in His full Human Nature, Jesus still experienced what it is like to approach God the Father as a Man part of the created order, and to be filled with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. These are both spiritual positions that every Christian knows, which are likewise enjoined with Christ’s mediatorship as the Church’s heavenly High Priest.

### Other Prayers of Christ

Jesus’ “High Priestly Prayer” recorded in St. John chapter 17, along with His “Lord’s Prayer” of St. Matthew chapter 6, are Christ’s two best-known prayers, but both Evangelists also record several other important instances of Jesus in prayer at pivotal moments of His ministry. In Matthew 11, Jesus prays following His affirmation of John the Baptist and his cousin’s ministry as the forerunner of the Messiah. Matthew also retells the most complete version of Jesus’ prayer before His betrayal in the Garden of Gethsemane.

John does not mention the latter, but he does record a similar prayer upon Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem (chapter 12:27-28). John is also the only Evangelist to record Jesus’ raising of His friend Lazarus of Bethany from the dead, including His prayer that He utters beforehand for all to hear (chapter 11).

*St. Matthew 11:25-27*

*St. John 11:41-42*

*St. Matthew 26:36-44*

QUESTION – What are at least 3 common themes, also present in the “High Priestly Prayer” that pervade all four of these prayers of Christ?

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