

10 Dangerous Prayers

Although prayer is simply talking to God as you would talk to a friend, prayer is not something to take lightly. As indicated previously in this course, through prayer, God gives His children divine “say so.” Prayer gives us a seat at God’s council table, where He hears our input and bases some of His decisions on what we say. For this reason, prayer can be quite dangerous. But this is also why God sometimes answers our prayers with a “No.” Ultimately, as C. S. Lewis pointed out, God gives Himself discretion on whether or not to grant our requests, because without this discretion, the power of prayer would destroy us.

Nevertheless, in my experience, there are some prayers that God always grants, and these prayers are quite dangerous to you and to your life. The reason God always grants these prayer requests is because they are within His will for our lives. In praying them, however, we often fail to realize how devastating these requests will be to our lives once they are granted. So in this lesson I want to share with you the ten most dangerous prayers you can pray. Although these prayers are dangerous, I still recommend that you pray them, for while they may seem to destroy your life at first, they will ultimately allow you to partner with God in extraordinary ways.

I share these dangerous prayer requests with you from personal experience. I have prayed all the dangerous prayers below ... and suffered the consequences as a result. But I reaped the rewards of these prayers as well. Though they ruined my life, they also saved my life.

I had my life all figured out, and it was all going according to my perfect plan. Then I started praying the prayers below, and before long, all my hopes and dreams lay shattered around my feet. I was publicly shamed and humiliated. I was without work and without money. I didn’t know who I was or what I was supposed to do. I often tried to pick up the pieces of my life and glue them back together, but God would come through with His baseball bat and smash it all to hell (almost literally ... all of my plans and dreams deserved nothing more).

So I know the danger of these prayers, but also their importance and their power. When you pray these prayers, God will start to do work in your life as you never before imagined. Yes, it will be painful and scary, but God will take the pieces of your life and

reconstruct them into a beautiful mosaic that reflects His light and love to a watching world. When you pray these prayers, watch out, for your life is about to change!

1. Teach me Humility

After you pray this Christian prayer for humility, be ready for people to badmouth you, slander you, and drag your name through the mud. If you pray for humility, be ready for false accusations, for that “skeleton in the closet” to be revealed, or for people to belittle you and talk down to you as if you were inferior. Praying for humility is a dangerous prayer, because the only way to learn humility is to be placed in humbling situations. So if you pray for humility, be ready.

2. Teach me Patience

Much like the prayer for humility, a prayer for patience is dangerous because the only way to learn patience is to be put in situations where your patience is tested and tried. If you pray for patience, you will soon be surrounded by the most annoying people you have ever met. Your car will break down when you are late for an appointment. Your children will go bonkers in the waiting room at the doctor’s office. Your other prayers will go unanswered. When you pray for patience, get ready for setbacks, roadblocks, and pitfalls. So if you pray for patience, take a deep breath and hold on to your seat; you are in for a wild ride that will seem to last forever.

3. Teach me How to Forgive

If you ask God to teach you how to forgive, He is going to do two things. He will first point out to you your many sins. He does this, not to shame you, but to show you how much you have been forgiven by God. We learn to forgive only when we come to understand how much we have been forgiven. After you have seen how much God has forgiven you, God will then bring people into your life who badmouth you, cheat you, sin against you, and do all kinds of horrible things to you. The only way to learn how to forgive others is to have people in your life whom you must forgive. So when you pray to learn how to forgive, watch out! For you are about to be hurt, slandered, maligned, mistreated, and abused. But when you finally learn the great ability to forgive, life will seem better, because you won’t be bogged down with anger and bitterness.

As a side note, please note that forgiveness is not the same as forgetting. If you are being mistreated and abused, forgiveness does not require you to stay in that situation.

Forgiveness does not require you to trust those who hurt and abused you. If you are being hurt, abused, or mistreated, you can forgive, but you must also get out. (I write more about this in my book on forgiveness in this Christian Question series.)

4. Teach me the Truth

This prayer seems pretty innocent. What could be dangerous about truth? Don't we all want truth? Don't we want to know what God is really like, and what Scripture really says? Don't we want to know where we are wrong in our thinking and in our theology? The truth is that most Christians do not actually want to know where they are wrong. Most Christians don't *really* want to understand Scripture better. What they want is to have Scripture support their own beliefs and ideas. They want to remain safe and secure in their theological beliefs. They don't want to have their theological boat rocked.

This is why a prayer for truth is so dangerous. When you pray for truth, God is going to come into your life and start questioning some of your central beliefs about Him. The Holy Spirit will start raising dangerous questions about your understanding of certain biblical texts. Jesus will gently nudge you to rethink how you follow Him into the world. When you pray for truth, you will soon discover that some of your most cherished doctrines might be wrong. You may soon discover that the God you worship might not actually be the God revealed in Scripture. You may find that the way you are comfortable “doing church” is not actually found in the Bible.

When these sorts of truth bombs explode in your life, it feels like the bottom has fallen away. It feels like there is nothing firm to stand on, that you have nothing left but questions and doubts. It feels like you are tumbling down the theological rabbit hole. For a time, you will not know up from down, in from out, or even right from wrong. Such theological vertigo is extremely disconcerting for most people, but it is what often happens when you pray for God to help you better understand Scripture and to show you where you are wrong in your thinking about Him and His ways.

The prayer for truth is a dangerous prayer. If you are comfortable in your theology and believe you are right in almost everything you believe about God and the Bible, do not pray this dangerous prayer. But if you do pray this prayer and are willing to see it through, the world God opens to you is one you will never want to leave. You will discover such freedom in thinking for yourself. When your eyes are opened to the truth, you will love how clearly you see things and will never want to return to the way you viewed things before.

5. Lead me Wherever You Want me to Go

One way this Christian prayer is often prayed is with the words, “Here I am, Lord, send me.” If you are like me, when you have prayed this prayer, you imagine that God is going to send you into a high-profile ministry with a big church and lots of prominence in the community. You imagine that maybe you will become an advisor to the President, or the CEO of an international Christian relief organization. And to hear many Christian leaders talk, this “upward ministry trend” does indeed seem to be the way God leads many people. This is why you will almost never hear Christian leaders say that God is leading them downward into insignificance and poverty. No, when most Christian leaders talk about how they were led by God, it is almost always to bigger churches, with more prominent ministries, where there will be larger salaries, and greater power.

While I do not deny that God sometimes leads people in these directions, I think that more often than not, when we follow Jesus wherever He leads, He actually leads us downward, but we refuse to go. Jesus leads us to the gutter. He leads us to the gates of hell. He leads us where lives are broken, where sin is blackest, and where Satan’s chains are strongest. This is why the prayer to follow Jesus wherever He leads is so dangerous.

If you want to do great things for God in His Kingdom, you must understand that greatness in God’s Kingdom does not look like greatness in the kingdoms of this world. It usually looks like the exact opposite. God’s path to greatness usually does not mirror what you have in mind. God’s path to greatness usually leads to prison, death, and the gates of hell. I once heard Francis Schaeffer say in an interview that if given the choice between two ministry positions, we should choose the one with less fame and glory, as this is likely where God is actually leading.

This dangerous prayer usually goes hand-in-hand with the prayer for humility. In my experience, choices in ministry usually come in pairs. There is often one path that leads to greatness and glory, and another path that leads to obscurity and insignificance. Though the temptation is to choose glory and honor, Jesus might actually be calling you to follow Him downward into humility. So be sure you really mean it when you tell Jesus you will follow Him wherever He leads.

But then sit back and enjoy the ride, for there is nothing as wonderful as being right where God wants you to be. You will start using your God-given gifts and talents in ways that are exhilarating and liberating. You will discover that you no longer feel like an outsider who is looking in to where all the action is taking place, but will instead find

yourself in the middle of the action of God’s expanding Kingdom work in this world. The joy of working with God in this world while using your gifts to expand the Kingdom is the most indescribable experience you can have in this life.

6. Help me Understand the Plight of the Poor

The poor and the needy are all around us, and since Scripture so often invites us to consider the plight of the poor, it is normal and natural to pray for God to help you understand their situation, and to do what you can to help. But this is also a dangerous prayer.

One way God might help you understand the poor is by causing you to become poor yourself. Or maybe you will lose your job and struggle to find a new one. Until you have faced the difficulty of putting food on the table, of finding work to provide for your family, or of putting a roof over one’s head, you cannot understand the plight of the poor. So if you like your nice house, your two cars, your steak dinners, and your Caribbean vacations, don’t ask God to help you understand the plight of the poor. If you long to have compassion for others and empathy to understand the plight of the poor so that you can better help and care for them, this is the prayer for you.

7. Make me More Like Jesus

Praying to be more like Jesus is a very common prayer in Christianity, yet I advise you to think twice the next time you pray this prayer. Jesus was beaten and bruised, scorned and mocked, despised and rejected. Are you sure you really want to be like Jesus? It’s good if you want to be like Jesus in His abilities to teach, love, serve, and heal, but these abilities also led Jesus to be crucified and killed. I do not think it is possible in this world to have one without the other.

When you pray to be like Jesus, other people will do everything they can to stop you. And I’m not talking about the world. People of the world were actually quite open to Jesus. He was the friend to prostitutes, tax-collectors, and sinners. The main opposition to Jesus came from religious people. Similarly, when you seek to be more like Jesus, you will likely find that your pastor and your church-going friends might be the most upset. The reason is that Jesus often challenges the *status quo*, and especially the *status quo* that claims to represent God.

But when you pray to be more like Jesus, trouble will also come directly from God. God will always work to make you more like Jesus, and so when you invite Him to do this work in your life, He steps in and starts to break down, burn away, and slough off anything and everything that does not look like Jesus. God may purify your life with His refining fire, but it still burns.

Soon enough, however, you will have people saying that you are like a breath of fresh air to be around. People will sense the presence of Jesus in you, and will feel comfortable telling you things they cannot tell anyone else. They will desire to be with you and around you for reasons they cannot explain. People will feel loved and accepted in your presence, just as people felt accepted in the presence of Jesus. When we become more like Jesus, we allow others the joy of being themselves, free from judgment and open to God’s love.

8. Give me More Faith

Christians like our beliefs in nice, neat packages. But life is not like that, and neither is life with God. When you pray for God to give you more faith, you are likely to enter into some of the most difficult and doubt-filled times of your life. You will begin to question everything you have ever known and everything you have ever believed. You may even begin to doubt God’s goodness. You might begin to wonder if God even exists.

This is not bad. Embrace the doubts. Understand that if what you believe is true, it can stand up against all questions. Truth does not fear a challenge. There is no other way for your faith to grow unless your faith is tested, and faith is only tested by questions that challenge your faith. So don’t be afraid of questions. Don’t be afraid of doubt.

When you pray for faith, you will initially gain more questions than faith. But don’t be alarmed. As you learn to live with doubt, God will make Himself known to you in new and exciting ways, and both your knowledge and your faith will grow.

9. Give me Victory over Sin and Temptation

Praying for victory over sin is like praying for victory over a great enemy. It is wonderful to pray for, but how do you think this victory will be achieved? It will only be achieved by facing it in battle. David could have prayed all he wanted for victory over Goliath, but he never would have been victorious over Goliath if he had not faced the giant in battle.

It is the same with you and your sin. Yes, pray for victory over sin and temptation, but know that when you pray for this, the onslaught of sin and temptation will only get worse. The battle will intensify. The giants will come forth and will mock you and your puny sticks and stones with which you intend to do battle.

Just remember, of course, that when such temptations come in response to your prayer, God is not the one sending the temptation. God does not tempt; nor does He allow you to be tempted above what you can bear. So when you face your giant, or even a whole army of giants, do not fear, for God is on your side, and if you are facing heavy temptation, know that God is standing by your side ready to help no matter what your challenge might be. God will never abandon you in the fight, no matter how large the enemy.

So if you pray this Christian prayer, be ready for an onslaught of all the wiles of the devil, but also be ready for God to battle with you at your side. And as God battles at your side, you will become a better, stronger, and more able soldier in the ongoing fight.

10. Please Help my Annoying Neighbor or Coworker Come to Faith

This is a great Christian prayer. Does God want to reach your annoying neighbor or your rude coworker with the gospel? Of course He does! But in light of what you learned in the previous lesson, do you know how God is going to reach your annoying neighbor or coworker with the gospel? That’s right. He’s going to use you.

I once heard a story of a Bible study group who decided to make a prayer list of all the people they “disliked” the most, and then pray for these people every week as part of the Bible study. Over the course of the next ten years, all but one of the people on that list became believers. Furthermore, almost all of them became Christians because the members of that Bible study showed grace, love, mercy, and forgiveness to these “annoying” people in their lives.

If you are going to pray for someone, be prepared to answer your own prayers. When you pray for God to reach someone with the gospel, God is likely going to send you.

Conclusion

When you are going through difficult times in life, it is normal to ask, “Why me? Why is God allowing these things to happen to me?” When you are surrounded by devastation and difficulties and you find yourself asking, “What did I do to deserve this?” don’t be surprised if the answer you receive back from God is, “You asked for it!” When you face

difficulties in life, don't assume that God is punishing you, for the opposite is actually true. God does not punish.

Instead, when you face trials and troubles in life, it is more than likely that God is simply answering your prayers. God molds, forms, and shapes you in response to your prayers for Him to do so. But more often than not, in order for God to teach you humility or patience, to give you compassion for the poor, or to help you understand Him and His ways more clearly, He must first break you down so that He can then build you up and form you into what He wants you to be. The prayers suggested in this lesson will accomplish this reconstruction by God. These prayers are dangerous, but they are also essential, as we learn to follow Jesus wherever He leads.