

## Prayers for Bible Reading

When we open our Bibles to read, we're never alone. The Holy Spirit hovers over and in the words God has for us, ready to stir our hearts, illumine our minds, and redirect our lives, all for the glory of Christ. The Spirit makes an otherwise ordinary routine supernatural — and making it unwise to read and study without praying for our eyes, minds, and hearts to be opened.

Prayer is then our attentiveness to God. He speaks in the Scriptures and climactically in the person and work of his Son ... and we listen for His voice. Then, wonder of wonders, He stops, He stoops, He bends His ear to listen to us.

So, how do we pray over our Bibles? Here are four verses to pray as we open God's word.

### 1. Psalm 119:18: *Open My Eyes to Wonder*

“Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law” (Psa. 119:18). We ask God to open our spiritual eyes to show us the glimpses of glory we can't see by ourselves. Without His help, we're simply “natural” persons with natural eyes. Yet, “the natural person doesn't accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he's not able to understand [see] them because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14).

Thus, Paul prays for Christians at Ephesus (and us), “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, *having the eyes of your hearts enlightened*” (Eph. 1:17-18).

### 2. Luke 18:38: *Lord, have Mercy on Me*

Here we pray with Bartimaeus the beggar, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” (Mk. 10:47). For as long as we're in this life, sin messes up every encounter with God and hinders our ability to discern His voice in the word. It's only by His mercy and grace that we can see Jesus and hear His voice in the Scriptures. This prayer takes us onto the path of fascination with His grace and cultivation of a spirit of true humility.

### 3. James 1:22: *Make Me a Doer of Your Word*

We pray that God, having opened our eyes to wonder and reminded us of the sufficiency of His grace, will produce genuine change in our lives. Here we ask Him to cause seeds from Scripture to bear real, noticeable fruit in tangible acts of sacrificial love for others. “Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (Jas. 1:22). We needn't artificially grab onto a specific point of application from every passage but we pray that His word will shape, inform and direct our practical living. Here we ask that God to make us more manifestly loving, not less, because of the time we invest alone in reading and studying His word.

#### 4. Luke 24:45: *Open My Eyes to Jesus*

This is a more specific way of praying that God would open our eyes to wonder. The God's works stand as marvelous mountain ranges in the Bible, but the highest peak, and the most majestic vista, is the person and work of his Son Jesus the Christ.

As Jesus himself taught after His resurrection, he is the key to unlocking the meaning of most every text — every book, every plot twist, the whole story. First, “He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself”, then He taught His disciples that “everything written about [Him] in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” In doing so, “He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures” (Lk. 24:27, 44, 45).

The great goal of reading and studying Scripture is to *know and enjoy Jesus*. This is to taste heaven's delights. For, “this is eternal life, that they know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (Jn. 17:3). This is the goal that gives direction, focus, and purpose to our study. “Let us know; let us press on to know the LORD” (Hos. 6:3). This forms the great yearning of our souls: “I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord” (Phil. 3:8).

So we keep both eyes peeled for God and how He shows up in Jesus. Until we see how a passage relates to Jesus' person and work, we have yet to come to the single most important aspect of our reading. Desperate for God's ongoing help to see, we pray.

Based on an article by David Mathis executive editor for [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org) and pastor at Cities Church in Minneapolis/St. Paul

#### *on Prayer*

It's not enough to read about prayer or study the lives of the saints or have theological conversation about spiritual practices. We learn to pray by praying. Prayer is both an act and an attitude. We pray in response to the reality of the Triune God by paying attention or by being attentive. God is always present and attentive to us, always pursuing, blessing, and loving us. God is always reaching out to offer grace and goodness to us. God is inexhaustible and unrelenting in pure presence. Prayer is then our attentiveness to God. It enables us to live in this presence and to engage in actions that keep us responsive and attentive. We often speak of prayer as conversation, communication, or communion with God, and this is true. But for me, the word prayer describes what Brother Lawrence called “the practice of the presence of God.”

~ Daniel Vestal, *Being the Presence of Christ*

Quoted in: Mogabgab, John S., *A Guide to Prayer for All Who Walk with God*, Upper Room. Kindle Edition.