

Prayers of the Bible

Prayers of the Bible

EQUIPPING WOMEN TO CALL ON GOD IN TRUTH

SUSAN HUNT



P U B L I S H I N G

PO. BOX 817 • PHILLIPSBURG • NEW JERSEY 08865-0817

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Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Hunt, Susan, 1940-

Prayers of the Bible : equipping women to call on God in truth / Susan Hunt.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references (p.).

ISBN 978-1-59638-387-6 (pbk.)

1. Bible--Prayers--History and criticism. 2. Christian women--Religious life. I. Title.

BS680.P64H86 2011

248.3'209--dc23

2011032269

To the Tuesday Morning Women's Bible Study
at Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church (PCA),
Dallas, Georgia.

These are the women with whom I first shared what I was learning as we studied the prayers of the Bible together. Their questions, comments, and prayers taught and inspired me. They are the coauthors and prayer supporters of this study.

And to the Pastors and Elders of Grace Covenant,
with gratitude for their prayers, encouragement, and oversight
of our women's ministry and of this project.



*The LORD is near to all who call on him,
to all who call on him in truth.*

Psalm 145:18

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INTRODUCTION

How do we approach the magnificent and mysterious topic of prayer? How do we learn to pray?

Our women's Bible study committee had determined that we wanted to study prayer, but then we were faced with these questions. We considered various books and plans but left the meeting without an answer.

I awoke during the night and began praying. Suddenly it was clear. Go to the Bible. Go to the *prayers* in the Bible. Then I slept well.

The next morning I made a list of the prayers that came to mind, and then read them from the perspective that these were the passionate prayers of God's people in the context of daily life and relationships. The more I read, the more excited I became about exploring these prayers with my sisters in Christ.

There are many prayers I could have selected. The rationale for my choices is that my heart was drawn to these specific prayers and to this order—not a chronological order but an order that seems to unfold a pilgrimage of prayer.

PSALM 145

Our Bible study committee selected Psalm 145:18 as our theme verse: "The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth."

The nearness of God is an extraordinary idea. Little did we realize that this concept captures the essence of every prayer we would study.

When it was decided to publish this study, women committed to pray one day a week. They selected verses from Psalm 145 to shape their prayers.

THE TRUE WOMAN

I am committed to Titus 2 discipleship.¹ In Titus 2, the apostle Paul calls the church to teach God's people sound doctrine. Then he tells Pastor Titus, "Older women . . . are to be reverent . . . and so train the young women . . ." (vv. 3–4). While all discipleship is not gender-specific, there should be some opportunities for women to disciple women to live for God's glory as women. As I thought about applying the topic of prayer to women, I realized that only true women *can* call on God in truth.

More than ten years ago I first encountered the term *the true woman*. I was immediately intrigued and inspired by this nineteenth-century concept of womanhood.

I never found a definitive explanation of what the nineteenth-century church, or women, meant by the term. It seems they assumed everyone understood it. The true woman was often defined by her virtues, but in my opinion she represented more than outward conformity to a moral code. My conclusion was that the true woman was the product of the God-centered theology brought to our shores by our forefathers and foremothers.

In *The True Woman* I wrote,

Some of the Greek words translated true . . . in the New Testament include unconcealed, actual, true to fact . . . the reality at the basis of an appearance. . . . The true woman is the real thing.

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She is a genuine, authentic Masterpiece. The Master set eternity in her heart and is conforming her to His own image. There is consistency in her outward behavior because it is dictated by the reality of her inner life. That reality is her redemption.²

The true woman is a reflection of redeemed womanhood.

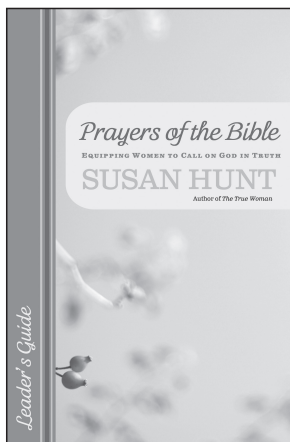
Whether I'm right or wrong in my conclusions, we know that we are in a crisis of womanhood. The world's definition of womanhood is the antithesis of God's calling for His daughters. This is not a call to return to the nineteenth century. It is a call to return to Scripture. It is a call to true women to call on God in truth.

MY PRAYER

Writing on prayer has been daunting because I feel inadequate. The only reason I dared do so is because God tells us that He chooses to use the foolish, weak, low, and despised "so that no human being might boast in the presence of God" (1 Cor. 1:29). I gratefully admit that "I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know" (Job 42:3). I pray that you go beyond what I have written and discover things too wonderful for *us*.

I encourage you to read this study with an open Bible. I hope you spend more time in the Book than in this book. Read slowly and meditate on the Scriptures. Whether you study alone or with others, I encourage you to use the Leader's Guide for additional thoughts on each prayer.

ALSO AVAILABLE:
The *Prayers of the Bible* Leader's Guide, by Susan Hunt



ISBN: 978-1-59638-388-3, Price: \$14.99

This 176-page leader's guide provides the Bible study leader or group facilitator with theological tools to expand the material in *Prayers of the Bible* and to take women deeper into God's Word.

Includes:

- A lesson plan and student handout for each chapter.
- Additional information about each passage, suggestions for prayer times, discussion questions, and ideas for application.
- Resources and suggestions to nurture the relationships among women in the group.

To order this important resource and get the most out of your study of *Prayers of the Bible*,

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PRAYERS FROM
PSALM 145

When I asked the women in our Bible study to pray Psalm 145 for this project, I had no intention of sharing their prayers with anyone. But I never imagined the power of this endeavor in my own life, in their lives, or in our fellowship as our hearts were united in praying a specific passage of Scripture. I share a few of their prayers with their permission. I think this is appropriate because they were also praying for you.

Monday, Sharon: Psalm 145:13–14

Dear Lord, lift Susan up as she bows before You to write this book. May it be a work that will survive through many generations and lift up the prayer life of all who read it. Give her strength, good health and Your might as she strives toward her deadline.

Tuesday, Dana: Psalm 145:18–20

O Lord, Your word assures us that You will be near to those who call on You in truth. I lift up Your servant Susan

to You. May she feel Your nearness each time she sits down to write. Hear her when she cries out to You for help. Rescue her as You have promised. May this book be faithful to Your word.

Wednesday, Denise: Psalm 145:10–13

Give Susan energy, space, and truth so this book will build Your kingdom for this generation and for every generation to come. Through this book, may *all* see Your splendor and glory and goodness. May all see Your truth. May all know You better. Work through our Susan, Lord, so she may show the world, with the precision of Your grace, the splendor and glory and wonder and beauty of eternal, immortal, invisible YOU, King of kings, Lord of lords. Susan is Your workmanship, and I know You will accomplish Your purposes through her. Thank You, Father. Amen. And Amen.

Thursday, Anne: Psalm 145:8–13

Lord, be gracious and merciful to Susan as she writes. May her work bring glory to Your kingdom and tell of Your power, mighty acts and majesty. May this book help spread Your word from generation to generation.

Friday, Tracy (our practical one): Psalm 145:14

Lord, uphold Susan when her vertigo and lack of confidence make her fall, and lift her up when she is tired, discouraged, and has writer's block.

And Elise committed to be the second line of defense and to pray every day for those who were praying: that the Lord will raise up those who are bowed down (v. 14), draw their eyes to look to Him (v. 15), give them faith as they pray, and preserve and keep them (v. 20).



*The LORD is near to all who call on him,
to all who call on him in truth.*

Psalm 145:18

REDEEMED

GENESIS 1–3

Biblical womanhood is part of the story of redemption. It can only be understood in the context of this amazing gospel story that begins . . .

BEFORE THE BEGINNING

Read Ephesians 1:1–14

In this marvelous doxology to the triune God, we learn that before creation the Father chose us in Christ (v. 4), that the Son redeemed us through His blood (v. 7), and that the Spirit seals and guarantees our inheritance (v. 13–14). In this covenant of redemption each person of the Trinity assumed a different function in the accomplishment of our redemption, but the common purpose is the praise of His glorious

REDEEMED

grace (vv. 6, 12, 14). The Bible is the unfolding story of this glorious plan and purpose.

Consider this question: Which Trinitarian function is most important for our salvation?

The answer: The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are “the same in substance, equal in power and glory,”¹ but each has a distinct, *equally important*, function in our redemption. These functions are so perfectly complementary that they harmonize to accomplish the grand work of redemption that praises God’s glorious grace.

THE BEGINNING

Read Genesis 1:1–3

God commanded light to appear. Light did not dare disobey. The authority of God’s Word brought creation into existence.

Foundational reality: Our authority
is God’s Word.

Read Genesis 1:26

Being created in God’s image means that we were created to live in relationship with Him and to reflect certain aspects of His glorious character.

Foundational reality: Our purpose is God's glory.

Read Genesis 1:27

“Male and female”—fascinating—God did not create a genderless being!

By creating the man first, God assigned him the function of headship. The man and woman were created equally in God's image but each was designed for a different, equally valuable function in God's kingdom.

Foundational reality: Gender distinctiveness is God's plan; thus it is very good.

Wayne Grudem explains:

The equality and differences between men and women reflect the equality and differences in the Trinity. . . . In 1 Corinthians 11 Paul writes, “But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God (v. 3).” . . .

When did the idea of headship and submission begin? *The idea of headship and submission never began!* It has *always existed* in the eternal nature of God himself. . . .

We can say then that a relationship of authority and submission between equals, with mutual giving of honor, is the most fundamental and most glorious interpersonal relationship in the universe. . . . And when we begin to dislike the very idea

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of authority and submission—not the distortions and abuses, but *the very idea*—we are tampering with something very deep. We are beginning to dislike God himself.²

Read Genesis 1:28

The male and female distinctiveness was so wondrously complementary that together they could glorify God by fulfilling the cultural mandate to be fruitful and multiply and have dominion over God's kingdom.

Read Genesis 2:15–17

God made a covenant of works with the man. Adam was our representative in this covenant. If he and the woman obeyed God perfectly they (and we) would live with God forever. They (and we) would know His nearness. Obedience meant life. Disobedience meant death. It still does.

GOD'S FEMALE DESIGN

Read Genesis 2:18

It was not good for the man to be alone because God created him with the need for a helper. Their interdependence was

not weakness; it was the strength and beauty of the relationship. Their interdependence reflected the unity and diversity of the Trinity.

In this verse we are given more insight into God's female design.

Helper is not an inferior function. The Hebrew word translated *helper* in Genesis 2:18 is *ezer*. In the Old Testament it often refers to God as our Helper. Understanding how God is our Helper shows the strong, relational, nurturing, compassionate character of this word. The following are some examples.

- He defends: "The God of my father was my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh" (Ex. 18:4).
- He sees and cares for suffering: "But you do see, for you note mischief and vexation, that you may take it into your hands; to you the helpless commits himself; you have been the helper of the fatherless" (Ps. 10:14).
- He supports: "May he send you help from the sanctuary and give you support from Zion!" (Ps. 20:2).
- He protects: "Our soul waits for the LORD; he is our help and our shield" (Ps. 33:20).
- He delivers from distress: "But I am poor and needy; hasten to me, O God! You are my help and my deliverer; O LORD, do not delay!" (Ps. 70:5).
- He pities: "For he delivers the needy when he calls, the poor and him who has no helper. He has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy" (Ps. 72:12–13).
- He comforts: ". . . you, LORD, have helped me and comforted me" (Ps. 86:17).

SIN

Read Genesis 3:1–13

When the man and woman rejected God's authority they lost their relationship with Him; thus they lost their ability to glorify Him. Sin separates us from God. Without His nearness they could not reflect Him. We reflect that which we face, and they turned away from God. They lost their ability to be and do what they were created to be and do.

The woman lost her ability to be a helper.

The true woman became a new woman.

Our first parents were covenant breakers but God is a covenant keeper. Because of the covenant of redemption He did not forsake them. They hid but He came near, not with a sword but with a promise. Neither Satan's deception nor man's disobedience could stop the triune God's covenant loyalty to those on whom He set His affection before creation.

REDEMPTION

Read Genesis 3:14–15

Embedded in the curse on Satan is the first revelation of the gospel. Obedience was still required, so God promised to

send One who would obey in our place. This covenant promise thunders through Scripture and through history as God declares, “I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people” (Lev. 26:12; also see Gen. 17:7; John 1:14; Rev. 21:1–3). This is a covenant of grace. It is not deserved and cannot be earned. It can only be accomplished by the Redeemer who would be the seed of the woman.

Surely Adam was stunned as he listened. The seed of the woman. . . . He and the woman would have children. . . . They deserved death but received life. What was his response to this gospel promise? In celebration and affirmation of his belief in the promise, “The man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living” (Gen. 3:20).

Adam named his wife. In Scripture, naming indicates headship. Because of the gospel, Adam was restored to headship.

Eve means “giver of life.” This is not just biological. Because of the gospel, she was restored to her ability to be a life-giving helper in every relationship, situation, and season of life. This is our redemptive calling, but our own sin and the influence of culture tempt us to be life-takers—to live for self. Is it really possible for us to fulfill our high and holy calling? Yes, because Jesus said, “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth. . . . He dwells with you and will be in you” (John 14:16–17). We can be helpers because, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Ps. 46:1).

The true woman knows that her privilege of nearness to God and her ability to call on Him in truth are gifts of His grace. She is awash with gratitude.

How Do We Call on God in Truth?

- With gratitude for our redemption.

Throughout this study we will identify principles that answer this question. This is not an exhaustive answer, and the order is unimportant. I am not suggesting a formula to be followed. These are simply principles based on the Scriptures we will study. The principles are not gender-specific, but we will make application to women by sharing the life-giving prayer stories of some true women.

LIFE-GIVING PRAYER

In his church newsletter, Pastor Glen Knecht wrote about attending a church service in Ukraine after the fall of communism.

How mistaken the Communists were when they allowed the older women to continue worshipping together! It was they who were considered no threat to the new order, but it was they whose prayers and faithfulness over all those barren years held the church together and raised up a generation of men and young people to serve the Lord. Yes, the church we attended was crowded with these older women at the very front, for they had been the stalwart defenders and maintainers of Christ's Gospel, but behind them and alongside them and in the balcony and outside the windows were the fruit of their faithfulness, men, women, young people, and children. We must never underestimate the place and power of our godly women. To them go the laurels in the Church in Ukraine.³

Several years after I heard this I was in a church in Ukraine, speaking for a women's conference. I told the story, and my translator looked at me in amazement. "My grandmother was like that," she said. "I was a communist so she never spoke to me about Jesus but somehow I knew. Her home and her marriage were different. Now I am a Christian. I know I am an answer to her prayers." We celebrated. We knew we had heard a life-giving story.

Reflect and Pray

1. Read Ephesians 1:1–14 and write a prayer thanking the triune God for who He is and what He has done for you.
2. Think about the three foundational realities mentioned under the section "The Beginning."
 - How do these foundational realities differ from the cultural perspective of authority?
 - How do they differ from the cultural perspective of our life purpose?
 - What is your reaction to the quote from Wayne Grudem?
3. What is your response to the concept of redeemed womanhood?
 - Reflect on the "helper" verses. What are some ways you have seen women exemplify these characteristics? What are some results when women fail to exemplify these graces?
 - What difference would it make in your relationships if you are a giver of life? A taker of life?
 - Think about your most difficult relationship. Pray about what it would mean to be a giver of life in

REDEEMED

that relationship, and ask the Holy Spirit to be your Helper to empower you in fulfilling your calling in that relationship.

- What difference would it make in your prayer life if God's Word was your authority and God's glory was your purpose?