

# Public Biblical Praying

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## Consider These Biblical Prayers & Pray-ers

### Acts 4:24-30

- Content?
- Structure?

### Jeremiah 32:17-25

- Content?
- Structure?

### Nehemiah 9:5ff

- Content?
- Structure?

## Background

- The Berekah, or blessing
  - Genesis 24:26-27: Then the man bowed down and worshiped the Lord, saying, “Blessed be the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, **who** has not abandoned his kindness and faithfulness to my master.”
  - Exodus 18:10-11: “Blessed be the Lord, **who** rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians and of Pharaoh, and who rescued the people from the hand of the Egyptians.”

## A Longer Example of a Berekah

- I Kings 8:15-21

## Background Continued

- The Berekah, or blessing
- The Hodayah, or acknowledgement (often as thanksgiving)
  - Isaiah 12:1: “I acknowledge to you, O Lord, **that** though you were angry with me, your anger turned away and you comforted me.”
  - Matthew 11:25: “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to little children.”

## Bottom Line?

### Prayer Rooted in Commemoration

### Habakkuk 3:1-19

### John 17:1-26

- How much time does Jesus spend remembering the Father’s saving activity in this prayer?

### Ephesians 1:3-18

- Content? Structure?
- Notice the same basic flow: Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who....for this reason I pray for you, asking.....
- Notice: From “Praise be to God who...” to “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who....”
  - Jesus provides for us the proper interpretation of the Big Biblical Story.

### Remembrance in Prayer is....

- ....theological interpretation of human experience.
- ....confession or acknowledgement that puts the spotlight on God.
- ....a form of proclamation.

### Later Examples

- Early 3<sup>rd</sup> century
- Late 4<sup>th</sup> century
- 16<sup>th</sup> century
- Even more recent

## Implications for Worship

- A Distinctive Story makes a Distinctive People for a Distinctive God.
- God is revealed in what God has done.
- Worship is rooted in memory.
- Prayer is rooted in memory.

## Implications for Prayer, Spoken

- Structure of prayer: remembering to asking; praising to interceding
- Content of prayer: story, story, story; remember, remember, remember; pray the Bible story
- Long prayers
  - Pastoral prayers/intercessory prayers
  - Prayers at baptisms
  - Prayers at the Lord's Supper
  - Prayers at great days in the year
- Short prayers: name God, remember what God has done, ask God, state desired result (connection made), pray through Christ, Amen.

## Exercises

- Consider a powerful aspect of Jesus' ministry (an individual story or a type of story). Compose a prayer that remembers this aspect of ministry, praises/thanks God for it, and then uses it as a basis for intercession.
- Consider God's mighty acts of salvation that involved water. Compose a prayer that praises God for this remembrance, tying it to a final intercession for people about to be baptized.
- Consider God's mighty acts of salvation that involved food. Compose a prayer that praises God for this remembrance, tying it to a final petition dealing with the Lord's Supper.
- Consider the Big Story of creation and redemption. Compose a prayer that remembers this, concluding with an intercession inspired by this Story and appropriate for a situation today.

## Implications for Prayer, Sung

- Where are songs that remember God's activity on a larger scale?
- Is it a false dichotomy to separate speaking about God and speaking to God?
- Use songs with commemorative, narrative content.
- If your repertoire does not include such songs, how can the scriptural story (read, testified, and visualized) provide a commemorative context for your songs?

## Exercises

- Think of a short praise song. What Bible story about God's saving activity might be read in front of the song to provide a commemorative context?
- Think of a praise chorus. What other song with a strong commemorative basis in God's saving activity might be sung in front of it? Or, vice versa. Think of a song with strong commemorative content. What short praise/intercession song might follow it as an appropriate response?

For further reading: Paul Bradshaw, *Two Ways of Praying* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995).