

# PRAYER: DOES IT MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE

September 14, 2025  
Library Bible Study

## Chapter 1-God's View of Reality

- "Prayer works according to science." Y/N, Implications, CK
- Waiting, Be Still., Know That I am God.
  - *Trusting God. A savvy choice for pleasing God.*
  - *Eliminate anxiety.*
  - *Does it move the needle?*
- What does it take to shift my focus?
  - *Praying for the bigger picture.*
  - *Praying for something besides me/mine.*

3. When we come face to face with the reality of how little control we have over our future, many of us get a little nervous. What do you think could happen in our prayer life and in our relationship with God if, in the midst of our uncertain future, we intentionally chose to “be still and know that [he is] God”? *TKUST*

## Bible Exploration

### Be Still and Know That I Am God

Every day my vision clouds over so that I perceive nothing but a world of matter. It requires a daily act of will to remember what Paul told the sophisticated crowd in Athens: “[God] is not far from each one of us. ‘For in him we live and move and have our being’” (Acts 17:27–28).

*Prayer, p. 22*

1. We tend to rely on our own sufficiency, but the Bible repeatedly exposes the true nature of earthly life. What unmistakable message about the God’s Eye View of life is communicated through Psalms 39:4; 90:12; James 4:13–14; and 1 Peter 1:24?

2. Job’s trials challenged his perspective and led him to reflect intensely on his human condition and God’s role in the world.

- What did the Lord of the universe remind Job about when he was wallowing in self-pity and demanding that God respond to his theological queries? (See Job 38:4–11, and note that God’s response continues through Job 40:2.)

- In his great discourse, God didn’t provide even one specific answer to Job’s probing questions. But what did Job say in response to God’s thundering query, “Who is this that obscures my plans with words without knowledge?” (Job 38:2), that shows he got God’s message loud and clear? (See Job 42:1–6.)

3. Philip encourages us to recognize the importance of God’s command in Psalm 46:10: “Be still, and know that I am God.” He helps us realize that we are not in control of the world (or our futures) and that the appropriate response to our condition is to be still before our powerful and merciful God and turn over our concerns and problems to that God. Let’s deepen our understanding of what God means by this command and explore how we might go about obeying it.

- Consider what the command means. The Latin imperative for “be still” is *vacate* (from which we get the word *vacation*), so God is inviting us to take a break and allow him to be God in our daily lives. In addition, the word translated “know” refers not only to intellectual knowledge but also to knowing God through worship and obedience. In your daily life, what might it look like to actually put into practice these definitions of stillness and knowledge?

- If we are honest, many of us don’t find it easy to be still and “wait on God.” We keep taking on responsibilities and trying to accomplish more and more in our own strength. Yet many faithful followers of God who have gone before us learned to live life with a keen awareness of God’s perspective and our human frailty. What do you learn about “waiting on God” from the following testimonies of those who have gone before us?

**The psalmist:** “Take delight in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this: He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn, your vindication like the noonday sun. Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him.” (Psalm 37:4–7)

**The apostle Peter:** “Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.” (1 Peter 5:6–7)

- **Jesus:** “So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” (Matthew 6:31–33)

- **The prophet Isaiah:** “Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!” (Isaiah 30:18)

## Closing Group Discovery Discussion

Not all of us make a practice of climbing mountains that envelop us in reminders of the God’s Eye View. Nevertheless, images of daily life can alert us to the God’s Eye View that we otherwise might dismiss. A car racing through an intersection against the light can remind us, in much the same way a lightning bolt can, how much we don’t control in our lives. A mass of commuters crowded onto a subway platform during rush hour can remind us, in much the same way a mountaintop view of distant hikers can, how small we really are. Which images in your daily world remind you of God’s command: “Be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10)?

**SUPPLEMENTAL BIBLE DISCOVERY:**  
**Praying for the Bigger Picture**

Often the scope of our prayers is limited to what we want God to do for us. Yet God sees and acts in a realm far beyond our sight. Consider the following passages about personal prayers offered to God that in some way (perhaps unknown to the one who was praying) connected to the bigger picture of what God was doing. How did God respond? In what ways do these examples influence your desire to keep company with God through prayer?

- 1 Kings 18:22-24, 33-39

2 Kings 20:1-7; 2 Chronicles 32:27-31

Nehemiah 1:5-11; 2:4-8

Daniel 9:4-5, 17-19; 10:1-13

- ✦ 2 Corinthians 12:7-9

## MY PRAYER JOURNAL

Prayer invites us to rest in the fact that God is in control, and the world's problems are ultimately God's, not ours. If I spend enough time with God, I will inevitably begin to look at the world with a point of view that more resembles God's own.

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It's not easy to acknowledge God and, in Philip's words, "restore the truth of the universe." Each of us faces many distractions and the ongoing temptation to try to be like God rather than being still, getting to know God better, and trusting God to be God. Yet the practice of being still before God is the best way to renew our perspective on life.

Use the following pages to write down your thoughts and observations about prayer as well as the people, situations, concerns, aspirations, and needs for which you want to pray. Keep the God's Eye View in mind and give some thought as to where your prayer concerns fit within that broader perspective.

Blessed are those who make the LORD their trust.

**PSALM 40:4**

turns to urgent prayer. Twice he has praised the *stadfast love* of God (5, 7); now let it reach out to the place of need (10)! There is no belittling of the enemy, though the Hebrew and ancient versions do not support the stronger word 'crush' (11a, NEB, etc.) in place of *come upon* (which is itself a hostile enough expression: cf. e.g. Job 1 5:21; 20:22). But the last verse shows the victory already claimed; it speaks as though the scene were present and clearly visible. 'There they lie, the evildoers' (NEB). This is the faith defined in Hebrews 11:1 (Philips) as 'putting our full confidence in the things we hope for; ... being certain of things we cannot see'.

So the early eloquence was genuine. The evil which David portrayed in the first stanza he was ready to fight; the grace which he praised in the second he was ready to invoke; and, once invoked, to accept as given and as settling the matter.

### Psalm 37. 'Wait patiently for him'

There is no finer exposition of the third Beatitude (Matt. 5:3) than this psalm, from which it is drawn (verse 11). It is a wisdom psalm: it speaks to man, not God, and its tone and style have some affinities with Proverbs, whose message of the righteous man's security is the central topic here.

The framework is an acrostic, with a fresh letter of the Hebrew alphabet to introduce each double verse (1–2, 3–4, etc.; but our numbering falls out of step). As in some other acrostic psalms, notably 23 and 119, this external pattern leaves the poet free to muse on a few themes, returning to them at will, without losing all sense of form and progress. We owe to this psalm, among other things, the hymn 'Put thou thy trust in God', based on John Wesley's translation of another kind of acrostic: Paul Gerhardt's *Befehl du deine Wege*, each of whose twelve verses begins with a successive word of the psalm's verse 5: 'Commit your way to the Lord ...'

### 37:1–11. *The quiet spirit*

The advice, *I've not myself*, or in terms of the Hebrew verb, 'do not get heated', is virtually the refrain of the opening passage (1, 7, 8); and the whole of verse 1 is found again in Proverbs 24:19, apart from one synonym. (See also Prov. 23:17f.; 24:1f., on *Be not envious*.) As a

bare command it would be of little use, so it is reinforced by reasoned encouragements, which could be summarized as:

(i) Look ahead! Verses 2 and 10 are unanswerably true of everything that is rooted in time and not eternity (cf. Isa. 40:8 with 1 John 2:17). And if the long view is the answer to human schemes, we can afford to *wait* God's time (7, 9).

Thy reign eternal will not cease;

Thy years are sure and glad, and slow.<sup>110</sup>

(ii) Look up! See especially verses 3–7. An obsession with enemies and rivals cannot be simply switched off, but it can be ousted by a new focus of attention; note the preoccupation with the Lord himself, expressed in the four phrases that contain his name here. It includes a deliberate redirection of one's emotions (4a, *take delight*; cf. Paul and Silas in prison, singing as well as praying), and an entrusting of one's career (*your way*, 5) and reputation (*your vindication*, 6) to him. This is a liberation: see additional note on 5, below.

(iii) Be constructive! This is put positively in verse 3 (*do good*), and negatively in verse 8's warning against anger and its bitter fruit. It is both theological and psychological wisdom, not only because the aggrieved person is no longer turned in on himself, but because God's own way is to overcome evil with good; in any case 'the anger of man does not work the righteousness of God' (Jas 1:20; cf. Rom. 12:21). The gospel, and indeed the Old Testament, will sharpen this advice, from doing good in general to doing it 'to those who hate you' (Luke 6:27; cf. Prov. 25:21).

### Additional notes on verses 1–11

3. *Enjoy security* is one of several possible translations of two Hebrew words, both of which have more than one meaning. *Enjoy* could mean 'tend' (as a shepherd), 'feed (on)' (as a sheep, etc.), 'be friends with', 'strive after' (assumed from the noun in Eccl. 1:14). *Security* most often means 'faithfulness', but also 'faith' (Hab. 2:4), and, adverbially, 'certainly'. Weiser's 'Keep upright in heart (lit.

<sup>110</sup> D. Greenwell, 'And art Thou come with us to dwell?'