

# **Dr. Gary Meadors, Knowing the Will of God, Session 14, The Role of Prayer Resources from NotebookLM**

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

## **1. Abstract of Meadors, Knowing the Will of God, Session 14, The Role of Prayer, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL**

**Dr. Gary Meadors' lecture explores the role of prayer within a Christian life focused on knowing God's will.** The session emphasizes that prayer is a significant spiritual discipline, though not a means of manipulating God. **Meadors examines biblical passages linking prayer to God's will, highlighting the importance of context and cautioning against misinterpreting prayer promises.** He posits that prayer is consistently subject to God's moral and sovereign will, and it serves as an expected, mature response to life's circumstances. **The lecture further argues that prayer is a form of worship monitored by Jesus and the apostles, ultimately underscoring its nature as submission and participation in God's greater purposes rather than a tool for personal gain.**

**2. 15 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of  
Dr. Meadors, Knowing the Will of God, Session 14 – Double  
click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the  
Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link  
there (Theology → Knowing the Will of God).**



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on14.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document: Meadors, Knowing the Will of God, Session 14, The Role of Prayer

#### Briefing Document: The Role of Prayer in Knowing God's Will (Dr. Gary Meadors)

**Main Theme:** This lecture by Dr. Gary Meadors, part of a series on Biblical Theology for Knowing God's Will, focuses on the crucial role of prayer as a discipline within the Christian life and its relationship to discerning God's will. Meadors emphasizes the importance of understanding the nature and limitations of prayer, cautioning against its misuse as a tool for manipulation and highlighting its function as worship and submission to God's sovereignty.

#### Key Ideas and Facts:

1. **Prayer as a Major Christian Discipline:** Meadors establishes prayer as a fundamental aspect of the Christian life, alongside the study of the Word of God. He encourages consistent prayer, drawing attention to the Psalms as examples of prayer from holy individuals in various circumstances, including times of struggle and complaint.
  - *"Prayer is a major part of the discipline of the Christian life."*
  - *"Read the Psalms. Read them over and over because the Psalms are the prayers of the holiest men in their holiest moments. And in some of their bad moments, they complain to God."*
1. **Limited Linguistic Links Between Prayer and God's Will:** Meadors points out that the explicit linguistic connection between prayer and God's will is relatively rare in the New Testament, appearing primarily in two instances:
  - **The Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:10):** The phrase *"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven"* serves as a model for aligning our desires with God's will.
  - **1 John 5:14:** *"If you ask anything according to his will, that's a prayer text, and it conditions the prayer by asking according to his will."* Meadors interprets "his will" in this context as likely referring to God's sovereign will in the moral realm.
1. **Caution Regarding Prayer Promises:** Meadors strongly cautions against misinterpreting and misapplying certain "prayer promises," particularly those found in John's Gospel (John 14:14 and John 16:23), where Jesus says, "Ask anything in my name, and I will do it." He argues that these promises were

specifically addressed to the disciples in the context of the Upper Room Discourse, preparing them for their unique role in spreading the gospel.

- *"That promise was made to the disciples as Jesus was giving them their last instructions about what they were going to do when he was gone... And so this is addressed to them. The address that I'll do anything that you ask for is not a common promise to me."*
  - He highlights the danger of creating false hope and potential disillusionment when these promises are taken out of context and not fulfilled.
1. **Prayer and God's Sovereign Will:** Meadors emphasizes that all prayers are ultimately subject to God's sovereign will. Even when we pray according to what we understand as God's moral will, the outcome rests within His ultimate authority and plan. He uses the examples of Jesus in Gethsemane ("not my will, but yours be done") and Paul's unanswered prayer regarding his "thorn in the flesh" (2 Corinthians 12:8-9) to illustrate that even righteous prayers may not be answered according to our desires.
    - *"Accepting God's sovereign will in the outcome of our prayers is our greatest expression of faith."*
    - *"Prayer's fulfillment is bounded by God's sovereign will. It's also bounded by his moral will."*
  1. **The Role of the Holy Spirit in Prayer:** Meadors discusses Romans 8:26-27, highlighting the Spirit's role in helping our infirmities in prayer, interceding for us with "groanings that cannot be uttered." He suggests that the Spirit interprets our prayers according to God's will, even when we don't know how or what to pray for.
    - *"In a similar manner, the Spirit also helps our infirmity. For we know not how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered."*
  1. **Proper Attitudes and Understandings in Prayer:** Meadors stresses the importance of:
    - **Avoiding Vain Repetition:** Referencing Matthew 7:7-12, he cautions against repetitive prayers based on the belief that much speaking will guarantee an answer.

- **Praying for Wisdom in Trials (James 1:5-8) in Context:** He clarifies that this passage is not a "magic wand" for information but a call to seek understanding of God's purpose within trials, utilizing the wisdom already available through Scripture.
  - **Thankfulness:** Prayer is presented as an aspect of being thankful, fulfilling God's will, and a spiritual duty.
  - **Humility and Submission:** Answers to prayer are grounded in God's grace and faithfulness, not our rights or demands.
  - *"We don't come to God demanding our rights. We come to God with a submissive spirit."*
1. **Prayer as a Mature Response to Life's Circumstances:** Meadors posits that prayer is a natural and mature response to the trials and burdens of life. It has "no boundaries" in terms of what we can bring before God.
    - *"Prayer is a mature response to life's circumstances... We should pray for whatever we're burdened about. You don't have to figure out what to pray for to pray. You go ahead and pray."*
  1. **Prayer's Impact on Events (Within God's Sovereignty):** While prayer doesn't change God's mind, Meadors suggests that God has ordained prayer as a means through which His will is accomplished. Our prayers can be part of what He has ordained to bring something to pass.
    - *"First of all, God has ordained that prayer affects the outcome of events in his world, although prayer does not change or direct the minded will of God... Your prayers may be part of what he has ordained to bring something to pass."*
  1. **Distinguishing Prayer from Magic:** Meadors explicitly differentiates Christian prayer from magic, which attempts to manipulate the divine will. True prayer involves a struggle of wills, but ultimately sees prayer as a divinely given way to participate in God's agenda.
    - *"We must guard against equating Christian belief with the efficacy of prayer and magic... Christian prayer involves a struggle of wills in which the prayer attempts to persuade God, all the time seeing prayer as a divinely given means whereby the prayer can participate in God's agenda."*
  1. **Prayer as a Form of Worship:** Meadors emphasizes that prayer is a verbal expression of our response to God's self-disclosure. He references Exodus 34 and

Moses' prayer as an illustration of worship as the recognition of who God is, how He acts, and our subsequent response.

- *"Prayer is a form of worship. It verbalizes our response to God's self-disclosure."*
- 1. **Prayer Monitored by Jesus and the Apostles:** Meadors points to the Lord's Prayer as a model, noting its structure of addressing God first before personal needs. He also states that prayer is monitored by the apostles, evident in the epistolary literature.
- 2. **Prayer as Submission, Not Manipulation:** Meadors concludes by reiterating that prayer is not a tool for manipulating God but an act of submission, allowing us to come before Him, confess our needs, and apply His transformed worldview to our lives.
- *"Prayer is not magic. Prayer is not a way to manipulate God. Prayer is a submission to God."*

**Key Takeaway:** Prayer is a vital and multifaceted aspect of the Christian life, essential for our relationship with God and for discerning His will. However, it must be understood within the framework of God's sovereignty and moral will. We should approach prayer with humility, honesty, and a spirit of submission, recognizing it as an act of worship and a means of aligning ourselves with God's purposes, rather than a mechanism to control outcomes. We must be careful not to misinterpret biblical promises or treat prayer as a form of magic.

## 4. Study Guide: Meadors, Knowing the Will of God, Session 14, The Role of Prayer

### Knowing God's Will: The Role of Prayer - Study Guide

#### Key Concepts and Themes:

- **The Significance of Prayer:** Prayer as a major discipline in the Christian life, a means of taking our lives to God, and a reflection of the struggles of believers.
- **Prayer and God's Will:** Understanding the linguistic links between prayer and God's will in Scripture (the Lord's Prayer and 1 John 5:14) and the distinction between God's moral and sovereign will.
- **Prayer Promises in Context:** Examining challenging "ask anything" prayer promises in John 14 and 16 within their specific context of Jesus addressing his disciples.
- **Unanswered Prayer:** Recognizing that both Jesus and Paul experienced unanswered prayer and understanding that a non-answer is still an answer within God's sovereign plan.
- **The Role of the Holy Spirit in Prayer:** Understanding how the Spirit helps our infirmity in prayer and intercedes for us according to God's will (Romans 8:26-27).
- **Biblical Guidance on Prayer:** Examining passages like Matthew 7:7-12 (the model prayer) and James 1:5-8 (prayer for wisdom in trials) within their proper context.
- **Propositions about Prayer:** Prayer is subject to God's will (moral and sovereign).
- Prayer is an expectation to fulfill God's will (duty, thankfulness).
- Prayer is a mature response to life's circumstances.
- Prayer's fulfillment is bounded by God's sovereign and moral will.
- God has ordained that prayer affects the outcome of events, but it doesn't manipulate God.
- Prayer is a form of worship.
- Prayer is monitored by Jesus and the apostles.

- **Prayer as Submission, Not Magic:** Emphasizing that prayer is not a means to manipulate God but a submission to Him, allowing us to cleanse ourselves, confess our needs, and apply a transformed worldview to life.

### Quiz:

1. According to the lecture, what are the only two places in the New Testament where prayer and the will of God are linguistically linked? Briefly explain the significance of each passage.
2. Explain why Dr. Meadors cautions against claiming the "ask anything in my name" promises in John 14:14 and John 16:23 as general promises for all believers today. What is the context of these passages?
3. Describe the difference between God's moral will and His sovereign will as discussed in the context of prayer. How should this distinction influence our prayer life?
4. What does Dr. Meadors mean when he states that "a non-answer, in a sense, is an answer"? Provide an example from the lecture of someone who experienced unanswered prayer.
5. Explain the role of the Holy Spirit in our prayer life based on Romans 8:26-27. What does it mean that the Spirit "makes intercession for us"?
6. According to the lecture, how is the prayer for wisdom in James 1:5-8 often misused? What is the proper understanding of this passage in its context of trials?
7. Summarize three of the propositions about prayer discussed in the lecture notes. Choose propositions that you find particularly insightful or challenging.
8. Explain why Dr. Meadors emphasizes that prayer is not magic. What is the difference between Christian prayer and magic as described in the lecture?
9. How does the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) serve as a model for our prayers, according to the lecture? What aspects of this prayer should we observe?
10. Briefly describe the connection between prayer and worship as presented in the lecture, referencing the example of Moses in Exodus 34.

### Quiz Answer Key:

1. The two passages are the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:10), where we pray "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," and 1 John 5:14, which states, "If we ask

anything according to his will, he hears us." The Lord's Prayer provides a model for aligning our desires with God's will, while 1 John 5:14 conditions answered prayer on asking according to God's (likely sovereign) will.

2. Dr. Meadors explains that these promises were specifically addressed to Jesus's disciples during the Upper Room Discourse, their last instructions before Jesus's departure. The context indicates these promises were tied to their unique role in establishing and spreading the gospel, including the performance of miracles. Claiming these promises out of context can lead to false hope and disappointment when prayers are not answered in the way we expect.
3. God's moral will refers to His commands and desires for how we ought to live (e.g., the Ten Commandments). Our prayers should always align with this. God's sovereign will is His ultimate plan and control over all things. While we should pray according to His moral will, our requests are ultimately subject to His sovereign will, which we don't always know.
4. This means that even when God doesn't answer our prayers in the way we desire (a "no" or a delay), it is still a response within His sovereign plan and may serve a purpose we don't understand. The lecture cites the examples of Jesus praying in Gethsemane and Paul praying for the removal of his "thorn in the flesh," both of whom experienced unanswered prayer in the way they initially requested.
5. Romans 8:26-27 states that the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness because we do not know how to pray as we ought. The Spirit intercedes for us with groanings that cannot be uttered, and God, who knows our hearts, understands the mind of the Spirit because the Spirit intercedes according to God's will. This suggests the Spirit translates our imperfect prayers in alignment with God's purposes.
6. James 1:5-8, which encourages asking God for wisdom during trials, is often misused as a promise of immediate, specific information to solve our problems. The lecture argues that the wisdom being referred to is the understanding of how trials relate to our lives and God's purposes, gained through engaging with Scripture and a transformed worldview, rather than a magical revelation.
- Prayer is subject to God's will: All prayers, regardless of their content, are ultimately under the authority of God's moral and sovereign will, meaning the outcome is in His hands.



- Prayer is an expectation to fulfill God's will: We are commanded to pray as a duty and spiritual discipline, and this act of prayer itself can be a means of fulfilling God's will and cultivating a thankful spirit.
  - Prayer is a mature response to life's circumstances: Mature believers turn to prayer as a natural and primary response when facing trials and difficulties, reflecting their trust in God's goodness and sovereignty.
1. Dr. Meadors emphasizes that prayer is not magic because magic attempts to control or manipulate the divine will through techniques like rituals and spells to get what one desires. Christian prayer, on the other hand, is a submission to God's will, a way to participate in His agenda, and an expression of our dependence on His grace, not a means of forcing His hand.
  2. The Lord's Prayer provides a model by first focusing on God (His name, His kingdom, His will) before addressing our own needs (sustenance, forgiveness, deliverance). It teaches us to prioritize God in our prayers and to seek His will above our own desires.
  3. Prayer is presented as a form of worship because it is a verbalized response to God's self-disclosure, acknowledging who He is and how He acts. The example of Moses in Exodus 34 shows him bowing down and worshiping after God proclaimed His name and attributes, illustrating that prayer is an integral part of recognizing and responding to God's character.

**Essay Format Questions:**

1. Discuss the implications of understanding prayer as being subject to God's sovereign will for the believer's prayer life and expectations regarding answered prayer.
2. Analyze the lecture's distinction between interpreting prayer promises in their original historical and literary context versus applying them directly to contemporary individual experiences. What are the potential benefits and dangers of each approach?
3. Explore the relationship between unanswered prayer and the development of faith, drawing on the examples of Jesus and Paul presented in the lecture.
4. Evaluate the lecture's proposition that prayer is a mature response to life's circumstances. How does this perspective contrast with other common views of prayer, and what are its practical implications?
5. Synthesize the various aspects of prayer discussed in the lecture – its relationship to God's will, the role of the Holy Spirit, its function as worship, and its nature as submission rather than manipulation – to create a comprehensive understanding of the purpose and practice of prayer in the Christian life.

## Glossary of Key Terms:

- **Moral Will of God:** God's revealed will concerning how humans ought to live, reflecting His righteous character and expressed through commands and principles in Scripture.
- **Sovereign Will of God:** God's ultimate plan and control over all things that happen in the universe, including events and outcomes.
- **Upper Room Discourse:** The collection of Jesus's teachings to his disciples on the night before his crucifixion, primarily found in John chapters 13-17.
- **Imprecatory Psalms:** Psalms that express strong emotions and call for God's judgment upon the enemies of the psalmist (often understood as the enemies of God).
- **Providence:** God's active involvement in and governance of the world, guiding events according to His will.
- **Supplications:** Humble and earnest requests made in prayer.
- **Johannine Writings:** The books of the New Testament attributed to the Apostle John: the Gospel of John, the three epistles of John, and the Book of Revelation.
- **Epistolary Literature:** The letters (epistles) found in the New Testament, written by apostles and other early Christian leaders to churches and individuals.
- **Appositional Construction:** A grammatical structure where a noun or noun phrase is placed next to another noun or noun phrase to identify or explain it.
- **Efficacy of Prayer:** The power or effectiveness of prayer to produce a desired result.

## 5. FAQs on Meadors, Knowing the Will of God, Session 14, The Role of Prayer, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### Frequently Asked Questions on the Role of Prayer in Knowing God's Will

**1. How does prayer relate to knowing God's will, according to the New Testament?** The New Testament explicitly links prayer and God's will in only two instances: the Lord's Prayer ("Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven") and 1 John 5:14 ("If you ask anything according to his will, he hears us"). The Lord's Prayer serves as a model for how to address God and includes the crucial aspect of aligning with His will. 1 John 5:14 conditions answered prayer on it being in accordance with God's will, which likely refers to His sovereign will—what God chooses to do. While there are prayer promises in the Gospels, particularly in John's writings, these were primarily addressed to the disciples in their specific context of establishing the early church and should not be claimed as universal guarantees for all believers today.

**2. What is the significance of the prayer promises found in John 14 and 16? Are these promises universally applicable to all Christians?** The prayer promises in John 14:14 and John 16:23, where Jesus states that the Father will give whatever is asked in His name, were made specifically to the disciples during the Upper Room Discourse—Jesus's final instructions before his crucifixion. These promises were intended to equip them for the unique task of spreading the gospel and performing signs and wonders in the early days of the church. They are not general promises applicable to all believers in every circumstance. Claiming these promises out of their original context can lead to false hope and disappointment when prayers are not answered as expected. It's crucial to understand the historical and specific audience of these passages.

**3. How should Christians understand and approach the concept of unanswered prayer? Did even Jesus and Paul experience unanswered prayer?** Unanswered prayer is a reality in the Christian life, and it should not be interpreted as God being displeased or ignoring the believer. Even Jesus, in the Garden of Gethsemane, prayed for the cup of suffering to pass but ultimately submitted to the Father's will. Similarly, Paul prayed three times for the removal of a "thorn in the flesh" (likely a physical ailment hindering his ministry), but God's response was, "My grace is sufficient for you." These examples demonstrate that even the most devoted individuals experienced prayers that were not answered in the way they desired. A "non-answer" can be an answer in itself, reflecting God's sovereign will and the fact that He knows what is ultimately best. Accepting God's sovereign will in the outcome of our prayers is a profound expression of faith.

**4. What role does the Holy Spirit play in our prayers, particularly when we don't know how or what to pray for?** Romans 8:26-27 highlights the crucial role of the Holy Spirit in our prayer life. It states that we often do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit intercedes for us with groanings that cannot be uttered. The Spirit understands the mind of God and translates the true sentiments of our hearts to the Father, even when our words are inadequate or our desires are unclear. This means we can take comfort in knowing that God understands our hearts even when we struggle to articulate our needs. However, even with the Spirit's intercession, our prayers are still subject to God's sovereign will and may not be answered according to our specific requests.

**5. What are some key propositions about prayer that can bring wisdom and understanding to our practice?** Several key propositions about prayer are highlighted:

- **Prayer is subject to God's will:** All prayers are ultimately under God's moral and sovereign will.
- **Prayer is an expectation to fulfill God's will:** We are commanded to pray, and it is a spiritual discipline and an aspect of thankfulness. The Spirit mediates our prayers, and answers are based on God's grace and faithfulness, not our rights.
- **Prayer is a mature response to life's circumstances:** It reflects a biblical worldview and our reliance on God in all situations.
- **Prayer has no boundaries but its fulfillment is bounded by God's sovereign and moral will:** We should bring all our burdens to God, but the outcome rests with Him.
- **Prayer affects the outcome of events within God's sovereign plan:** God has ordained prayer as a means through which His will is accomplished.
- **Prayer is not magic but a form of worship:** It is a verbal response to God's self-disclosure and involves a submission of our will to His.
- **Prayer is monitored by Jesus and the apostles:** The Lord's Prayer provides a model, emphasizing God's priority, and the epistles demonstrate the consistent practice of prayer in the early church.

### **6. How should Christians avoid treating prayer as a form of magic or manipulation?**

Christians must be careful not to equate prayer with magic, which attempts to control the divine will through rituals or techniques. True Christian prayer involves a submission to God's will and a recognition that He is sovereign. While we can and should bring our requests before God with sincerity and persistence, we should not view prayer as a means to manipulate Him into granting our wishes. Instead, prayer should be seen as a participation in God's agenda, trusting that He will act according to His perfect wisdom and love. The authenticity of our hearts and God's sovereign will are what determine the outcomes of our prayers, not the performance of specific rituals or the intensity of our demands.

**7. What does the Lord's Prayer teach us about how to pray effectively?** The Lord's Prayer serves as a model, outlining key aspects of prayer. It begins by addressing God with reverence ("Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name"), acknowledging His holiness and authority. It then focuses on God's priorities ("Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven") before turning to our needs ("Give us this day our daily bread," "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors," "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil"). This structure emphasizes that God should be central in our prayers, and our concerns should be placed within the context of His greater purposes. Effective prayer, therefore, involves reverence, a desire for God's will to be done, and a humble presentation of our needs.

**8. How does James 1:5-8 about asking for wisdom in times of trial relate to prayer and knowing God's will?** James 1:5-8 encourages believers who lack wisdom during trials to ask God, who gives generously. However, this passage should be understood within its context, which focuses on how trials develop patience and lead to spiritual maturity. The wisdom referred to here is not necessarily about receiving specific information to escape the trial, but rather understanding God's purpose in it and responding with faith and maturity. It involves applying the biblical worldview and values we already possess to the specific challenges we face. Prayer in this context is about engaging with the information and understanding God has already provided in Scripture, seeking His perspective and guidance on how to navigate the trial in a way that honors Him and fosters spiritual growth.