

What do Americans pray for? Themselves. And maybe a sports team

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(RNS) When Americans aren't busy praying for themselves or their own needs—and most of them are—many are seeking divine intervention on behalf of a favorite sports team or the golden ticket in the lottery, according to a new survey.

About 13 percent of Americans who pray say they pray for sports teams, compared with about one in five (21 percent) who say they have prayed to win the lottery, the new survey from LifeWay Research suggests.

A survey earlier this year from Public Religion Research Institute suggested that more Americans (26 percent) pray for their sports team, while more than seven in 10 (73 percent) say they have never done this.

Some of LifeWay's new survey's main findings include:

- 48 percent of Americans pray every day
- 82 percent who pray typically pray about family or friends
- 20 percent pray for people of other faiths or no faith
- Equal numbers of Americans (7 percent) pray behind the wheel, either for a good parking space or not to get a speeding ticket
- Smaller numbers of people, around 5 percent, pray for someone's relationship to end, someone to get fired, or for someone else to fail.

In the New Testament, Paul encourages Christians to pray for those in authority. However, only about 12 percent of Americans who pray say they pray for government officials, according to the survey.

Jesus also directs Christians to pray for their enemies. About 40 percent who pray say they have done so, while four in 10 (41 percent) have prayed for people who have mistreated them.

Prayer is receiving attention this fall from at least two Christian leaders with books coming out: prolific Max Lucado, whose book *Before Amen: The Power of a Simple Prayer* came out Tuesday (September 30), and New York City megachurch pastor Tim Keller, whose book *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy With God* will be published November 4.

About a third of survey respondents say they pray several times a day, according to the survey. About two-thirds (65 percent) of Americans say they pray at least once a month.