



Continuous answers to prayer

(From: 'Prayer changes everything', written by Bennie Mostert, published by Carpe Diem)

God teaches us in Scripture that there are certain things that are of utmost importance when it comes to intercession. One can call them preconditions for prayer. What are the preconditions and basic biblical principles to see continuous answers to our prayers? What are the biblical preconditions and principles for effective prayer?

The following guidelines will be helpful:

Break with sin completely. Confess all forms of known, unconfessed sin in your life and break with it. Be sure that your heart is pure before God by allowing the Holy Spirit to show you any unconfessed sin.

Be united with Christ and never leave this position. *If we have been united with Him in his death, we will certainly also be united with Him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body of sin might be rendered powerless, that we should no longer be slaves to sin...* (Romans 6:5-6). When we are united with the Lord Jesus, we will be sensitive to see any sin in our lives.

Abide in the risen Christ (John 15:7; Romans 6:11). *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.* (Galatians 2:20). Constantly remind yourself and live aware of the fact that you are now a child of God by faith.

His words must be in you as food for the inner self. Feed on the Word of God. Reading substantial portions of Scripture every day washes our hearts and minds with the truth of God's love for us and reassures us of eternal life through Christ. Constantly live in the Word and from the Word.

Make a deliberate decision to pray. Requests to God must not only come from our emotions, but rather according to the will of God. Ask the Lord about His will for the matter you are praying for. Our prayers can originate from four different sources: a) self, b) the desires or needs of others, c) from Satan, or d) the Holy Spirit. Lay aside your own imagination and prayer burdens. Be sensitive to what the Holy Spirit prompts you to pray. *For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.* (Philippians 2:13).

Faith and obedience. Faith in and obedience to God are absolutely necessary. Make a firm decision to listen to His voice and do what He leads you to do. *And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards*

those who earnestly seek him. (Hebrews 11:6). *"If you remain in Me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be given you."* (John 15:7).

Self-interest should not be present in your prayers. *You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.* (James 4:2-3). Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading as you pray.

Pray in and through the Spirit, in the power of the Holy Spirit. Ask the guidance of the Holy Spirit when you are doing the work of intercession. We do not know how to pray, but God gave us the Holy Spirit as our Helper in prayer. Admit to God that you do not know how to pray and rely on the Holy Spirit. *And pray in the Holy Spirit.* (Jude 20). And pray in the Spirit on all occasions (Ephesians 6:18). *In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.* (Romans 8:26-27).

Satan will try to prevent you from praying or hinder the answers to your prayers. When this happens, the principles of spiritual warfare should be applied, namely to resist the devil and to address the Evil One from your position of authority in Christ. (James 4:7). Resist him in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ and with the 'Sword of the Spirit' which is the Word of God. (Ephesians 6:17).

Use God's promises in Scripture when praying. There are different promises for different situations in Scripture. Stand on the promises of God, plead them, pray them. *For no matter how many promises God has made, they are 'Yes' in Christ. And so through Him the 'Amen' is spoken by us to the glory of God.* (2 Corinthians 1:20).

Wait on the Lord for an answer. Do not be in a hurry. He who believes, will not be in a hurry. Wait in the full assurance that God will answer you. (Isaiah 30:18, Jeremiah 29:11-13).

Gather as much information as possible on a specific matter when you pray for it. Use the information when you pray and also rely on the guidance of the Holy Spirit to reveal things unknown to you (Jeremiah 33:3).

Pray with others. It is often helpful to share and pray in a group for what God puts on our hearts. In this way we can protect each other against any possible error like deception. It also helps us discern whether we have heard the Lord correctly when it is confirmed by two or three others. *"Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."* (Matthew 18:19-20).

Learn to pray from Bible characters. Learn from the prayer life of Jesus, Moses, Daniel, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Elijah, Paul and other believers in the Bible. Study their lives and apply some of the principles to your own life.

When we pray we should go to the throne of God with boldness and faith, because faith and boldness please God (Hebrews 11:6, 4:16).

Write it down. It can be very helpful to write down your prayer requests. Once the answers come, write that down as well. This will help you to remember: a) to thank God for answering your prayers, b) what it was that you prayed for, so you can persevere in intercession, and c) it strengthens your faith when you see the written answers to your prayers.

Pray through. Do not hurry through your prayer points. Thoroughly pray through every detail for every point.

Refer to the Word. Always keep your Bible handy to look up Scripture references the Holy Spirit brings to mind. Once the prayer burden from the Holy Spirit subsides, you can give thanks and praise to Him and conclude your prayer time.

Jesus' death is a seal. The accomplished work of Jesus on the Cross provides you the assurance that God will answer your prayers. More than the intensity, sincerity or words you use in prayer, or who you are, it is because of the price Jesus paid on the Cross that you can come boldly come to the throne of grace with your prayer requests (Hebrews 4:16). It is all about His death and the atonement, His victory over the Evil One and His victory over death. The life of the intercessor should be a crucified life of intense fellowship with Jesus Christ as their crucified and risen Lord and Saviour.

The Lord sets the following preconditions for prayers to be answered:

- If we have faith and do not doubt... (Matthew 21:21-22).
- If we remain in Jesus and His words remain in us... (John 15:7).
- If we ask anything according to His will... (1 John 5:14-15).
- If two of us agree on earth... (Matthew 18:19-20).
- When we ask in His name... (John 14:13-14).
- We must obey His commands and do what pleases Him... (1 John 3:22).