



Conditions for answered prayer

Do you sometimes struggle to understand why answers to some of your prayers tarry? Do you question whether the way you pray is wrong, or perhaps if God has forgotten about you?

To have questions about answers to prayer that tarry is completely normal. There are many reasons why answers to prayers can be delayed. Every situation we face requires of us to seek God's face, will and desire. There is an encouraging promise in James 1:5-6: *If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. 6 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.*

Faith is to believe for something not yet seen in the natural (Hebrews 11:1). We are encouraged to pray and sincerely believe that God will answer us. When our requests are granted, it is most wonderful and glorious. However, an answer to prayer is not only considered an answer when we 'get what we asked for'. Whenever the Lord tells us 'no' or 'not now', that is also considered an answer to our prayers and we will be wise to accept that as well, for in His great wisdom that will be best for us. Following are some conditions set out in Scripture when we pose our requests to the Lord.

1. It must be about the glory of the Lord

Our motive when asking for something in prayer is very important to discern. Is what you pray for something you want at all cost? Even if it is a personal matter – which is not wrong to bring before the Lord in prayer – ask the Holy Spirit to show you any hidden motive of self-centredness. Consider whether an answer to your current request will bring glory to the Lord.

And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it. (John 14:13-14).

For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us. (2 Corinthians 1:20).

2. Be sensitive to repent of any known sin

If there is anything you just know deep down is not right with the Lord, it is surely the Holy Spirit prompting you to repent of it and make right with God. This also applies to when you have done something against someone else. It is important to confess and repent of such behaviour before the Lord, but also make right with the person themselves. If we have unconfessed sin, God cannot hear our prayers.

If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. (Psalm 66:18).

Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear. (Isaiah 59:1-2).

When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood. (Isaiah 1:15).

You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. (James 4:2-3).

3. Do not have unforgiveness in your heart

Unforgiveness can very subtly creep into our hearts. Therefore, we have to constantly check our hearts for any offense or unforgiveness, bitterness and even feelings of contempt or apathy. Whenever we spot any of these emotions, it will make a big difference to quickly deal with unforgiveness – which can be towards others, ourselves, or even feeling offended at God. This forgiveness must flow from the depths of our heart.

But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. (Matthew 6:15).

So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses. (Matthew 18:35).

And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses. (Mark 11:25-26).

4. Pray to the Father in Jesus' name

When Jesus walked the earth, He admonished His disciples from that time onwards to ask the Father in His name. Jesus Himself prayed to the Father during His entire earthly life. Because Jesus died and rose again, we can ask the Father anything in His name!

Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. (John 16:24).

"And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it." (John 14:13-14).

5. His will be done on earth

Jesus, who was the very Son of God, in Gethsemane prayed and said, *not my will but Your will be done*. Jesus was overcome and deeply troubled about His upcoming death on the cross – yet He knew that it was the will of His Father. Imagine that – this was the one request the Father could not grant Jesus! If the Father would have had this terrible cup pass by His Son, you and I would never have been saved from an eternal hell! Therefore, it is always wise to trust the Father when

we pray. Ask for His perfect will to always exceed your own will and desire, however hard it may feel at that moment.

... "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done." (Luke 22:42).

Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. (Matthew 6:10).

Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him. (1 John 5:14-15).

6. Live a life of surrender and obedience to God

Throughout Scripture we learn of the spiritual fruit of everyone who surrendered to the will of God for their lives. Sometimes they went through difficulties, but God was with them amidst their trouble. There is not one biblical character that only had success in their lives! Even Jesus – the very Son of God – in His earthly life faced many trials, of which His death on the Cross was the worst. However, the fruit of His obedience is eternal life for everyone who says 'yes' to Him! Let us therefore follow His example of obedience.

...who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him... (Hebrews 5:7-9).

"And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." (1 John 3:22).

7. Hide your life in Christ, the 'Living Word'

Not many Christians have ever read through the Bible even once! One sure way of knowing who our God is, is to know Him from Scripture. The more time we commit to reading and praying from the Word, the better we will understand His ways and will. Consider spending more time in Scripture on a regular basis as part of your prayer times. Jesus, the Living Word is known from the Written Word!

For "WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD THAT HE MAY INSTRUCT HIM?" But we have the mind of Christ. (1 Corinthians 2:16).

If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. (John 15:7).

8. Persevere in prayer until the breakthrough comes

We always pray for something that has not yet materialised. Sometimes answers come quickly. More often though, more prayer is needed to experience breakthrough. Just think of Daniel who fasted and prayed for 21 days before Gabriel came with the answer. However, Gabriel told Daniel

that on the first day he had started to pray, Gabriel was sent with the answer! (Daniel 10:12-13). The delay was not because of the quality of Daniel's prayers, but the spiritual resistance over Babylon. Therefore, never give up in prayer too soon!

...yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs. "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened,..." (Luke 11:5-10).

Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart... And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth? (Luke 18:1-8).

9. Delight yourself in God while waiting

There is so much joy in praising God amidst the storm, amidst the hardship. Praise breaks the yoke of the situation. It shifts our hearts and attention to the Lord who is so good to all His children, and it causes us to view matters from His perspective and not from a natural point of view only. Therefore, be sure to spend time to delight yourself in the Lord! David knew this amazing secret.

Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart. (Psalm 37:4).

10. Rest in the Lord

While we are waiting for God's answers to our prayers, we can rest with confidence in His goodness and mercy. He is faithful and full of lovingkindness – you can rest in that. He wants what is best for you – you can rest in that. He loves you more than you can ever imagine – you can rest in that. While continuing to faithfully and daily pray about the matters on your heart, you can 'rest' in the knowledge that the Lord will answer in His time.

For since the beginning of the world men have not heard nor perceived by the ear, nor has the eye seen any God besides You, Who acts for the one who waits for Him. (Isaiah 64:4).

Wait on the LORD; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the LORD! (Psalm 27:14).

Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him; do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; do not fret—it only causes harm. (Psalm 37:7-8).