

20 GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE PRAYER



*"We think of prayer as a preparation for work, or a calm after having done work, whereas prayer is the essential work."
- Oswald Chambers*

These questions regarding prayer may cross your mind at least at one time or another: Why are my prayers not answered? Or, why does it take so long for certain prayers to be answered? Is there a different way in which to pray, that will render my prayers more effective?

The following Scriptures give us some guidelines as to the Biblical protocols when it comes to effective prayer.

1. Persevere in prayer (Luke 18:1)

"Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up." Sometimes we need to present the same matter before the Lord in prayer repeatedly. It is not because God does not hear, but it teaches us to persevere in faith.

2. Pray with confidence (Hebrews 4:16)

"Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." Because He is a God of mercy and grace, it is a throne of grace where we offer our prayers – we can boldly ask. He is our Father who knows what we need.

3. Resist the devil (James 4:7)

"Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Sometimes when we have been praying about a matter and there is seemingly no reason for the delay of the answer, it is really necessary to resist the devil out loud! You can boldly rebuke the enemy in the name of Jesus when you know your heart is surrendered to the Lordship of Jesus.

4. Allow God to work (Psalm 37:5)

"Commit your way to the Lord, trust in Him and He will do ..." Prayer should always be offered in surrender to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes we do not receive clear answers. Those are the times that we need to walk by faith and trust that God will lead us every step of the way. Still, we carry the responsibility to bring everything concerning our lives before Him in prayer.

5. Pray specifically (Philippians 4:19; 4:6)

"And my God will meet all your needs ... in everything, by prayer and petition ... present your requests to God." We can boldly ask our Heavenly Father specific things we need. We are not to dictate to Him what He should or should not do, we just make known to Him the desires of our hearts, knowing that the 'what, how and when' is completely in His perfect hands.

6. Pray in Jesus' Name (John 4:13-14)

"And I will do whatever you ask in my Name so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask Me for anything in my Name and I will do it." Jesus has been given all authority in heaven and on earth and His name is above every other name. He invites us to use His name (His authority) in prayer. We must never be ashamed to pray in the name of Jesus, even when we pray for someone who is not a Believer.

7. Pray in faith (Mark 11:22-24)

"Have faith in God," Jesus answered. "I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain: 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it and it will be yours." These verses have been misused and misquoted many times! What is really meant here is this: if you and I pray for something which is the will of the Father, however impossible it may seem to us at that moment, it will certainly be done. Therefore, we can boldly pray and declare for His will to be done!

8. Pray according to God's promises (2 Corinthians 1:20)

"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." Jesus is the Way, Truth and Life! He is the One who keeps His promises at all times and to all people. Pray with boldness and great expectation the promises of the Bible.

9. Don't try to dictate to God (Isaiah 55:8-9)

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. "As the heavens are higher than the earth so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." You can boldly offer your prayers before the Lord, but remain humble. Be sure not to dictate to Him what He should do and how. Sometimes our expectation is way below what He has in mind. Do not limit the Lord in expectation, neither in prayer.

10. God is almighty (Ephesians 1:19-21)

"... and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power, and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come." Remind yourself that anything you may ask for is a small thing in His eyes to do. He is seated far above all your calamities, problems or fears. Ask boldly.

11. Pray according to God's will (1 John 5:14-15)

"This is the assurance we have in approaching God; 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 what we asked of Him." Ask the Holy Spirit how to present Your prayers before the Lord. He knows the heart of the Father and will teach you how to pray according to His will.

12. Pray with expectation (Jeremiah 33:3)

"Call to Me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know."

Again, remember that God can literally do more than what you are asking for. So always remain expectant for something greater than you think is possible.

13. Praise and thank God for answers (Psalm 100)

"Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth, serve the Lord with gladness ... " It is very important to give thanks to God when the answers to our prayers come. Even for many days or weeks, continue to pour out your heart in thanksgiving to the Lord.

14. Obey God and live a holy life (1 John 3:21-22)

"Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from Him anything we ask, because we obey His commands and do what pleases Him." If we have a clean conscience before God, we can boldly approach Him. And when we live a life of obedience that is pleasing to Him, He answers us.

15. Confess and break with all conscious and unconfessed sin (Proverbs 28:9, 13)

"If anyone turns a deaf ear to the law, even his prayers are detestable ... He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy." It is not worthwhile to hold on to grudges, unforgiveness or any known sins. It only hurts us over time. Be quick to repent and obtain God's amazing mercy, so that He will hear your prayers.

16. Pray fervently and earnestly (James 5:16)

"The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective." Sometimes our prayers can be really lifeless and just full of meaningless words. If your own prayer does not move your heart, how will it move the heart of the Lord! Pray with passion, cry out to your Heavenly Father. He wants to answer a sincere heart that is crying out to Him.

17. Pray from your position of authority in Christ (Ephesians 2:6)

"And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus ... " Sometimes our prayers sound like that of a 'beggar'. All the while we have been born again and are seated with our Lord Jesus Christ in His realm, position and favour. We do not need to 'convince' God to answer our requests.

18. Saturate your prayers in praise and worship (Romans 11:33-36)

"Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments and his paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counsellor? Who has ever given to God that God should repay him? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever! Amen." The moment our prayers are ended with praise and worship, something shifts in our own hearts. Praise and worship unlock faith within us in the glorious might of our God.

19. Wait upon the Lord so that He can answer you (Isaiah 40:31; Psalm 145:15)

"But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint". "The eyes of all look to You and You give them their food at the proper time". While answers to prayer may sometimes take longer to come than at other times, our God always answers. Sometimes the answers come, but in a different way or form than we expected. Do not grow weary in waiting for God's perfect answer to manifest in your situation. Put your hope in Him and He will strengthen you while you wait.

20. Be honest with God in your prayers; do not try to hide things or misrepresent things to God (Psalm 139:23-24)

"Search me, O God and know my heart, test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting." God knows the true motives and condition of our hearts. There is nothing you can hide from Him. You cannot really 'bargain' with God on anything, because even in those moment He knows your all. Therefore be sincere and open with Him, confess your sins, your fears, anxieties, worries etc. Speak to Him as your FATHER.