

10 Keys to Successful Prayer

Many times we get embittered against God because we don't see Him answering our prayers in the way **we** want Him to. We feel that He either doesn't care or that He thinks that we don't **need** or **deserve** such blessings. Maybe we feel He is withholding a blessing because of punishment for something we did or are doing wrong. Or maybe we think He does care and is merciful, but not all powerful. Often we accuse God of something that isn't true and live a life of despair and/or unbelief in trusting God ever again. We think, "Why ask? He doesn't help improve my life, so it's useless." Since "hope deferred makes the heart sick" (Prov. 13:12), feeling hopeless makes us stuck in bed without energy. In reality, however, God always **has an answer to our requests**, but those answers are in four categories: No, slow, grow, or go! So, sometimes the type of answer depends more **on us than on Him. God in His sovereignty, allows us to be in partnership with Him. He is personal, reveals himself, and lets us in on His plans. (Read Gen 18:17-33)**

The Bible tells us that God wants to answer our prayers with a green light not red, but it must be according to His will and for His glory, because that is what is best for us. He is a compassionate and merciful Father, seeking dialog. He wants to give us the desire of our hearts *after* we delight ourselves in Him (see Psalm 37:4). We must, however, pray under His conditions. What are some of those requirements from Him? Let's examine them below one at a time:

Statement or Request	Focus	Explanation
#1 "Our Father in heaven... hallowed be your name...	God's nature	Our prayers are directed to a loving Father* who wants the best for his children and whose heart we can trust. (* F.A.T.H.E.R. : Our Faithful, Almighty, Truth, and Holy, Eternal, Redeemer.)
#2 your kingdom come . . . your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven...	God's kingdom	Our prayers ought to seek the righteous rule of God in every part of life.
#3 Give us today our daily bread...	God's will	Our prayers must always submit to the higher plan and wiser purposes of God.
#4 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors . . .	God's provision	Our prayers need to be humble and dependent, looking to God to meet our needs.
#5 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."	God's mercy	Our prayers acknowledge our constant need to receive and dispense grace.
	God's protection	Our prayers recognize the sobering reality of evil.

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Key #2 Seek God's will—Luke 22: 41,42-- ⁴¹ He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, ⁴² "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."

Question: What do you notice about the way Jesus talked to His father in verse 42? How does that apply to you?

Key #4 Forgiveness--Matt 5:23,24-- ²³ "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and **be reconciled to them**; then come and offer your gift. Matt 6:14,15-- ¹⁴ For if you **forgive other people** when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. Question: Why is it hard to forgive other people when they have sinned against you? What causes your anger?

Key #6 Unselfishness -- James 4:2,3-- ²You **desire** but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. ³When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with **wrong motives**, that you may spend what you get on **your pleasures**.

Question: Why don't we ask God first when we need something? What are the right motives? Wrong ones?

Key #7 Honor Family -- I Peter 3:7-- ⁷Husbands, in the same way **be considerate** as you live with your wives, and treat them **with respect** as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers." "**Honor** your father and your mother, as the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you **may live long** and that it may **go well** with you in the land." Ex 10:12

Question: How can we be more respectful and considerate to others in our home, work, or elsewhere?

Key #8 Confess Sin – Psalm 66:17-19-- I cried out to him with my mouth; his praise was on my tongue. ¹⁸If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened; ¹⁹but God has surely listened and has heard my prayer." James 5:16-- Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective."

Question: Who should confess their sins before praying for the sick? Why does sin inhibit the power of God?

Key #9 Don't Doubt-- 1. James 1: 5-7-- ⁵If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. ⁶But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. ⁷That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord.

2. Mark 11:24-- ²⁴Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

Question: What causes you or people to doubt God's ability or care for us? How can we strengthen this? HW

Key #10 Obey His Commandments—I John 3:22-- Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God ²²and receive from him anything we ask, because we keep his commands and do what pleases him.

Question: What is the difference between keeping His commands and doing what pleases him (in verse 22)?

God is Sovereign

Keeping these ten principles is not an arbitrary formula to obey. We are **His** creation. He is not ours. God is God and we are not! It is still up to **His** perfect wisdom and timing in everything to do what is best for **His** agenda and our spiritual growth. As we trust **in Him** and do the right thing in the right way, we will see fruit in **His** time not ours. In the end, all things will work out according to **His** will. If things are not working out right now, it's because it is not "the end!" Hope in Him! Trust and obey. There is no other way. **H.O.P.E.** -- **Holding On** to the **Promises** of an **Eternal God!** Don't be afraid to be boldly honest and open with God. He welcomes our questions, anger, frustration, and fears.

When nothing is happening, something is happening. We just can't see it. Keep praying according to these principles above. God is not only your Almighty Creator and Absolute Authority in your life, but also as with Abraham desires to be your friend, seeking intimacy with you by sharing His heart. Will you share yours? Don't let your past guilt of not praying, or other sin, hinder your future diligence to pray. Forget the past! **That was then and this is now.** Learn from the past. Ask forgiveness from God. Apologize to others and go on. It's never too late to start doing what is right.

Satan wants you to live according to your feelings of self-condemnation from guilt or shame. He wants your past to be ball and chain around your soul and spirit that keeps you in bondage, constantly weak in faith and strong in hopelessness. Be convicted of your past mistakes, repent, and go on. God is merciful. He understands. Today is the first day of the rest of your life. The best is yet to come for those who trust in God. Read Prov 3:5, 6 and Psalm 119: 105