

## Survey On Prayer

Prayer...sometimes we make it so complicated, like we have to come up with some profound words to keep God's interest. Some people love to pray, while others are scared to pray, because they feel they don't know how to do it right...after today's message if you fall into that category, I believe you will never feel that way again!

Others of you here today may have given up on prayer, or you might not pray as often as you should...I also hope after today that will change.

When we were kids it was all so much easier though wasn't it? Listen to some of these prayers:

### CHILDREN'S PRAYERS:

Dear God: Please send a new baby for Mommy. The new baby you sent last week cries too much. Debbie, 7

Dear God: Who did you make smarter? Boys or girls? My sister and I want to know. Jimmy, 6

Dear God: How many angels are there in heaven? I would like to be the first kid in my class to know the answer. Norma, 8

Dear Lord: Thank you for the nice day today. You even fooled the TV weather man. Hank, 7

Dear God: I need a raise in my allowance. Could you have one of your angels tell my father. Thank you. David, 7

Dear God: This is my prayer. Could you please give my brother some brains. So far he doesn't have any. Angela, 8.

Have you ever prayed, and prayed and nothing happened or maybe the outcome wasn't what you expected.

Today I want to share with you twelve (12) things that the Bible teaches us need to be in line in order for our prayers to be answered!

Now that being said, God is sovereign and He does whatever He likes, but today we are going to look at the biblical conditions of our prayers! Perhaps there is a reason one or all of your prayers are not being answered...today is going to be a little different than the average Sunday, it is going to be more of a Bible survey on prayer...alright?

Now before we begin, and I know I have said this before, but there really isn't a magical formula to getting God to answer our prayers, but THERE IS BIBLICAL GUIDELINES to how we should pray...so with that in mind

Lets get started because there is a lot to cover...

### **I. We must ask in the name of Jesus (John 14:13-14)**

Have you ever wondered why we tack on that in Jesus name stuff at the end of our prayers? Well look at Christ's own words in John chapter fourteen verses 13 and 14:

*13 And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. 14 You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.*

Pretty clear, when we pray, we are to pray to Jesus Christ! And that we should not be afraid to ask Him for anything!

Ok on to the next one...

## **II. We must be abiding in Him and His Word in us (John 15:7).**

This condition of prayer reminds me of my relationship I have with my daughters...and after all Jesus is our heavenly father, so at times we as parents we can relate to where Christ is coming from. Aren't you more likely to give your children stuff when they are obeying you, when they are showing how much they love you!

I remember figuring this out as a kid, and a few days before something was suppose to come out that I really wanted, I would start really behaving, doing extra chores and stuff...anyone know what I am talking about here, and then my mom would say

“What is it you want anyways...”

Well, we can't trick God...we can't pull the wool over Christ's eyes so, we truly have to follow what the Bible instructs us to do...we have to try to live up to the expectations that are set before us, right?

And so **John 15:7** says,

*If you remain in me and my words remain in you ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.*

And the third condition for answered prayers goes right along with the second it is...

## **III. We must be keeping His commandments (1 John 3:21-22)**

Look at **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.*

And I want to read a few more verses here because it goes on and says a few things that should be very familiar to you, especially after the series we just had:

*And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them.*

So there again we see that we must be following God's commands and trying to live what is considered a holy life...remember we are supposed to Love the Lord with all our heart, with all our soul, and mind and were supposed to love our neighbor as ourselves!

## **IV. We must give thanks at the same time (Philippians 4:6).**

Thanking God ahead of time is like showing confidence that He will hear your prayer and that He will answer it...

Look at **Philippians 4:6**,

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God.*

Oh man now this one...see it is easy to praise God and give Him the thanks he deserves when things are going well, but the Bible says that even when things stink...when your life is no fun, when your suffering...you still have to give thanks to God! And honestly can't we always find something to thank God for?

This reminds me of the story behind the Hymn it is well with my soul...in fact watch this video clip...

Yes, there is always something to be thanking God for...

This is why we can say things like, and maybe you have heard these things before:

And they always come at a time when you don't want to hear them, and you know them...

- Give all your cares to God...
- Let go and let God...
- Stop worrying and start praying...

A really cool thing is that God never commands us to worry about anything, in fact He promises over and over again that He will look out for those who follow after Him and who keep His commands.

#### **V. We must be watching for answers (Colossians 4:2)**

Sometimes were praying and praying for something and then we just give up, but God already gave us the answer we just weren't keeping a close eye on things...

**Colossians 4:2** Warns us,

*Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful*

Don't miss the answer because you gave up looking for it. If you pray, God will hear your prayers! Kind of like the story when the John and Peter go running to the tomb of Jesus with Mary Magdalene and they leave, but she stays, well she didn't give up, she stayed and was watchful for the answer... and she was rewarded by seeing Christ.

#### **VI. We must seek spiritual things first (Matthew 6:33)**

What are you seeking in life? What are you really devoted to? If your seeking your own will, if your asking for your will to be done...nothing good is going to come out of that...we are to seek the Kingdom of God...we are to attempt to live Holy lives...we are to Seek RIGHTEOUSNESS

**Matthew 6:33** in Christ's own words says,

*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*

And if you read the verse in context with its surrounding scripture you notice that what Jesus is talking about here is our daily needs, food, shelter, and clothes...much like God supplies for all His creation He will supply for those who are trying to connect with Him. God will never leave you, nor forsake you!

### **VII. We must pray for our fellow Christians (Ephesians 6:18)**

The world is a big place right? And there are tons of Christians all over the globe...and the Bible is clear and it instructs us to be in prayer for all of God's church and this makes sense right, after all we are just one body...one group united in Christ.

**Ephesians 6:18** says,

*And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayer requests. With this in mind be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.*

### **VIII. We must seek God's mind or His Will (Jude 20 and Ephesians 6:18 again)**

**Jude 20** says,

*But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit.*

Our prayers are to reflect God's will...

### **IX. We must have no hard feelings toward anyone (Mark 11:25)**

No here is a difficult one...if we have anything against anyone we are commanded to forgive them instantly. Read **Mark 11:25**:

*And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.*

In order to be forgiven we must learn to forgive. And we understand that we don't forgive because the person deserves to be forgiven, but rather because when we didn't deserve forgiveness God granted it to us! Now we are asked to forgive the unforgivable!

### **X. We must not go on and on and on and on (Matthew 6:7)**

This one is a bit tricky...because I don't mean that God doesn't want you to go on and on in prayer to Him...because He does! He wants us to pray without stopping, He wants us to live a life style of prayer, to be in constant communication with Him...so what do I mean when I say we must not go on and on and on...here is the context to this verse because this one is very important to understand.

During Jesus days the religious leaders loved the attention...they would stand out on the corners and pray, and they did it sooooo well! They were polished and they used big words to impress people and this is what Jesus says about that...

**Matthew 6:5 – 8**

*And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in*

*full. But when you pray, go into your room, close your door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father who sees what is done in secret (both good and bad by the way), will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.*

And before we talk about this verse look again quickly down at verse fourteen (14) just so you can see that thing about forgiveness again, it says,

**Matthew 6:14**

*For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.*

Ut oh...your choice there....I think I will be choosing to forgive!

But back to the previous verse...

(Expound and highlight on the praying for attention thing...)

HOPE YOU ENJOYED THAT ATTENTION because that's all your going to get

**XI. We must not ask for fleshly desire (James 4:3)**

Now everyone is wondering, if prayer really works...why haven't I won the lottery yet?

**James 4:3** says,

*When you ask, you do not receive because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasure...*

Ok...so we have all told God we would tithe on our lottery winnings...but the truth is, God cannot be fooled. And when we ask with the wrong motives we will not receive!

Which creates a problem for us, doesn't it? Because then when a prayer goes seemingly unanswered we have to question our motives...are we praying for God's will or for our own?

**XII. We must not doubt; God will keep His word (Mark 11:24 and 1 John 5:14-15)**

Now here is the danger with this final step...many times people have prayed and not doubted God, especially for physical healing, and I have heard people actually blame others for a lack of faith because they weren't healed...

I have prayed before not doubting God and His answer was quite different then what I thought needed to be done...and I had to say, not my will but your will!

That being said look at **Mark 11:23 and 24**,

*I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'go and 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.*

Ohhhhhh and by the way look at the next verse...

*And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.*

So back to verse 23 and 24 ask in confidence believing you will receive whatever you ask God for.

Finally the last verse... **1 John 5:14** and 15 and I feel like this really sums it all up:

*This is the confidence 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.*