
Proper Prayer Pattern

Radio Message by Dwight Porter, D.D.

DOES God answer everybody's prayer? Of course He does *not!* Time can be wasted in prayer! All the forces of hell are arrayed against us when deliberate time and energy are spent in prayer. If the devil cannot keep us from praying, he will contaminate our lives so that our prayers are wasted effort. If we are not in the place of obedience, trust, and surrender to God's will, plan, and purpose, prayer is a waste of time. God does not answer the prayers of people who are disobeying, doubting, and dissipating.

Are you among the many who go through life not knowing the biblical conditions for answered prayer? "And whatsoever we ask, we receive from Him, because we KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS AND DO those things that are pleasing in his sight" (I John 3:22). If we expect God to do that which we ask, then we must do that which He requests of us. If we give a listening ear to His commandments, then He will respond to our petition in prayer. How encouraging!

Few so-called Christians in our day pay sufficient attention to God's Word to learn the absolute necessity of obedience. Both the Old and New Testaments are filled with such demand from God. This subject matter is part of the Great Commission of Christ just prior to His departure back to the right hand of His Father: "Teaching them to observe ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER I HAVE COMMANDED YOU: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20).

Let's pause to remember a few of His commandments to us, His children. They are very plain and in understandable language. We are to pray and rejoice always. We are to be kindly affectioned toward one another. Are we in love with every Christian as instructed to love one another? Someone you do not love? We are to pray for those who spitefully use us. We are under civil authority. We are to hate the worldly system surrounding us and rebuke wrongdoing.

Obedience means doing those things that are pleasing in His sight. The Lord is to find pleasure in our actions. We must come to one simple conclusion! If we are not obeying the plain commands of God, our time is wasted in attempting to pray. If our everyday actions are not pleasing to Him, we cannot expect to receive anything from Him in answer to prayer. Ever wonder why so many never open their Bible during the week? Why they are content to attend a church that has no communication of the absolute directions of God? There is a reason for their not desiring to be around people walking in the light of God's direction.

There are two ways to bring displeasure to God. His justice will not allow Him to bless disobedient people. One way is to do the things that God tells us not to do. Second, leave undone the things He informs us to do in His Word. How do I know what to do or not do? It's all in a Book called the Bible!

Friend, if I am sick unto death and I desire prayer for some extended time here on this earth, and I am inclined to believe God to give me such pleasure in answer to prayer, please don't bother to pray for me unless you are on praying ground. I am referring to the foundation of obedience and the practice of that pattern of life that is pleasing a holy God. Otherwise, do not bother to pray for me. We receive nothing from God, whose absolute authority and direction we ignore. "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth" (Psalm 145:18).

The Name of Christ

Prayer in the Name of Christ has power with God. He is well pleased with His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Listen to John 14:13,14: "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." Please note that we depend upon the authority of the Name of Christ, not ours. We have no merit of our own.

Now, remember the promises of these two verses - "whatsoever ye shall ask" and "I will do it." Coupled with these promises is the ultimate end, "that the Father may be glorified in the Son." If this is not the motivation of our asking, then why waste our time to pray? There is a glorious relationship between the Father and His Son, Christ. The subjection of the Son to His Father is thrilling to behold in the Scriptures. Christ informs us that all answers to prayer are for the glory of His Father. This is the expressed purpose of all the work of the Son in intercession for us and His direction for our prayers. Should we fail to desire the Father glorified in His Son, we will receive nothing in response to our prayers.

According to His Will

Now here is a real problem to many people who pray. Always remember, the Lord wants us to pray in His will far more than we will ever desire. Therefore, give this burden to the Lord and depend upon His leadership in your prayer life. Here is the instruction concerning such prayers: "And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, he heareth us; and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him" (I John 5:14,15).

If we are to pray in the will of God, how can we know it? First, by the Word of God we learn His will. We can be absolutely assured that God desires all men to be saved. So when praying for the salvation of the lost, we can pray in confidence. "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9). When anything is definitely promised in the Bible, we know that it is His will for us to receive it. We can always ask for wisdom as to our course of action; it is promised in the Bible. "If any of you lack wisdom, let Him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1:5).

We have the Holy Spirit to direct us: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the heart knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he

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maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God” (Romans 8:26,27).

True prayer is petitions submerged into the will of God. If you do not know exactly what to ask for, just make your requests known to God on the basis that you want Him to do whatever He desires. Search the Scriptures about your request. Make sure it is in absolute accordance with the promises of God. Believe the Lord to direct your desires and appetites by His Spirit. If you do not know exactly how to pray, then don't pray any particular way. Just commit the entire matter to the Lord, then trust Him to give you peace of mind and heart as to how you should pray. If you have no direction or peace about the matter, then pray for the accomplishment of His will, for this should be the underlying foundation of every request we make before the Lord. We can ask for that which we will when in complete subjection to His will.

Never forget the confidence of the Scripture: “This is the confidence. . .He heareth us” (I John 5:24). This passage was not placed in the Bible to introduce “ifs” in all of our prayers, but in order that we might throw away our “ifs” and be assured with absolute knowledge that we have the petitions which we have asked of Him.

Pray in Faith

If we fail to believe God, then why waste time with our petitions to Him? “Therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire, when ye pray, BELIEVE that ye receive them, and ye shall have them” (Mark 11:24). Despite positive promises of God's Word, we will never enjoy the actual experience or possession of the promise unless we confidently expect its fulfillment in answer to our prayer. Faith is communicated to us through the Word of God: “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Romans 10:17). Real faith is the consequence of the study of the Bible. Little time for such study means little faith: “But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:6).

Abide in Christ

Listen to this unbounded power in prayer. It is recorded in John 15:7: “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” What a plain statement! “Ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you.” The secret of possession is the first five words of the verse: “If ye abide in me.” The second five words are equally important: “my words abide in you.” Our respect for God demands the absolute authority of His Word in our lives.

Obedience to the direction of His Word is a prerequisite for having things done for us by God.

We as branches have no independent life of our own. Everything in us is simply the outcome of the life of the vine flowing into us. For us to abide in Christ is to renounce all life independent of Christ and to constantly depend upon the outward working of His power through us. “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except

it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches; He that abideth in me, and I in Him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing” (John 15:4, 5).

For Christ's Words to abide in us, we must be under its absolute authority. If God's directions in His Word are not heeded, why waste our time praying and trying to get through, independent of our repentance and forgiveness of wrong doing.

With Thanksgiving

The Bible plainly states that we are not to worry or be anxious. **An** unthankful spirit always dominates the heart and mind of people who are nervous wrecks from worry. Here is the plain command of the Bible (by the way, if you disregard it, then don't bother to pray, for such prayers from such a person will not be heard or answered): “Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with THANKSGIVING let your request be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6,7).

How dare we expect God to give us additional blessings when we fail to express thanksgiving for past ones? Such thanks increases our faith and enables us to approach God with an additional boldness. Assurance of God's answer to our present prayers will generate thanks before the petition is granted to us. We have so much for which to be thankful. One glimpse of past and present blessings will remove future worries and anxiety.

Are you ready to pray? It is much easier to talk about it than practice. Are you on praying ground? Come on now, let us be honest! Are you keeping God's commandments and doing the things pleasing to Him? Willing to pray in the Name of Christ, that the Father might be glorified in the Son? Are you in complete subjection to the accomplishment of God's will in your life? Are you willing to pay the price for knowledge of God's will? Are you studying your Bible? Will you pray in faith, abiding in Christ, which means total subjection? Have you been thanking the Lord in your prayers?

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