

#100 “Prerequisites for Answered Prayer”

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The Bible gives five components of prayer that we must heed and obey if we want God to hear and answer our prayers.

1. Faith

Mark 11:22-24 says,

“And Jesus answered saying to them, ‘Have faith in God. Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, “Be taken up and cast into the sea,” and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him. Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you.’”

The principle here is that we must have faith that we have received what we have asked of God in order to receive it. There is no room for doubt (see James 1:5-8). This is not some power of positive thinking ploy, nor is it an excuse for commanding God to do what we want. The message is that when we are fully in line with the Spirit’s leading, we will know that what we are praying is indeed God’s will. When that is the case, we will believe that God has heard and will answer our prayer. If there is any doubt, we should question whether or not we are praying for the right thing because when we are praying for the right thing, we will have faith that we will receive what we have asked for.

2. Persistence

Luke 11:5-10 says,

“Then He said to them, ‘Suppose one of you has a friend, and goes to him at midnight and says to him, “Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him”; and from inside he answers and says, “Do not bother me; the door has already been shut and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.” I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much 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.’”

The clear lesson in this story is that God honors persistence in prayer. God doesn’t always give us what we ask for right away. Sometimes He tests our faith by allowing us to have to continually and consistently seek God in prayer. Persistence demonstrates faith, and as God puts us in such positions, our motives can be purified and refined so that we can see what is really going on in our

hearts. If we want to see answers to our prayers, we need to tarry in prayer, not just one time, but over and over again, not losing heart all the while.

3. Without Ceasing

1 Thessalonians 5:17 gives us another qualification for answered prayer. It says that we must “pray without ceasing.” Since Jesus Himself wasn’t literally praying constantly but only at certain times, it would be unwise to conclude that we should spend our entire lives in a prayer closet. Prayer wasn’t a compartmentalized aspect of His life as if He could only pray at a certain time of the day for a certain length of time for certain things. As the Spirit led Him through His life and ministry, prayer was part of His being and life. As issues came up, as He struggled with things internally, as time permitted, and as needs arose, He prayed. We need to come to the place where prayer is reflexive because we view it as an essential component of healthy Christian living. Though it will likely mean that we will pray more often and for longer durations, just praying for longer intervals does not fulfill the heart of this admonition. Praying without ceasing ultimately stems from a spiritual viewpoint that truly believes that prayer moves mountains and changes things in the world, especially our own hearts. It is a perspective where prayer is an utter need, a deep desire, and a means for hope and refreshment.

4. Righteousness

James 5:16 says, “The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.” The principle which this passage exposes is that prayer is hindered by the presence of unconfessed sin. If we regard iniquity in our hearts, God says that He cannot hear our prayers (Psalm 66:18). Those who are living a double life by walking in darkness and in light are not going to have effective prayer lives. On the other hand, those who are submissive to God, to His commands, and to the leading of the Spirit will be burdened with Spirit-led prayer and given wisdom to know what to say (Romans 8:26-27). If we want to discern the will of God and pray rightly, we must first confess our sin to God and to those whom we have sinned against.

5. According to God’s Will

1 John 5:14-15 reminds us that we must pray according to God’s will if we want to see our prayers answered. It says, “And this is the confidence that we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.” To pray according to God’s will is to pray according to what God wants done. This is something the Spirit of God will enable us to do (see Romans 8:26-27) if we are humble and willing to listen and be changed according to the Scripture.

God delights in giving us the chance to commune with Him through prayer and to move mountains just by faith if only we would ask. Prayer is powerful, and we must not underestimate its worth. Answered prayer is possible and the desire of God, but we must do it God's way by His Spirit and according to His Word and guiding principles therein. May God make us effective and powerful for kingdom purposes as we pray.

