

# TWELVE TIPS FOR POWER IN PRAYER

Prayer is talking to God just as we would to a friend; asking and knowing we will receive. Philippians 4:6, 19, says:

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. . . . And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

The Bible says that God answers prayer. "O you who hear prayer, to you all men will come" (Psalm 65:2). God hears the prayers of everyone who calls on Him in faith—Jew, Gentile, black, white, man, woman, adult, child.

Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops. (James 5:16-18)

God even hears the prayers of those who are not his servants. He heard the prayer of the dying thief on the cross. He heard the prayer of the publican and of the Italian centurion. Even the heathen sailors who threw Jonah overboard were heard when they prayed. In fact, God even heard the prayers of the demons at Gadara, and allowed them to send the pigs into the sea. And He will also hear your prayers.

We may not be able to put our prayers into good language, but God has promised that the Holy Spirit will help us to know what to pray about:

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will. (Romans 8:26, 27)

God is anxious to help and is "able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine" (Ephesians 3:20).

Where should we pray? Jesus said:

When you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. (Matthew 6:6)

There is a place for public prayer, for the Old Testament temple was called "a house of prayer" (Isaiah 56:7) and God promised to hear the prayers offered there (2 Chronicles 7:15), but it is in private that we can find the source of real power from God. This is where Jesus went to find His special reservoir of power:

After he had dismissed them, he went up into the hills by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone. . . . (Matthew 14:23)

How often should we pray? Paul writes, “pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests” (Ephesians 6:18). In 1 Thessalonians 5:17 Paul again urges, “Pray continually.” We are always to be in an attitude of prayer.

## THE RULES OF PRAYER

When Beethoven wrote the “Moonlight Sonata” he followed the laws of music. The Wright Brothers could never have made their first flight in an airplane in defiance of the laws of flight. So with true prayer. It must follow the rules; it must comply with the laws of prayer.

- *Let the keynote of your prayer be adoration and praise.* God is not your personal Santa Claus; He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. So begin your prayer, not with “I want,” but with praise for His greatness and thanksgiving for His past mercies.

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations. (Psalm 100)

Seven times a day I praise you for your righteous laws. (Psalm 119:164)

- *Confess and forsake any known sin, or it may prevent your prayers from being answered.* Are you hanging on to some sin in your life? Are you praying contrary to God’s will? Are you holding a grudge? If your prayers are not being answered, you may need to make some changes in your life.

If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. (Psalm 66:18)

The Lord detests the sacrifice of the wicked, but the prayer of the upright pleases him. . . The Lord is far from the wicked but he hears the prayer of the righteous. (Proverbs 15:8, 29)

But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear. (Isaiah 59:2)

If anyone turns a deaf ear to the law, even his prayers are detestable. (Proverbs 28:9)

Husbands, 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. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil. (1 Peter 3:7, 12)

. . . (We) receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him. (1 John 3:22)

- *Ask for the things you need.* Jesus promised,

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. (Matthew 7:7)

Jesus gave many examples of prayer, and almost without exception they are requests: “Friend, lend me three loaves” (Luke 11:5); the widow before the judge pleading, “Avenge me of mine adversary” (Luke 18:3); the son asking for a fish or an egg of his father (Luke 11:11, 12); the publican in the Temple praying, “God be merciful to me a sinner” (Luke 18:13); Peter out on the stormy sea saying, “Lord, save me” (Matthew 14:30); blind Bartimaeus by the roadside imploring, “Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me” (Mark 10:47); the thief on the cross requesting, “Lord, remember me” (Luke 23:42); the Canaanitish woman’s plea to heal her daughter (Matthew 15:22, 25).

We can come boldly before God with our requests (Hebrews 4:16). However, do not ask God to do for you what you can do yourself. Prayer is not an excuse for laziness.

- *Make your requests in the name of Jesus.* This is more than just using the name of Jesus in our prayers. The devil can do that. We must be in harmony with Jesus’ principles in order to do anything in His name. The president of your firm would not authorize you to do anything in his name unless you were in harmony with his policies. We use Jesus’ name because He has promised that if we surrender to Him, we can become members of His family. As sons of God through Jesus, we can draw on the family bank account. “In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence” (Ephesians 3:12).

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. (John 14:13, 14)

I chose you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. (John 15:16)

Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete. (John 16:24)

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Colossians 3:17)

- *Believe.* One reason God can’t answer our prayers is because we don’t have faith.

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. (Hebrews 11:6)

“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.” (Mark 11:22-24)

Hearing this, Jesus said to Jairus, “Don’t be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed.” (Luke 8:50)

But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord. (James 1:6, 7)

Everyone is given “a measure of faith,” according to Romans 12:3. If you doubt, pray the prayer of Mark 9:24: “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”

- *Claim a promise (see the list inside the front cover) and meet the conditions, if any.*

God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill? (Numbers 23:19)

Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. (Psalm 37:4)

And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins. (Mark 11:25)

- *Appeal to the Lord’s saving acts in past history.* Notice how Nehemiah (chapter 9) and David (Psalms 105) recite God’s saving providences of old. The God who saved before can save again.

Then I thought, “To this I will appeal: the years of the right hand of the Most High.” I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago. I will meditate on all your works and consider all your mighty deeds. (Psalm 77:10-12)

- *Make sure your motive is right.* Is your request a selfish one? Or is it to benefit others and glorify God? We should ask so that glory will be brought to God’s name.

When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. (James 4:3)

It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone. (Ezekiel 36:22)

Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? "Father, save me from this hour"? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name. . . . (John 12:27, 28)

We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thessalonians 1:12)

- *Ask that God's will be done.* Some of our requests, if answered, could prove unfortunate (see Numbers 11, 1 Kings 19:4, 2 Kings 20). Therefore, sometimes the Lord says no, as He did when Paul asked for his affliction to be removed (2 Corinthians 12:8). Thus we must submit to God's will, for He may have something better in mind for us than what we asked for.

Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will." (Matthew 26:39)

This is the assurance we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. (1 John 5:14)

- *Thank Him in advance for the answer.*

Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear. (Isaiah 65:24)

So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me." (John 11:41)

. . . always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 5:20)

. . . give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

- *It helps to have at least one prayer partner.* There is power in united prayer.

Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them. (Matthew 18:19)

- *Be persistent!* For His own good reasons, God does not always answer immediately. Don't give up too quickly, because God respects perseverance.

You who call on the Lord, give yourselves no rest, and give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth. (Isaiah 62:6, 7)

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!' " And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly." (Luke 18:1-8)

You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. (Hebrews 10:36)