

Prayer – How to Pray and Receive Answers to Prayer

Purpose: Prayer is effective, powerful and necessary for a follower of Christ. There are certain conditions for receiving answers to prayer.

Focus: To pray is to open the heart to Jesus, as to a friend.

Introduction God knows what we need and can read our hearts, so why pray?

Is prayer actually necessary?

Phil 4:6-7 God can't answer the prayer we don't pray (Matt 7:7). What effect does prayer have on the person praying? Prayer doesn't draw God closer to us, it draws us closer to God. IE: Relationships require communication. Open your heart to God as to a friend. How much can we pray for? Only the big things?

Through His example, Jesus showed us that prayer was important...

Mark 1:35 God's own Son, the One we pray to, felt a need to prayer; how much more do we need it! When did Jesus pray? IE: Morning worship (**Ps 119:147-148**)

Jesus also taught His disciples how to pray...

Matt 6:5-6 It is not enough to only pray in church or in the family, we must also be alone with God. Let nothing disturb this precious time, so essential to spiritual life.

Let us look at another example where Jesus speaks of prayer...

Luke 11:1-4 Sometimes we have to learn how to pray. IE: Model Prayer – not a liturgical rigmarole. There are conditions to having your prayers answered.

The first condition is to feel your need for God's help...

Ps 63:1 Did David feel his need for God? Our need is an argument for God to help us (Jdg 10:15-16, Matt 5:6).

Sometimes we need help to realize our need for God...

Ps 107:5-6, 12-13 God sometimes leads us into hopeless situations so that we realize our need for Him. IE: Israelites at the Red Sea. But when we call on Him, He will answer.

The second condition is to confess every known sin...

Prov 28:9 If God convicts us of a specific transgression of His Law and we are unwilling to surrender it, will God hear our prayers? (**Ps 66:18**)

There is one prayer, however, that God always hears...

Ps 32:3-5 What does God do when we are willing to confess our sins? We also need to be willing to confess to the people we have wronged (**Matt 5:23-24**).

The third condition is to forgive others...

Mark 11:25-26 We will be forgiven in the same way we forgive others (**Matt 6:12, 14-15**). To forgive doesn't mean to excuse the sin or to find some good traits in the offender or that there are no consequences (Micah 7:9). Forgiveness means to admit that the act was hurtful to you, to let go of bitterness and revenge and commit your case to Him who judges righteously (1 Pet 2:23, Rom 12:17-21).

The fourth condition is faith...

Mark 11:24 Do we take God at His word? When we believe we receive answers. The opposite is also true (**Heb 11:6**). We can thank God that we have already received it. Perhaps the answer will not be exactly as we hoped for, but He always gives us what we would have wanted to have if we could see the end from the beginning. IE: Parent, child. Claim the promise, the answer will come when we most need it. Faith = Active, not passive.

The fifth condition is persistence...

Col 4:2 Many people give up too quickly in prayer. What do we need to do in prayer? (**Luke 18:1-8**) IE: Elijah prayed 7 times for rain (1 Kings 18:41-45, Jas 5:16-19). Persistence shows sincerity and faith. IE: Great Controversy (Dan 10:1-3, 12-13)

The last condition is to pray according to God's will...

1 John 5:14-15 Is it your desire to pray according to God's will and apply these principles?

APPENDIX

Question: Can you pray to Jesus?

Answer: Jesus is worthy of our worship (Heb 1:6, Matt 28:9, 17, John 5:23, 9:38, Rev 5:12-14). After His ascension, the apostles and early Christians did at times pray to Jesus (Acts 7:59, 9:4-6, 10-15, 1 Tim 1:12, Rev 1:12-17). The most common person to address in prayer though is God the Father. The process of prayer goes something like this: 1. The Holy Spirit inspires our prayers and helps us to formulate correct words and thoughts (Rom 8:26-27). 2. Jesus cleanses our prayers by His blood as a Mediator in Heaven (Rom 8:34, Heb 7:24-25, Rev 8:3-4, 1 Tim 2:5). 3. God accepts the prayer and graciously grants answers. But God is not overly technical, and no matter whom of the Godhead you address in your prayer, we can trust that it will end up in the right place.

Ellen White had no problem to pray to Jesus: "We should go to Jesus and tell Him all our needs. We may bring Him our little cares and perplexities as well as our greater troubles. Whatever arises to disturb or distress us, we should take it to the Lord in prayer." (*Testimonies for the Church* 5, p. 200, 201) "If we are under infirmities of body, it is certainly consistent to trust in the Lord, making supplications to our God in our own case, and if we feel inclined to ask others in whom we have confidence to unite with us in prayer to Jesus who is the Mighty Healer, help will surely come if we ask in faith." (*Medical Ministry*, p. 16) "Then, children, ask God to do for you those things that you cannot do for yourselves. Tell Jesus everything. Lay open before Him the secrets of your heart;" (*Adventist Home*, p. 299)

Question: What posture/position should you have while praying?

Answer: We have examples in the Bible of several postures that people assumed while praying:

- Lying down (Isa 38:1-2, 2 Sam 12:16-20)
- Standing (Neh 2:4, 2 Chron 6:12, 14, 20:5-13, Mark 11:25, Luke 18:11-14)
- Kneeling (Dan 6:10, Eph 3:14, 1 Kings 8:54, Ezra 9:5, Acts 9:40, 20:36, 21:5, Ps 95:6, Luke 22:41)
- Sitting (2 Sam 7:18, Matt 15:35, 36, 1 Kings 19:4, Luke 24:30, Acts 2:1-2)
- Hanging on a cross (Luke 23:33-34)
- Sitting in the stocks (Acts 16:24-25)
- Inside the belly of a whale (Jona 2:1)

Kneeling can often create a sense of reverence in prayer. But there are no requirements about a certain position that makes your prayer more or less acceptable to God. It is the sincerity and spirit with which the prayer is prayed, that God looks at, not necessarily the posture.

Ellen White put it this way: "It is not always necessary to bow upon your knees in order to pray. Cultivate the habit of talking with the Saviour when you are alone, when you are walking, and when you are busy with your daily labor." (*Ministry of Healing*, pp. 510, 511) "We cannot always be on our knees in prayer, but the way to the mercy seat is always open. While engaged in active labor, we may ask for help; and we are promised by One who will not deceive us, "Ye shall receive."" (*Counsels on Health*, p. 423) "Christ has urged that His people pray without ceasing. This does not mean that we should always be upon our knees, but that prayer is to be as the breath of the soul. Our silent requests, wherever we may be, are to be ascending unto God, and Jesus, our advocate, pleads in our behalf, bearing up with the incense of His righteousness our requests to the Father." (*Sabbath School Worker*, Feb. 1, 1896)