

20 Guidelines for Effective Prayer

20 Scriptural Guidelines for Effective Prayer

Here are some scriptural ways to pray with confidence and effectiveness! Why not take one a week and practice each principle so that you can learn to apply it to your life of prayer?

- 1. Confess and break with all conscious and unconfessed sin so that your prayers are birthed out of righteousness and will accomplish much. Take time to confess before God and to meet with a trusted person or persons to confess to and ask for prayer:** “God has no use for the prayers of the people who won’t listen to him... You can’t whitewash your sins and get by with it; you find mercy by admitting and leaving them” (Proverbs 28:9, 13 MSG). “Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much” (James 5:16 NASB).
- 2. Remember that prayer is relationship with God:** God is our Father and we are His children. He is the greatest Love we can ever know or try to comprehend. Come before Him as a loving parent who desires to spend time with you. If you haven’t experienced this kind of parental love, draw near and ask God to show you His great love for you. He has adopted you into His family. “For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as

sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father” (Romans 8:15 NASB)!

- 3. Pray according to God’s will...not your own.** “This is the confidence which 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” (1 John 5:14-15 NASB). “Not my will, but Yours be done” – an important lesson from the lips of Jesus, who wanted the cup of death to be taken from Him, yet was willing to endure the cross before Him because it was God’s will: “And He withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, and He knelt down and *began* to pray, saying, ‘Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done’” (Luke 22:41-42 NASB).

In prayer, your job is to ask, and learning how to ask the things that line up with what God wants you to have. Many of us want what we want rather than wanting what God wants: “Where do you think all these appalling wars and quarrels come from? Do you think they just happen? Think again. They come about because you want your own way, and fight for it deep inside yourselves. You lust for what you don’t have and are willing to kill to get it. You want what isn’t yours and will risk violence to get your hands on it. You wouldn’t think of just asking God for it, would you? And why not? Because you know you’d be asking for what you have no right to. You’re spoiled children, each wanting your own way” (James 4:1-3 MSG).

Look for things in scripture that are on the heart of God and pray those things because you can always know they are His will! For example, God wants unity in the body, He wants all to be saved, He wants us to love one another, He wants us to pray for those in authority over us, and He wants us to pray that workers will be sent into the harvest field! Whenever you come across something that God clearly wants, pray! Looking

for what God wants us to pray about even changes our desires as we pray. We learn to pray for what He wants instead of what we want. Also, God has also told us He will give us what He knows we need: "Remember, your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him" (Matthew 6:8b).

4. **Persevere in prayer:** "One day Jesus told his disciples a story to illustrate their need for constant prayer and to show them that they must keep praying until the answer comes. 'There was a city judge,' he said, 'a very godless man who had great contempt for everyone. A widow of that city came to him frequently to appeal for justice against a man who had harmed her. The judge ignored her for a while, but eventually she got on his nerves. "'I fear neither God nor man,' he said to himself, 'but this woman bothers me. I'm going to see that she gets justice, for she is wearing me out with her constant coming!'" Then the Lord said, "If even an evil judge can be worn down like that, don't you think that God will surely give justice to his people who plead with him day and night? Yes! He will answer them quickly! But the question is: When I, the Messiah, return, how many will I find who have faith and are praying" (Luke 18:1-8 TLB)? Persevere in prayer with God!
5. **Ask with right motives:** "You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend *it* on your pleasures" (James 4:3). Examine your heart before you ask God.
6. **Pray with confidence:** "Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16). This scripture tells us that when you pray, you are entering the very throne room of heaven! The King is sitting on His throne ready to listen! That should give us all confidence!

7. **Resist the devil:** “Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you” (James 4:7). The devil will do anything he can to keep you from prayer. Once you know this and are continually aware of it, you can resist his distractions and temptations! Don’t allow the devil to derail your prayer life!
8. **Allow God to work:** “For in the day of trouble He will conceal me in His tabernacle; in the secret place of His tent He will hide me; He will lift me up on a rock” (Psalm 27:5). Trust that He is working on your behalf. When you worry and try to do things in your own strength, you are keeping God from doing what He desires to do. Allow the peace of His presence to overshadow your prayer life: “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7).
9. **Pray in Jesus’ Name** “Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do *it*” (John 14:13-14). This does not mean simply tacking a phrase on to the end of every prayer. It means recognizing that your prayers go through Jesus, who made it possible for you to have direct access to God.
10. **Pray in faith:** “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*. 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” (Mark 11:22-24 NASB). It’s difficult to believe God for some things, but if we have faith to know He has our

best interest in His heart, we can have great faith that He will move to accomplish that purpose...even when it may not be the answer we are hoping for in our flesh.

11. **Pray according to God's promises:** "For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us" (2 Corinthians 1:20 NASB). Be alert for promises you see in Scripture, and remind God of His promises as you pray. For example, God's word says, "Don't be obsessed with getting more material things. Be relaxed with what you have. Since God assured us, 'I'll never let you down, never walk off and leave you,' we can boldly quote, God is there, ready to help; I'm fearless no matter what. Who or what can get to me" (Hebrews 13:5-6 MSG)?
12. **Don't try to dictate to God:** "This plan of mine is not what you would work out, neither are my thoughts the same as yours! For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than yours, and my thoughts than yours" (Isaiah 55:8-9 TLB). And Proverbs 16:9 TLB says, "We should make plans—counting on God to direct us."
13. **Recognize that God is Almighty:** The power and authority of God is way beyond anything we could ever hope to comprehend. Remind yourself that there is nothing too great or too small that He cannot accomplish. Embrace this prayer of Paul: "That is why, ever since I heard of your strong faith in the Lord Jesus and of the love you have for Christians everywhere, I have never stopped thanking God for you. I pray for you constantly, asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you wisdom to see clearly and really understand who Christ is and all that he has done for you. I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can see something of the future he has called you to share.

I want you to realize that God has been made rich because we who are Christ's have been given to him! I pray that you will begin to understand how incredibly great his power is to help those who believe him. It is that same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in heaven, far, far above any other king or ruler or dictator or leader. Yes, his honor is far more glorious than that of anyone else either in this world or in the world to come" (Ephesians 1:15-21 TLB).

14. **Pray with expectation:** When we pray, we should always eagerly anticipate and expect God to answer. Sometimes His answers surprise us because they are different than what we think: "Call to Me and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know" (Jeremiah 33:3 NASB).
15. **Praise and thank God for answers:** As God answers prayer, don't forget to give Him thanks! "Shout with joy before the Lord, O earth! Obey him gladly; come before him, singing with joy. Try to realize what this means—the Lord is God! He made us—we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Go through his open gates with great thanksgiving; enter his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and bless his name. For the Lord is always good. He is always loving and kind, and his faithfulness goes on and on to each succeeding generation" (Psalm 100 TLB).
16. **Obey God and live a holy life:** "Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight" (1 John 3:21-22 NASB). Of course, no one can live a perfectly holy life; however, God looks at our hearts and knows our thoughts. He is a good Father who desires to give good gifts to His children. As we live out lives

of holiness, we will naturally begin to align our prayers more and more with God's will and see more and more answers to prayer.

17. **Saturate your prayers in praise and worship:** "Oh, what a wonderful God we have! How great are his wisdom and knowledge and riches! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his methods! For who among us can know the mind of the Lord? Who knows enough to be his counselor and guide? And who could ever offer to the Lord enough to induce him to act? For everything from God alone. Everything lives by his power, and everything is for his glory. To him be glory evermore" (Romans 11:33-36 TLB). God desires our worship. To pray without giving Him praise and honor is to forget that He is the Almighty, who sits on the throne!
18. **Spend time waiting upon the Lord:** If we rush into God's presence with our prayer lists and then rush back out again, we are not honoring prayer as relationship with God. His presence should be so important that we can even forget what we wanted to pray about. It should always be enough to simply be in the presence of the Father, recognizing the One who sits on the throne before us as we make our requests. Consider being like King David, who said, "I'm asking God for one thing: to live with him in his house my whole life long. I'll contemplate his beauty; I'll study at his feet" (Psalm 27:4 MSG). God has a promise for those who wait upon Him: "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31).
19. **Be honest with God in your prayers:** God knows everything about you because He created you. Sometimes we are hurt, angry, depressed or defeated. We need to lay those feelings before Him. "Search me, O God, and know my

heart; test my thoughts. Point out anything you find in me that makes you sad, and lead me along the path of everlasting life” (Psalm 139:23-24 TLB).

20. **Pray continually:** “Always be joyful. Always keep on praying. No matter what happens, always be thankful, for this is God’s will for you who belong to Christ Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 5: 16-18 TLB). When you have relationship with someone you want to spend time with them. Prayer is relationship with God. The more you spend time in prayer, the more you will want to grow in your prayer life...because it means being in the presence of the One you love and who loves you.

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