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The Privilege of Prayer

Answer me will I call you, my righteous God. Give me release from my distress, and have mercy on me and hear my prayer. (Psalm 4:1)



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The Privilege of Prayer

You read the Bible and find scriptures where God promises to answer prayer and provide what you ask for. And you pray and pray but God doesn't answer your prayer. Why doesn't God answer my prayer?

This document will provide scriptures that reveal what God is looking for in our prayers. Discussed is the attitude of prayer, praying in the Spirit, persistence in prayer, God's answer to prayer, listening to God, and what hinders our prayers. This is a brief description of the basics of prayer. There are numerous books that cover prayer in depth, so many it can be difficult in choosing one to read.

Attitude of Prayer

Our attitude when we pray reveals our heart to God, and God is always looking at our heart. Therefore we will search scripture and find the attitude that pleases God.

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

Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. (Mark 11:24)

From the above scriptures we are to pray with an attitude of confidence and belief. If we pray with confidence and believe God will answer our prayer, then are we in the right attitude of prayer?

Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; (Colossians 4:2)

In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

I will praise you, Lord my God, with all my heart; I will glorify your name forever. (Psalm 86:12)

Whatever the situation we are facing in life we pray with a thankful heart that praises God. We pray with a grateful attitude that we can come to the Lord in prayer. Prayer is a privilege given to us by Christ; it is conversation with the creator of all things. Prayer is an awesome privilege!

But in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses, (2 Corinthians 6:4)

We are God's servants, and our prayer must be in his will, because a servant's goal is to please his master and fulfill his will. We live by

faith which implies we give God control of our lives by following the Holy Spirit's guidance, and leaving the results in his hands.

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. (Matthew 16:24)

And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. (John 14:13)

If our prayers are to bring glory to God through the Son, then we must bring glory to the Son. This is more than just the contents of our prayer, it is our life surrendered to the Son. A person who is surrendered to the Lord, letting him guide their thoughts, words and actions; that person's life brings glory to God. This makes a righteousness person and their prayers powerful and effective.

The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. (James 5:16)

If we are spiritually and eternally minded it will help us to understand things from God's perspective, spiritual first then physical. The more we understand the ways of God, the more our prayers will bring glory to God. We should always bring glory and thankfulness to God, for both hearing our prayer and answering our prayer.

Summarizing, we are to be confident, believe, thankful praising heart, eternally minded, humble, and pray for God's glory. Below are three points that can reveal a heart pleasing to God.

- 1. Recognize we are praying to God, the creator of all things, and it is impossible to find the right words to describe his divinity. We show an attitude of gratefulness and praise that we have the awesome privilege to pray to God, and it's only through Christ that we have this great privilege.**

- 2. We see ourselves as God sees us. He sees us sinless, as his children, his special possession, and he sees in our eternal home with him in heaven. Our hearts are filled with thankfulness by what Christ has done for us; he has saved us, filled us with his spirit, and heaven is our home.**
- 3. We remember who we were before Christ saved us, before we accepted Christ as our savior. We remember when we were disconnected from God and living in our sins. Looking back we see how lost we were and how empty life was without the Holy Spirit connecting us to God. This can bring us to tears with thankfulness.**

These three points bring us closer to the Lord, and fills us with a surrendered heart. Our hearts are always filled with these three points, but they will become more evident when we stop and spend quiet time in prayer. We will find that most of our prayers will be praising and thanking God, and the things of this world will take second priority.

Persistent Prayer

In Luke 11:5-10 is a parable illustrating that we should be persistent in prayer. Why does God want us to be persistent in prayer?

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. (Luke 18:1)

If God always answered our prayers the first time we pray, we might start treating God as our servant instead of being his servant. We are God's servant and must always submit to his authority and his ways.

Persistent prayer is for our benefit. It helps us evaluate our prayers, examine our motives, examine our faith, and determine if we are seeking an answer from God more than we are seeking God. Persistence in prayer will strengthen our relationship with God and can increase our love for the people we are praying for. And the more love we give the more love we can receive from God. This is the circle

of love which provides spiritual growth, better understanding of God, and can increase our faith. So continue to pray, continue to examine your prayer, and continue to seek understanding how God might answer your prayer. Never give up praying.

Pray in the Spirit

With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, (Ephesians 6:18)

But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, (Jude 1:20)

When we pray in the Spirit, our prayer originates from the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit prompted our prayer, then we know our pray is bringing glory to God.

We have the promise that if we pray in Jesus' name, the prayer will be answered, and if the prayer originated from the Holy Spirit it must be in Jesus' name. But why is it that sometimes we pray in the Spirit, and we don't receive the answer from God? Is it lack of faith? Is it our walk with God? Is there un-forgiven sin in our life? We can question ourselves on all these issues, but suppose we have the faith, walk with God, and have forgiveness; would our prayers be answered every time to our understanding?

Answer to Prayer

God promises to answer our prayers if it brings glory to the Father through Christ. God is infinite in his understanding and we are finite in our understanding. We cannot possibility understand all the ways of God this side of eternity, especially since we cannot see things from the heavenly perspective. God's priority is to bring us home to him and while on this planet his goal is to mold us to the mind of Christ.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. (Isaiah 55:8-9)

God knows we are unable to understand all his ways. We pray through the Spirit, specifically describing our request and at the same time praising and thanking him. The more we pray with praise and thanksgiving the more humble we become, and God gives grace to the humble.

When we pray we know God will answer the prayer in his timing and in his way which is often different from our timing and our way. We adopt the attitude that God’s answer to our prayer is always perfect, even when we don’t understand or don’t agree with his timing.

While we are waiting for God to answer our prayer it is imperative that we continue serving the Lord by being a light in this world. Often our prayers are answered through our obedient walk with the Lord.

Hindrances to Our Prayers

Unconfessed Sin

If we refuse to give up a sinful behavior, or if we are doing things we know are displeasing to the Lord, how can we expect him to answer our prayers? We can be fighting the spiritual war to overcome a sinful behavior and this is pleasing to Lord. However if we are not fighting the spiritual war but instead justifying this sinful behavior, this will make God angry. God’s wrath is for those without a repentant heart.

But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God’s wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. (Romans 2:5)

Motive

When we pray we should check to see if our motivation is from the Spirit or from ourselves. Without being aware of what we are doing, we can put our own interest ahead of glorifying God.

You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. (James 4:6)

We pray, knowing from his Word that we are praying in accordance to his will and for his glory. Try and picture the Lord receiving your prayer and his response to your prayer. Seek to understand how the Lord sees your heart which reveals your motive for the prayer. Remember all prayers should bring him glory.

What are prayers that bring glory to God? Anything we pray for that that will help us serve the Lord is for his glory. We pray for wisdom, courage, and understanding of his word. We pray for peace and for his comfort and for our health. We pray for our job, to pay the bills, to care for our family, to for transportation. And scripture tells us to pray for others and to pray for healing. These are just a few things that will bring glory to God.

Obedience to God

If anyone turns a deaf ear to my instruction, even their prayers are detestable. (Proverbs 28:9)

A deaf ear to God's instruction implies we are not serving the Lord or not reading his Word or not fellowshiping with God's family. We will never know God if we are not obedient to his guidance.

We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands. (1 John 2:3)

How can we be pleasing to God if we don't trust him by not obeying him? To not obey God is to say, "Lord I do not trust you and do not

believe your promises, therefore I am going to be my own God, I can handle my life better than you.” This is a rebellious prideful near sighted attitude.

God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble. (James 4:6)

If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. (1 Corinthians 15:19)

If we are prideful and not seeking the Lord by his word and not walking in obedience to his will, do you expect your prayers to be answered?

Unforgiving Hearts

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

God’s love is centered on forgiveness as clearly seen in his Word. Without forgiveness God’s unconditional love does not exist in our heart. Love without forgiveness is a self-centering conditional love, which is saying, “I will show love when you meet my needs.”

Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. (1 John 4:8)

If we do not know God how can we expect Him to answer our prayers?

Family Discord

It is impossible for families to live in perfect peace, but God demands that we maintain close relationships and strive for harmony. The father is the head of the household and carries the responsibility of leading the family in the direction that promotes harmony, and in doing this he should earn the respect from all in the family. When conflict

leads to disharmony, especially between husband and wife, our prayers may be hindered.

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. (1 Peter 3:7)

However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. (Ephesians 5:33)

The Word is telling husbands to live with their wives in an understanding way, being sensitive to their needs and the wife should show respect to their husbands.

Doubt

But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. (James 1:5-7)

God wants us to have confidence and believe that he can and will do what he promises. God knows our heart and if we have doubt it tells him our faith is weak. How can we pray and expect God to answer without faith?

Make sure your prayer glorifies God and know he hears and will answer. Also know that whatever the circumstance God's answer is perfect and his timing is perfect.

Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; (Psalm 37:7)

Always walk in obedience while waiting upon the Lord. God's answer to our prayers depends on our continued faith, which shows our love for him.

Honesty

It is imperative that we are honest with God in our prayers. Honest in our thoughts, our words, and our emotions.

The Lord detests lying lips, but he delights in people who are trustworthy. (Proverbs 12:22)

Our prayers must be grounded in God's truth and delivered to him with an honest heart. Reveal your heart and your deepest feelings to God, and hold nothing back. This will be pleasing to God and make your prayer time rewarding and freeing.

Listening to God

Should we be listening for the Lord during prayer? Prayer is communion with God and seeking God with all our heart includes seeking to hear his voice. Listening to the Lord during prayer can change our prayers and every time we hear the Lord's voice it brings us closer to him.

Learning to hear the Lord's voice isn't difficult, but it does require the discipline of being quiet inside and learning to concentrate and focus, because the Lord's voice comes through our thoughts.

Be still, and know that I am God; (Psalm 46:10)

The Bible is the language of God and the more we read and meditate on the Word, the more we will recognize his voice. Once we start hearing God's voice it motivates us to seek his voice more often.

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. (John 10:27)

During prayer seek the Lord's voice by pausing and being still. Read the Word before and after your prayer because this will draw you

closer to God and better able to hear His voice, either while praying or while reading the Word.

Summary

All prayers are for the glory of God, therefore before we start praying be sure your prayer is for God's glory. Remember we are here to serve God and we are ambassadors for Christ.

For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. (Colossians 1:16)

We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us (2 Corinthians 5:20)

Remember these two verses when you pray and always include in your prayers praise and thankfulness to God. This is the humble attitude of prayer.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. (Psalm 100:4)

God hears our prayer and will answer according to his will and his timing, and his answer and timing are perfect. We are creatures of limited understanding and we cannot possibly understand all the ways of God. Therefore we live by faith.

Listen for God's voice as you pray and invite him into conversation. Continue to seek to hear the Lord's voice and never give up seeking to hear his voice, but be persistent.

Make sure nothing will hinder your prayers, such as continuing in sinful behavior, wrong motivation, disobedience, unforgiving heart, family discord, or doubt. Correct any of these issues if they are in your

life because they will not only affect your prayers they can affect the attitude of your heart and God looks at the heart.

The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7)

If your heart is not right with God, do you think he will hear or answer your prayers?

Enjoy your prayer time with God and make it the highlights of your day. Praying and communing with God is a privilege and a great joy. The more we pray and praise the Lord the more joy we have.