

Sermon Notes

Practical Lessons for Understanding the Word of God



Your Convictions About Prayer

KEY PASSAGE: Matthew 7:7-8 | **SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES:** Psalm 119:105 | Isaiah 59:1-2 | Matthew 21:22
John 14:1, 13, 27; 15:7 | Philippians 4:19 | 1 Timothy 2:5-6 | James 1:5-7 | 1 John 5:14-15

SUMMARY

What are your convictions about prayer?

Are you convinced that God will answer your requests, or do you feel uncertain or frustrated? Having a conviction is being so thoroughly convinced something is absolutely true that you will take a stand for it regardless of the consequences. The Bible is the foundation for our convictions about prayer. If we believe and practice what it says, we can be confident that the Lord will hear and answer our prayers.

SERMON POINTS

The Bible contains some tremendous promises concerning prayer that we can confidently believe.

- **Matthew 7:7-8** “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.”
- **Matthew 21:22** “All things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.”
- **1 John 5:14-15** “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.”

The First Decision for Answered Prayer

In order to receive answers to prayer, we must first place our faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. Because God is holy, our sins have separated us from Him. But when we repent and

believe that Christ died on the cross to pay our sin debt in full, we enter into a relationship with God and can then converse with Him and be certain that He hears us.

The bottom line of all prayer is that access to the Lord is only available through Jesus Christ, the one mediator between God and man. (1 Tim. 2:5). Those who pray without this relationship are speaking to the one they imagine God to be, but not to the one true God. Jesus came to open the door for us to have a relationship with the heavenly Father and access to Him through prayer. The promises regarding answered prayer only apply to those who have been forgiven and reconciled to the Lord.

Four Basic Convictions About Effective and Answered Prayer

Once we have entered into a relationship with the Father through Jesus Christ, we can confidently expect answers to our prayers when we . . .

- **Make your requests in accordance with God’s will** (1 John 5:14-15). This means we should ask for those things that are consistent with His character, nature, desires, purposes, and plans for our lives or the lives of those for whom we intercede. He will not give us anything that is motivated by selfishness, exalts our pride, contradicts His Word, or leads us into sin.
- **Ask in faith, believing and expecting Him to answer.** James 1:5-7 tells us, “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. 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.” God’s promises in His Word are the basis for our confidence in His willingness to answer our requests.

However, if we rely on our feelings or a sense of unworthiness, doubts will soon overtake faith.

- **Ask in Jesus’ name** (John 14:13). Oftentimes, the phrase “in Jesus’ name” is tacked onto the end of our prayers as if it were a magic formula guaranteeing an answer. But that is not at all what it means to pray in Jesus’ name. It actually means that our prayers align with Christ’s nature, teaching, and will. Rather than trying to persuade God to answer our requests according to what we desire, prayer in Jesus’ name seeks His will and glory above our own.
- **Ask with a pure heart.** If we tolerate or ignore known sin and disobedience in our lives, we have no reason to expect God to hear and answer our prayers (Isa. 59:1-2). That’s why it’s so important to confess and repent of sin when it happens. Having a pure heart means we are committed to being obedient to Christ in every way and living a holy life. However, holiness as applied to mankind doesn’t mean perfection, but sensitivity to the Spirit’s conviction and willingness to deal with sin immediately.

Mistakes Made in Prayer

One of the reasons our prayers go unanswered is because of mistakes we make in our prayers.

- **We want to help God answer our prayers.** After laying our petitions before the Lord, we don’t leave them with Him, trusting that He will answer them in the best way at the right time. If the answer doesn’t come as soon as we’d like, our faith in Him begins to waver, and we try to fix the situation ourselves. In reality, feelings of helplessness are good because they remind us that God alone has the power to intervene and the wisdom to know what’s best. The acid test of faith is being willing to keep our hands off the situation until God deals with it. Our attempts to help Him only result in confusion and compounded problems.

- **We focus on our requests rather than on God.**

Sometimes, in our deep concern over the issues we bring to the Lord, we lose sight of Him. Our thoughts are focused on the needs and not on the One who can meet them. We must remember that we are talking to almighty God and should therefore center our thoughts on His character, power, and promises, expressing our confidence, gratitude, and praise to Him.

- **We pray without the Word of God.**

In John 15:7 Jesus said, “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.” When Scripture fills our hearts and minds, our thoughts and prayer requests align with God’s will, and our faith grows strong. But if we neglect God’s Word, there is no light to guide our path or to give us understanding and assurance (Ps. 119:105). Together, prayer and the Word of God should be our priority. As we open the Word, we find guidance regarding how to pray, and as we pray, our understanding of Scripture increases.

RESPONSE

- How confident are you that the Lord will answer your prayers?
- Look back at the four basic convictions regarding answered prayer. Which ones do you need to make your regular practice in order to pray more effectively?
- Now review the three mistakes made in prayer. If you have followed any of these patterns, what changes can you make to correct your approach?

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