

“Five Conditions for Answered Prayer”

Text: John 14 - 15

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Joe & Jarred of Cincinnati and prayer illustration!

If we were honest we'd probably all say there are thousands of prayers that go up but there are very few answers that come down. Why is that? Is prayer a farce, a superstition, something we just con ourselves into and pretend that it works but it really doesn't? What is prayer?

There's a deeper question than that. Does God promise to answer everyone's prayers?

- No! It's very clear in scripture that God completely ignores some people's prayers. In fact, the Bible says God has laid out some conditions to answered prayer.

This morning we are going to look at **5 conditions for answered prayer**.

I. You must have an honest relationship with God.

A. Jesus says in John 15:7, *“If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, you can ask whatever you wish and it will be given to you.”*

1. That's a beautiful promise. But in scripture every promise has a condition or premise. The promise here is, *“I will give you whatever you ask in prayer if you remain in Me.”* In other words, *“...if you have an honest relationship with Me.”*

B. How do you remain in Christ? The next sentence tells it. By *“My words remaining in you.”* In other words, God says if we fill our minds with the Bible, the word of God, then we will be in Christ. We will be abiding in Him. If I don't pay attention to what God says to me in His word, why should He pay attention to me when I talk to Him? God wants us to listen to Him first before He listens to us.

1. That's why Bible study is so important and why being a part of a small group where you can study God's word with others is so important. Am I saying, “If you don't study the Bible you won't have an answered prayer?” No, what I'm saying is that your prayer life will be more effective when you understand scripture. The more you understand the Bible the more you'll know how to pray affectively.

- Psalm illustration

II. You must have a forgiving attitude toward other people.

- A. In Mark 11:24-25, Jesus is talking about faith and prayer, *“Therefore, I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you’ve received it and it will be yours. Condition: And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them so that your Father in heaven may forgive your sins.”*
1. More than any other characteristic in the Bible except maybe faith, the one thing related to prayer is forgiveness. Over and over again, every time Jesus talks about prayer He talks about forgiveness. Why? Because nothing will kill your prayers faster than resentment. When you hold a grudge, when you nurse an ill feeling, when you allow bitterness to grow in your life, it knocks off your prayers.
- B. 1 Peter 3:7 is an excellent illustration concerning forgiveness and prayer in a marriage setting. Bitterness and resentment are a common experience in family relationships. In verse 7 Peter talks to the husbands. He says, *“Husbands, in the same way (just like he’s talked to the wives in the previous verses) be considerate as you live with your wives and treat them with respect... so that nothing will hinder your prayers.”*
1. How you treat your spouse influences your prayer life.
 - Argument with Marg and talking with God.

III. You must be willing to share the results.

- A. *“What you sow you reap. Give and it will be given to you.”* This is the principle of generosity; the more you give out, the more God gives to you. If you expect God to bless your life you must be willing to bless other people’s lives with the same benefits God has given to you.
- B. Proverbs 21:13, *“Those who shut their eyes to the poor will also cry out and not be answered.”*
1. God says if you pay no attention to other people’s legitimate needs, why should He pay attention to your needs? He wants us to be like Him. God says a prerequisite for God to bless our lives is that we must be blessings to other people. If we ignore those who are in obvious difficulty around us, what right do we have to expect God to bail us out?
- C. We are a channel.
1. I would not presume to ask God to bless my business if I were not willing to at least give back a portion of what He has blessed me with in a percentage, a tithe.
 2. You say, “I ask God for good health.” What are you going to do with that healthy body after you’ve got it? Are you going to spend all the effort and energy on yourself or are you willing to help other people? God is not interested in simply satisfying our selfishness.

- D. One of the conditions for answered prayer is to be willing to help those less fortunate with the blessings which we are given.

IV. You must believe that God will answer.

A. James 1:5-7 says, *“If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. He says, “If you need any wisdom go ahead and ask God; He’ll give it to you.” But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. Those who doubt should not think they will receive anything from the Lord; they are double-minded and unstable in all they do.”*

1. You can’t doubt. You must expect God to answer. There’s only one kind of prayer that God answers: the prayer of faith. Matthew 9:29 where Jesus heals the blind men, He says, *“According to your faith, it will be done unto you.”* What are you expecting God to do in your life? We see so little in our lives because we expect so little in our lives.

- National Night Out last Tuesday

V. You must pray in Jesus’ name.

A. John 14:13-14 Jesus says, *“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.”*

1. A fifth condition for answered prayer – you must pray in Jesus’ name. What so special about Jesus’ name?

- Some may see it as a spiritual sign-off that signals that the prayer is about to end.
- Some people think “In Jesus’ name” is kind of a mystical password that gets you into God. Like the secret word. “Here are all my requests. By the way – codeword: In Jesus’ name.”

B. What in the world does it mean to pray “In Jesus’ name”?

1. The story about the guy who took his young son and about 8 of his son’s friends to the carnival for a birthday party.

C. The point is I don’t have any right to get any answered prayers from God. What makes me think I should get my prayers to be answered? God doesn’t owe me anything. I owe him a lot but He doesn’t owe me anything. When I come and pray and ask God for requests, I don’t ask on my own merit but I come on the merit of Christ. I came and say, *“Father, I’m coming to You because Your Son said so. I’m coming because of what Jesus Christ has already done for me on the cross and He’s promised and said I can ask in His name. God, I’m coming In Jesus’ name.”*

1. Jesus is the bridge between God and human beings. God came in the form of a man – Jesus Christ. The Bible says there's one mediator, one bridge, between God and humanity. Jesus said it like this, *"I am the Way. No one comes to the Father except through Me."* Jesus is the bridge.

Which of these conditions have you been overlooking? That could be why you haven't been getting any answers to prayer.

The most important question to ask this morning is this, "Do you have an honest relationship with God?"

- I'm not talking about church membership.
- I'm not talking about being religious.
- I'm talking about a relationship. God wants me to know Him personally. That's why He sent Jesus Christ to earth, so we could know what God is like. Jesus said, *"I am the Way."*

Prayer

Relationship with God – words are not as important as the attitude.

"God I realize I need you in my life. Forgive me for trying to live my life without your input. Thank you for loving me. Jesus Christ, help me to believe in You. I want to believe in You. I want you to be the manager of my life. I want to be the kind of person You want me to be. As much as I know how, I ask You to come into my life."

"Lord, I thank You for the Bible that it is so practical and relevant to our lives and that it helps us. Thank You that prayer is no big mystery but it is simply a communication with You. When we meet the conditions that You've laid for us we can see tremendous results in our lives. Thank You for the privilege of prayer. In Jesus' name we do pray. Amen."