

2019 - I'm Expecting Great Things

Five Keys to Answered Prayers

5467 promises,

The promises of God reveal his particular and eternal purposes to which he is unchangeably committed and upon which believers can totally depend.

These promises are, however, conditional upon obedience on the part of believers.

God's promises are irrevocable

How do we know that God will hear our prayers and that we will receive answers to them? Here are five things the Bible tells us to do.

If you are like me, you probably relate to King David's poignant (evoking a keen sense of sadness or regret) prayer:

"Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my meditation. Give heed to the voice of my cry, my King and my God, for to You I will pray" (Psalm 5:1-2).

We know God deeply cares for us, and He wants us to come to Him in prayer. But how can we know that He will hear us and answer our prayers?

Thankfully God answers that question for us.

The Bible reveals Five Keys for receiving answers to our prayers.

First Key: Ask

Jesus said in Matthew 7:7, “*Ask, and it will be given to you*” (emphasis added throughout). This is a very basic starting point. However, it is one that too often is misunderstood or not used.

I am sure you have heard some people say “I have not prayed in years”. As children of God we must stress the importance of prayer. People who do not pray will say “But doesn’t the Bible say God knows what we need before we ask?” They are referring to Christ’s words in Matthew 6:8.

Yes, our Father does know what we need before we ask, but by asking we show our Father that we see the need as well, and really want His help to meet that need. Asking shows Him how important the need is to us. God, of course, also sees the difference between habitual, repetitive prayers and persistent, fervent, heartfelt prayers. We should always show God that we will always need his (GRACE).

Luke’s account of Jesus’ words adds an important truth, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find. ... For everyone who asks receives. ... If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? ... If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, *how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!*” (Luke 11:9-13).

To learn to worship and serve the true God, we need His Spirit, which reveals to us His truth (John 4:24). God says He will give His Spirit to those who ask Him. We need to be asking for help and power from God (which He gives through His Spirit) on a daily basis. **[Baptism]**

Second Key: Have Faith

Having faith—believing God will indeed hear and answer—is an essential key to receiving answers to our prayers. The apostle James explained in James 1:5-8, “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him *ask of God*. ... *But let him ask in faith*, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”

Faith is founded on God’s promises. When God has given a promise, we can rely on the fact that God will always do what He has promised.

This was Abraham’s example when God told him he would have a son in his old age. “He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being *fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform*” (Romans 4:20-21).

Jesus spoke clearly about faith and prayer in Mark 11:22-24: “Have faith in God. ... Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.”

Asking in Faith is an essential key to receiving answers to our prayers.

Third Key: Seek God's Will

The apostle John wrote, “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that *if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us*. And if we know that He hears us, *whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions* that we have asked of Him” (1 John 5:14-15).

I am sure you have heard people say, “Oh, if we only knew God's will!”

But God's will is not some mystical, unknowable thing. God reveals His will to us in the pages of the Bible. The Bible reveals God's words, which explain how He wants us to live. It is God's will for us to live as He designed human life to be lived to produce happiness. It is God's will for us to understand the truths of the purpose of life and what He is doing when He gives us access to that knowledge. It is God's will for us to claim the many promises He has given us in His Bible.

What are some of His promises—things it is His will for us to claim? The sample prayer—often called the Lord's prayer—gives a number of examples (Matthew 6:9-13):

- Give us this day our daily bread (provide our needs).
- Forgive us our debts (sins).
- Do not lead us into temptation (help us be alert to avoid situations that lead to sin).
- Deliver us from the evil one (help us overcome Satan's influences in our lives).

Other promises include:

- Wisdom (James 1:5).
- Healing (James 5:14).
- All things working out for good “to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).

There are many more promises in the Bible. It is God's will for us to claim these. So if we come to Him asking anything that is according to His will, He hears us.

However, this is not to say that He immediately answers yes to everything that is His will.

“There are many things that *are* God's will that don't receive an immediate yes. God wants us to prosper and be in health, to have an abundant life, to be healed.

But still He answers in different ways:

- “Yes.
- “Yes, but not yet.
- “No, but I have something better in store for you.

Obedience is a fundamentally important key for receiving answers to our prayers. The apostle John wrote, “And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight” (1 John 3:22). “Seemingly unanswered prayers are not proof we lack faith. Instead, they are faith-building exercises—part of the tough basic training we must go through now to prepare us to be eternal, powerful **kings** helping in the Kingdom of God. It is preparation to be transformed into the complete image and likeness of God—to be **children of God!**”

Fourth Key: Obey

Obedience is a fundamentally important key for receiving answers to our prayers. The apostle John wrote, “And *whatever we ask we receive* from Him, *because we keep His commandments* and do those things that are pleasing in His sight” (1 John 3:22).

Psalm 34:15 records, “The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry.” A simple definition of righteous is “doing what is right” (*Webster’s New World Dictionary*). Godly righteousness then is doing what is right in God’s sight, or, as John wrote, doing “those things that are pleasing in His sight.”

God wants us to obey Him. He gave us His commandments and laws to instruct us in the principles of living that will produce the happiness we all want. God loves us and only wants us to reap good fruit in our lives. God wants us to love Him.

As Jesus said, the great commandment in the law is, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:37).

We show love for God by obeying Him. The apostle John explained this in 1 John 5:3: “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.”

God wants us to show Him love the same way we want our children to show us love. We appreciate the hugs, kisses and words expressing love from our children. But we especially want to see our children following the instructions that we give them for their good.

When they come asking for permission to go out with friends, we are more apt to listen to their request if they have been happily following the rules we set about safety and curfews and avoiding alcohol and drugs. All of the hugs, kisses and “I love yous” will not make up for not obeying these important rules.

The same goes for God. To truly show love for God, we must obey His commands from the heart. If we have not been living our lives in a way pleasing to God, we cannot come “boldly to the throne of grace” (Hebrews 4:16) expecting to receive what we ask unless we truly repent—commit to changing from the way of sin to the way of obedience.

Fifth Key: Come in Jesus' name

Jesus said several times that we should make our requests—ask—in His name (John 14:13-14; 15:16). What does it mean to end our prayers with “in Jesus' name”?

The phrase “in the name of the LORD” is used 44 times in the Bible. It was used to express that something was being done by the authority of God.

In England when someone came in the name of the king, he came with his support and authority, having that privilege conferred upon him by the king himself. No one could take this privilege to himself. Favor, rights and privilege also generally accompanied the one who came in the name of the king.

So, likewise, when we close a prayer to our Father with the words “in the name of Jesus we pray,” we are exercising a privilege we have been granted by our Savior and doing what Jesus commanded us to do.

Jesus wants us to come before the Father in His name. The Father deeply loves His firstborn Son. He also deeply loves us. When we come in Jesus' name, we are obeying Jesus' will and we are showing that we want to have the same relationship with our Father that He has.

The night that Jesus died as the perfect sacrificial lamb—sacrificed for our sins—He taught His disciples many truths. He told them, “Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. ... In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you; for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God” (John 16:23-27).

We all want to know that God hears us when we pray.

We can be assured that God does, if we come before Him using these keys.

Open Discussion.