

# Keys to Succeed: Prayer, Preparation & Partnership

Jesus gave a very special invitation to all who would 'hear' Him: come, learn, and share His 'yoke' and you will find 'rest' (Mat 11:28-30.) He wasn't asking much ("my yoke is easy, my burden light") but these things are necessary if you want to succeed in your new spiritual journey. The way to do this is to come to Jesus (in **prayer**), learn of Jesus (through **Bible study**), and share the experience of Jesus with others who love Him, too (through fellowship at a **church**.) In this and the next lesson we are going to reflect on a few thoughts about each of these. By no means can we cover all that you will want to know about them in this short time so please continue your study as you grow in Christ.



## Prayer (Just "talk it over")



In our first lesson we discussed how important it is for you to win the battles, to run well the race, until your crown is received. And Paul admitted it can be a real challenge at times. Yet, James tells us we should be "joyful" because of the benefits of "testing" [James 1:2-4]. But what if it sometimes 'just doesn't make sense'? In the next verse, James says, "Ask God"!! [v.5]

The simplest way to describe prayer is "having a talk with God" (should be no different than any other conversation you've ever had.) The problem for most people is - they do all the talking! The Lord wants to hear us, but He also wants us to hear Him. You can put it this way: **prayer requires pause**!! (Take a look at these two passages: Psa 4:4 & Psa 46:10 ) Now, listen to this promise, "Then thou shalt call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am." [Isa 58:9] Let God speak: sometimes through His scriptures, sometimes through His servants, and sometimes even with His voice (either into your heart, but can also be into your ear!)

**Prayer also requires praise, petition, and purpose.** After telling his listeners to avoid praying as a pretense, for any reason but a right one [Mat 6:5-6] and to not try impressing God with the 'quality' of our prayer [v.7-8] Jesus gave us a 'model' that has popularly become known as "The Lord's Prayer." [v.9-13] Let's examine its three parts:



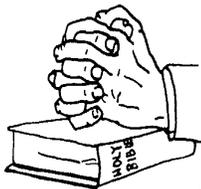
We **praise** the Lord by acknowledging that, though he is a 'Father' to us, we still respect his majestic throne (being in heaven), that His name (reputation) is 'holy', that His kingdom (rule) is coming, and therefore His will (commands/wants) should be obeyed. [v.9-10 ; see also Galatians 4:6 & Psalms 29:2]



**Petition** is when we ask the Lord for help (for ourselves or for others.) In this prayer it is for our daily needs, for forgiveness (and help in forgiving), and to be victorious over sin. That pretty much covers it for most of us! [v.11-13a] But something else may come up. The important thing is to not worry, but instead 'worship' and 'give it up' [see 1Pe 5:6,7 & Phil 4:4,6]



And the **purpose** for all of this? Well, of course we get our blessing [Phil 4:7] but it must never be forgotten that we are the Lord's and the 'glory' belongs to Him [Mat 6:13b] Consider this promise from Jesus about answered prayer, but especially why these prayers are answered [Jn 14:13,14] Everything good in our life should be for the one purpose - to honor our gracious Father and to direct others to Him [see Mt 5:16.] So, even though Jesus tells us to **ask - seek - knock** [Luke 11:9] and our needs will be met, there are reasons that some of our prayers may not get answered (at least not 'when' and in the 'way' we want them answered.) Someone said once, "God always answers prayer: yes, no, or wait awhile." That's a bit simple, but does contain a lot of truth. Consider these passages on conditions for answered prayer and let them serve as a guideline as you spend your time in conversation with God:



- John 15: 7 You must be 'alive' in Christ, living in His word.
- 1 John 3:22 Do what he has 'commanded' but also what may please Him.
- James 4:3 Don't "self-indulge" - be sure it is a 'need', not just a 'greed.'
- 2 Chronicles 7:14 A very well known passage calling for national repentance, consider it also as a guideline for personal prayer, telling us to come in humility, communicate your need but also yearn for an audience with God, ready to abandon anything he reveals as offensive. Do this and the Lord promises that He will hear, forgive, and heal.

A final passage (though the Bible is filled with scriptures on prayer) gives us special comfort, especially in times of urgent need. We sometimes wonder, when so much is going wrong, 'How is God ever going to get this sorted out in time?' A minister's wife had prayed over her family's financial crisis. It was such a pleading prayer that, when she found a check in her mailbox immediately after for the amount needed but postmarked days before, she wondered if it could even be counted as the answer to her specific prayer. But then she read in Isaiah 65:24 that God will sometimes get started on the answer long before our asking. He knows our need - but tell him anyway!!