



The Good News

April 30th, 2017

Volume 17, Issue 18

What characteristics are necessary for prayer?

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This may be a rather strange question to ask, especially when we (hopefully) pray so often. Have you ever thought about the characteristics that are necessary for us to pray to God? The Bible tells of several characteristics that are necessary for a "successful" or "proper" prayer, and by that, I mean a prayer that God will hear and answer. Consider the following:

1) Whole-heartedness – The Psalmist says in **Psalm 119:145** "*I cry out with my whole heart; Hear me, O Lord! I will keep your statutes.*" In **Jer.29:12-13**, God says "*Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.*" Obviously devoting ourselves to God is something that God desires of us, but in these two passages prayer is mentioned in connection with our hearts and devotion. We must pray to God with full devotion and our unswerving allegiance, realizing that He wants us to call upon Him because, as Peter points out in **I Pet. 5:7**, "*He cares for you*". We must make sure that when we pray, we pray with our full devotion and love.

2) Faith – Faith is the source for the fully devoted heart, as we "*believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*" (**Heb. 11:6**) But faith in God is not the only necessary attribute. Jesus says in **Mark 11:24**, "*Therefore I say unto you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.*" James, talking about wisdom, says in **Jas. 1:6**, "*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*". We learn that when we pray, we must pray with faith, believing that God can and will answer our prayer. It doesn't mean He will always say "yes" and it also does not mean we can pray for anything under the sun (See **James 4:3**). But James promises us that if we ask for spiritual things from God, such as wisdom, it will be given to us.

3) Righteousness – It may be superfluous to add this to our list, but there are those Christians who do whatever they want and, instead of changing their lives and praying to God for forgiveness, they get upset with God when things don't work out or when prayers aren't answered. Just because we are a Christian does not mean

we get the benefits of being a Christian when we are not living right. James says in **Jas. 5:16**, "*The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*" The key adjective here is the "*righteous*" man. If we are not right with God when we pray to Him, we should leave our other issues off the agenda and get straight to repenting and asking forgiveness for our sins as our soul is the most important issue of all. John tells us in **I John 3:22** that "*whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.*" Obedience is vital if we hope to approach His throne properly.

4) Contrition – We cannot just sin and pray for forgiveness like it is routine. "*Godly sorrow worketh repentance.*" (**II Cor. 7:10**) If we are truly sorry, we will make adjustments to our attitudes and conduct. God says in **II Chr. 7:14**, "*If My people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin...*" We must approach God's throne in true sorrow and repentance if we hope to receive forgiveness.

5) Thankfulness – Have you ever been so busy thinking about what you don't have or feel you need that you forget all the ways you have been blessed already? There's a reason why thankfulness is so closely associated with prayer in the Bible; even when there are times we are making requests to God, we should always be mindful of the wonderful blessings He's already given us. And it seems that when we really spend the time to thank God for what we do have, that which we perceive to be lacking doesn't seem to be missing quite so much. That's because being thankful and being content go hand in hand. When I am mindful and thankful for what God has given me, I can be more appreciative of being sufficient for the moment. Even when requests are being made to God, Paul reminds the Philippians to be thankful in **Phil. 4:6**. Just a few short verses later (**Phil. 4:11**) Paul discusses being content.

Having looked at these five characteristics that are necessary for prayer, let us endeavor to pray today and every day with these things in mind, realizing that we are praying to God Most High.