



The Good News

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Characteristics Necessary for Successful Prayer

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Have you ever thought about what characteristics are needed for us to pray to God? This may be a strange question to ask, especially when we (hopefully) pray so often. The Bible teaches us of several characteristics that are necessary for a “successful” or “proper” prayer, i.e., a prayer that God will hear and answer. Consider the following:

1) Faith – We “*believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*” (**Heb. 11:6**) But belief 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.*” We must have conviction in God and in His power when we pray. 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 should pray for everything under the sun (see James 4:3).

2) Whole-heartedness – The Psalmist says in **Psalms 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.*” 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.

3) 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 we are making requests to God, we should always be mindful of the wonderful blessings He’s already given us. 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.

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 adjust our attitude 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) Righteousness – Just because we may be 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.*” A 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. 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.

Let us endeavor to pray today and every day with these characteristics in mind, realizing that we are praying to our Creator, God Most High.