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## Secrets of Answered Prayer

It's tempting to think that answered prayer is reserved for a privileged few. But this is not what the Bible teaches:

*"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened."* (Matthew 7:7, 8)

Notice: it doesn't say "*almost everyone.*" Another misconception about prayer is that only some of our prayers are answered. This is also unbiblical:

*"And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it."* (John 14:13, 14)

The Bible teaches that if you follow a few simple rules, you can have all of your prayers answered all of the time.

### **RULE #1: Pray in Jesus' name.**

Jesus says, "If you ask anything in My name, I will do it." (John 14:14)

To pray in the name of Jesus is to identify yourself by His name, to allow His character to show through in your life. God's name, after all, is His character. Jesus also said:

*"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven."* (Matthew 7:21)

### **RULE #2: Pray in faith.**

*"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..."* (James 1:6, 7)

To pray "in faith" signifies more than lip service. It means to live in a trusting relationship with God. We build our faith by hearing (understanding and implementing) the word of God: "*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*" (Romans 10:17)

### **RULE #3: Live an obedient life.**

*"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)

Commandment keeping, of course, does not save anyone, because we are not saved by works. But Jesus also said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." (John 14:15) We keep God's commandments, not in order to be saved, but because we *are* saved. Sin separates us from God. Remember: the Bible says that "sin is the transgression of the law." (1 John 3:4)

Sin blocks the line of communication with heaven. Consider these passages:

*"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me..."* (Psalm 66:18)

*"One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination;"*  
(Proverbs 28:9)

**RULE #4: Make things right with others.**

*"Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift."* (Matthew 5:23, 24)

In answer to King Darius' question of whether or not he had survived the night in the den of lions, Daniel replied, "My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths...because I was found innocent before Him; and also, O king, I have done no wrong before you." (Daniel 6:22) Like Daniel, Christians should strive to be blameless not only with God, but also with fellow humans. Remember, Jesus said the greatest two commandments were to love God and to love your neighbor. (Matthew 22:37-39)

**RULE #5: Trust God to do what's best according to His will.**

Sometimes God says "Yes" when we ask Him for something. But sometimes He says "No." That doesn't mean that your prayer isn't answered. He answers all of our prayers all of the time, but not always with an affirmative answer. And sometimes the answer is "Wait."

*"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."* (Romans 8:28)

This verse doesn't say that all things are good. It says that all things work together for the good. Don't be afraid to lay before God your plans and desires, asking for His help. However, before God really opens the door He must hear you saying, "Nevertheless not my will, but Thine, be done." (Luke 22:42) Offering that prayer means being willing to accept God's answer for your life. Jesus prayed, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth..." (Luke 11:2) The Father answered that prayer with a cross, and we have eternal life because of it.

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Eight men drifted aimlessly in three life rafts on the vast Pacific Ocean with no water and only four oranges for food. Their plane had run out of fuel on a mission during World War II. During the day the sun burned their skin; at night they huddled together, wet and shivering with the cold. Clearly, they couldn't survive long like this.

One of the men had a pocket Bible. Tying the three rafts together, the men asked him to read to them. Here are the words he read: "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' . . . For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." (Matthew 6:31-33)

Then these men joined in prayer, asking God for food and water. And the answer they got was sensational!

Suddenly, an enormous bird came down and sat on the head of one of the men. They caught the bird and ate it raw. That night it started to rain, and so they were able to quench their thirst.

For 26 days they drifted and prayed. And miracles took place repeatedly during those weeks in answer to prayer. Once, a rain cloud approached, but moved away with the wind. They prayed, and the wind brought it back, drenching them with fresh water! One of the men later said, "We prayed, and God answered. It was real. . . . We asked for fish, and we got fish."

Finally an Allied plane spotted them, and they were rescued.

**Did these amazing things just happen? Does God really answer our prayers? What does the Bible say?**

1. Can we be sure God hears us when we pray? (Matthew 7:7, 8)
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Does God hear you when you pray? Yes, He does. Sometimes we get the idea that God answers the prayers of a privileged few—but not for the rest of us. That isn't what the Bible says. The Bible says God hears the prayers of *everyone*. It doesn't say "almost everyone"; it doesn't say He hears the prayers of "the majority." It says "everyone," and that includes you!

2. What amazing promise does God make about answering our prayers? (John 14:13, 14)

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This amazing promise is like a blank check! "Anything you ask in My name, I will do it." But what about those who have prayed for health—and remained sick? Or who prayed for food—and it never came? Maybe you've asked God for something in earnest prayer and nothing happened. Is God's promise not true? Is He playing games with us?

The problem is not that God has failed to do His part. If our prayers are not answered, it is because we have forgotten something very important. You see, the Bible points out certain principles we need to follow if we expect God to answer our prayers. Let's take a look at these principles—these secrets of answered prayer.

3. When we ask for something in prayer, in whose name should we pray? (John 14:14)

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### **PRINCIPLE #1: PRAY IN JESUS' NAME**

To pray in the name of Jesus doesn't just mean that we use His name out loud in our prayers. It means that we live in harmony with the things that are important to Him—that we take His values and make them our own. It means that we identify with Jesus and start living like He would live.

4. What is the essential ingredient that makes our prayers effective? (James 1:6, 7)
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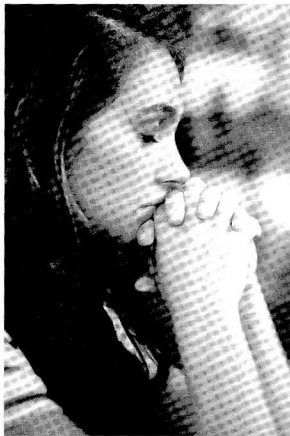
## PRINCIPLE #2: PRAY WITH FAITH

If we want our prayers to be answered, we must believe that God hears and answers prayer. We must start living like we truly believe God and His promises. Faith is the essential ingredient that makes our prayers effective. We must learn to trust God. But what if you *do* have doubts? What then?

5. How can we build up our faith and eradicate doubt? (**Romans 10:17**)
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Just like our physical bodies need nourishing food in order to grow and be healthy, we need to feed our spiritual life with the nourishing truths of God's Word. Fill your life with God's messages to you in the Bible in order to build up your faith.

6. Besides faith, what else is necessary if our prayers are to be answered? (**1 John 3:21, 22**)
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## PRINCIPLE #3: LIVE A LIFE OF OBEDIENCE

This is one reason so many of us fail to find the answers to our prayers that we seek. We want God to do what we want, but we are not always willing to do what He wants. The Bible is clear that obedience doesn't save us, but it is also clear that if we love Jesus, we will keep His commandments. (John 14:15) If we refuse to do what we know is right, it drives a wedge between us and God that makes it impossible for Him to answer our prayers. (Psalm 66:18; Proverbs 28:9)

7. What does the Bible say about trying to worship God while holding a grudge against someone? (**Matthew 5:23, 24**)
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## **PRINCIPLE #4: MAKE THINGS RIGHT WITH OTHERS**

If you really want to live in harmony with God so that He can answer your prayers, it means making things right with Him and making things right with the people in your life—even the difficult people. Just as God has forgiven you, you need to forgive others. That is the only way to have a healthy relationship with God.

8. In order for our prayers to be answered, we must pray in harmony with whose will? (1 John 5:14)

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## **PRINCIPLE #5: PRAY ACCORDING TO GOD'S WILL**

Jesus, our Example, prayed to His Father, “Not My will, but Yours, be done.” (Luke 22:42) When we pray, we must trust that God knows what is best for us and that He will answer our prayers in the right way. Sometimes God answers, “Yes,” and sometimes He answers, “No.” And if we could see the end from the beginning, as God can, we wouldn’t choose to have it any other way.

9. If we feel discouraged or weak, does Jesus understand? Does He still love us and hear our prayers? (Hebrews 4:14-16)

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When we feel that we don’t measure up, that our faith is small, Jesus understands. He lived on earth and knows what it is to be human. He says He will never leave us or forsake us. (Hebrews 13:5, 6)

## **MY DECISION**

- I want to spend time in prayer each day, building and strengthening my relationship with God.

## **MY PRAYER**

*Father, thank You for Your wonderful promise to hear my prayers. Help me build a vibrant prayer life and fully live out my faith and trust in You. I ask this in Jesus’ name, Amen.*