

Keys for Effective Praying

Mt. 6:5-7:5

1. We must remember that prayer is a relationship with God, not just words that we learn to say. We teach prayers to our children and try to learn how best to express prayers when we pray, especially in public. But we really should concentrate on the fact that we are talking to Someone who loves us and knows all about us and who really does care.

2. We must pray in sincerity and not to impress other people. One of the reasons we go to our prayer closets to pray is to avoid this temptation. Humility before God is important.

3. We must spend time alone with God so that we can both talk and listen to our Father. If we always talk 'on the run,' the relationship is a shallow one. We ask God to speak to us, and we take time to listen for His still, small voice. And a chief way He speaks is through the Bible. It is urgent that we understand how important the Bible is in helping us know both what to pray, as well as how to pray.

4. We must not babble on and on about what we want or need. We are not trying to persuade God to do what we want from Him. Some may wonder why we should pray, since He already knows what we need. There are at least two good answers to that question: (1) We come to God in prayer to receive from Him, and (2) We come to enhance our relationship with Him. He knows what is best for us. We don't need to persuade Him with 'many words.' We must believe... and receive.

5. We must have a well-balanced prayer life. We often use petition, asking God to do for us or give to us and our families. We may regularly intercede for others, and we use supplication, what is called the "Oh, help" prayer. But how often do we use other types of prayer: praise and thanksgiving; confession; commitment; and communion...just hanging out with God, enjoying His presence and worshipping Who He is? (Notice the different types of prayer given by Jesus in the model prayer.)

6. We must understand that holding onto any unforgiveness toward anyone is a chief cause for God not offering forgiveness to us. Failing to forgive others is a major prayer-blocker between us and the Lord. (See Mt 6: 12,14-15) This is a tough one for many who have been deeply injured by someone else. We must understand what it means to forgive someone. Sin and disobedience in any area of our lives erects a barrier between us and God, thereby hindering our prayers. Thankfully, when we are willing to confess our sins to God and ask for His forgiveness, He will forgive and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (I Jn 1:9)

7. We must be persistent and consistent in our praying. Jesus taught us to KEEP ON asking, to KEEP on seeking, and to KEEP ON knocking. Why? We are not trying to persuade God. It is through the process of prayer that we are being made ready or willing to receive God's answer; or we are waiting on God's perfect timing.

But there are some **warnings** that Jesus gives us about prayer. He says that there are some normal, everyday ways in which we block effective praying:

1. When we focus on material things. Mt 6:19. The lure of the world always is pulling us away from the will of God.

2. When we worry. Mt. 6:25. When we worry, we are displaying doubt in God's power, wisdom and goodness. It is helpful to examine which of these three things are at the root of our doubt.

3. When we are critical and judgmental of others. Mt 7:1. One chief way that pride works on us is by

convincing us that we are better than someone or know more than they do. It is helpful to be on the lookout for times when criticism crops up in our minds or on our lips.

Thankfully, our Lord not only left us wonderful instructions about how to pray effectively, He sent the Holy Spirit to live our hearts. He is the one who will continue to teach us, to draw us into the Lord's presence. He will convict us when we sin, and will pray for and through us. (Rom. 8:26-27) Let's praise the Lord today for His provisions for us that we may always be able to pray effectively!

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