



Introduction

Imagine how you might respond if you received a personal note that read as follows:

The President requests your presence tomorrow morning at 7:00AM. He has heard of your need and wants to understand fully the desires that you have. He is canceling his appointments so that your needs will receive his full attention.

Most of us will never see an invitation like that from the ruler of our country. But God has given us an invitation that is even more astounding. This study will explore the wonderful promises associated with the privilege of prayer.

God wants to meet with you not just once or twice, but every day of your life. The vDRC study "Assurance of Friendship with God", in the Getting Started Series will help you develop daily communication between you and God

The Invitation

Jesus gave a wonderful invitation when He delivered the Sermon on the Mount.

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

Matthew 7:7-8



Circle the action to be taken before a thing is given.

- Underline the activity to be taken in order to find something
- Frame the action needed to gain an opening.

The invitation that Jesus made is far reaching and without limit. It has no expiration date.

Later in His ministry, Jesus issued another invitation.

¹³ And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. ¹⁴ You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

John 14:13-14

- Circle the thing that Jesus will do in verse 13.
- Underline why He will do whatever we ask.
- In verse 14, circle what we may ask.
- Underline the way Jesus promises to respond.
- *The important condition to these promises has to do with asking in Jesus' name, and seeking the Father's glory.*

Asking in Jesus Name does not mean adding a phrase at the end of your prayer "in Jesus name". It does mean asking for the same things He would ask. When you ask in His name you are assuming His position of authority as His representative. Asking in His name means asking for the things you think He would ask for.

The invitation is to any who will pray. It is open to any who will ask. The God of the universe, who created heaven and earth, has offered to listen to the requests you and I offer. He does not put a time limit on the requests. He does not tell us the subjects we can discuss. He offers to answer our requests if we will but pray.

He has placed some restrictions and conditions around the process of prayer.

Hindrances to Answered Prayer

James offers some insight as to why God might not answer prayer. After he instructs us to ask for wisdom, James offers this caution.

⁶ But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. ⁷ That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord;

James 1:6-7

- Circle in verse 6 what must characterize a person when he asks.
- Underline the description that James uses in verse 6 to describe a person who has doubts in prayer.
- In verse 7, circle the thing a doubting person should not think.
- *Faith is an essential ingredient in prayer.*

A little later in his letter James describes another hindrance to prayer.

² You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. ³ When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

James 4:2-3

- Circle in verse 2 the reason we do not have what we desire.
- Underline in verse 3 the reason we do not receive the things we ask for.
- *Asking for something for selfish pleasure will stop a prayer's effectiveness.*

Additionally, unconfessed sin can cause our prayers to be ignored.

But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.

Isaiah 59:2

- Circle the thing that separates us from God.
- Underline the reaction God has to sin.
- Circle the effect that sin and iniquity have on God's willingness to listen to prayer.

Conditions for Answered Prayer

Jesus gave a very clear promise concerning prayer.

"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. (NASV)

John 15:7

- Circle what Jesus says we can ask for.
- Underline the promise He makes.
- Frame the two conditions that he sets out in the beginning of the verse.
- **"Abide"** is the key condition to this promise. Notice the two dimensions of the abiding. You are to abide in him and His word is to abide in you.

Look at the vDRC study "Assured Forgiveness" in the Getting Started Series to understand how to deal with sin in your life.

Abide is a term used to describe a dwelling place. We abide in a house. In the same way, we are to live in Jesus and His word is to live in us. People who have such a relationship with Jesus can ask for and receive whatever they wish.

Praying according to God's will is also an important condition of answered prayer.

¹⁴ *This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.* ¹⁵ *And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him. (NASV)*

1 John 5:14-15

- In verse 14 circle the petitions that God hears.
- In verse 15 underline the reason we know God will grant the requests we ask of Him.
- *Praying according to God's will is the key condition of this verse.*

The Pattern of Prayer

Matthew records Jesus' response to His disciples, when they asked Him to teach them to pray. We commonly call this prayer the "Lord's Prayer". But rather than being a prayer to be memorized and repeated word for word, this prayer is a pattern to be used in addressing the Father.

⁹ *"This, then, is how you should pray:
 "Our Father in heaven,
 hallowed be your name,
¹⁰ your kingdom come,
 your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
¹¹ Give us today our daily bread.
¹² Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
¹³ And lead us not into temptation,
 but deliver us from the evil one.'*

Matthew 6:9-13

- Frame the portion of the prayer containing the address.
- Draw a circle around requests that show honor to God.
- Frame requests that are related to right living.
- Underline requests for personal needs.
- Circle requests for protection.

You can use this prayer as a guide and framework for prayer. The framework might look something like this:

Address the prayer to the Father
 Offer praise
 Ask God for people to commit to kingdom living
 For you to be under His Lordship
 For others to be under His Lordship
 Ask God's guidance concerning His will in the day ahead
 For you
 For others
 Ask God for His provision of your needs
 Confess your sin as you forgive others
 Ask to be protected from temptation
 Ask to be delivered from Satan
 Pray for other people to turn to God
 Put on your Spiritual armor

ACTS...

Another format for prayer that many have found useful comes from the acronym ACTS where

A Adoration
 C Confession
 T Thanksgiving
 S Supplication

Adoration is the activity of giving praise to God for who He is and what he has done.

Confession is agreeing with God about sinful thought, words or deeds.

Thanksgiving is thanking God for all of the things He has provided.

Supplication is requests that are made either for you or someone else.

Other Guidelines

Our attitudes and emotions are important ingredients in prayer.

⁶ *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.* ⁷ *And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Philippians 4:6-7

- Circle the instruction about anxiety. (*Anxiety is a form of fear. Fear is a form of unbelief.*)
- Underline the word in verse 6 describing the attitude we should have in presenting our requests to God.
- *What is the implication of the word **everything** in verse 6?*
- In verse 7, underline the promised result of such prayer.



Jesus indicated that prayer is intended for God, not other people.

⁵ *"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.* ⁶ *But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.*

Matthew 6:5-6

- Circle the word Jesus uses to describe someone who uses prayer as a means of attracting attention to himself.
- Underline in verse 6 the actions to take when praying.
- In verse 6, circle the action God takes for those who pray in secret.



God is also concerned with the frequency of our prayer. Consider:
1 Thessalonians 5:17:

Jesus goes on with an additional instruction about prayer.

⁷ *And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.* ⁸ *Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.*

Matthew 6:7-8

- Circle the word describing the way pagans pray.
- In verse 7, underline the reason pagans pray with many words.
- In verse 8, frame the reason that we do not need to use many words in our requests.

Thoughtful people have asked: "If God knows what we need, why do we need to ask?" Among the many possible answers, three stand out:

- We pray because He has told us to pray.
- Once we have asked, it is easier to identify the answer as something God has done.
- God gets more glory by answering the requests we make than by just giving us what we need.

The Limits of Prayer

God has promised to answer prayer. Some of the promises concerning prayer are tied to a condition. Other promises require only a request. One thing is certain. God is not required to answer if a request has not been made. But if we do petition Him, He is able to do anything.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,
Ephesians 3:20

- Underline what God is able to do.
- Circle the means that God uses.

There are two conclusions that can be drawn from Ephesians 3:20:

1. Our most difficult request is easy for God. He is able to do immeasurable more than we ask.
2. We have power available within us to do everything that God wants us to do.

God told Jeremiah to do something that made no sense. So after he obeyed, Jeremiah, in prayer, told God how the instructions made no sense and seemed to be a tremendous waste. God's response was instructive for us all:

"I am the LORD, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?"

Jeremiah 32:27

Application

What verse most impressed you in this study?

What is your greatest need concerning prayer?

Is there some action that you need to take based upon the information you learned in this study?

What specifically do you intend to do as a result of this study?

***Thou art coming to a King
Large petitions with thee bring
For His grace and power are such
One can never ask too much***

John Newton

God's Ability

There is no limit to God's ability to do what we ask. The Bible is quite clear that nothing is impossible:



Luke 1:37
Matthew 17:20