

## Seven Basic Conditions for Answered Prayer

By Derek Prince

This series of nine daily devotionals to strengthen your prayer life is adapted from the Bible-teaching legacy of Derek Prince (1915-2003). Because of his fondness for the original KJV, we find his “voice” is best reflected for today’s readers by the NKJV, which is used here unless otherwise noted.

### Editor’s Note:

*With regard to “Conditions for Answered Prayer” and conditional promises in Scripture, Brother Prince taught honestly and directly that some instructions and promises from the Bible come with conditions that cannot be ignored. For example, Jesus taught that forgiving others is essential to getting our prayers answered, no exceptions. Other “conditions” for answered prayer in this series may actually be characteristics yet to be developed (or still maturing) in a believer’s life, such as coming to God with the spirit of praise and thanksgiving. God will be faithful, by His Spirit, to “come alongside” these believers, to teach and develop a characteristic, yet never to reject one’s prayers. Those who knew Derek Prince knew him as a compassionate teacher, far from legalism. We have tried to reflect his balanced approach in this series.*

### Day 1: Introduction to Effective Prayer

Prayer is one of the greatest opportunities, one of the greatest privileges, and one of the greatest ministries available to all Christians. I don’t believe Jesus ever taught his disciples how to preach, but He did teach them how to pray. Any everyone who desires to be a disciple of Jesus Christ should seek to learn how to pray effectively.

To understand prayer, we must be assured of God’s attitude toward our prayers. When I was growing up in the Anglican Church in Britain, I had a very bad and confused impression of God. I’m not blaming the Anglian Church, because I think it’s not uncommon for people to have the attitude that God doesn’t want to be bothered too much with us and our prayers and our needs. But nothing could be further from the truth. **The Scripture teaches the desire of God to hear our prayers and His willingness to answer our prayers.** So we’re going to deal with some verses that confirm God’s willingness to answer prayer.

Proverbs 15:8 tells us, *“The prayer of the upright is [God’s] delight.”* The word “delight” indicates “strong pleasure, keen interest.” Remember, if we are upright and sincere when we come to God with our prayers, He delights of hear us, and He wants us to receive what we pray

for. The revealed will of God for the believer in Christ is that we should pray and expect to receive what we prayed for. Anything less than that is below the will of God. Consider how this thought is upheld in the following Bible passages.

Song of Solomon 2:14 says, *“Let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet.”* This verse depicts the relationship between Christ as the Bridegroom and the Church as His Bride. God desires to hear our voices lifted up to Him in believing prayer.

Matthew 7:7-8 says in six different ways that God wants us to get what we pray for. *“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.”* Notice that there is not one negative suggestion in all those words.

Note also Matthew 21:22 – *“And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.”* What could be more inviting than that? And the list continues.

Mark 11:24 – *“Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.”*

John 15:7 – *“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.”*

And let’s also consider James 4:2: *“You do have because you do not ask.”* That’s the main reason Christians don’t “have.” They simply don’t “ask.” But then James goes on. *“You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.”* In other words, James said, “Your prayers are self-centered. Your motives are wrong. You’re simply aiming to get something for your own creature comfort and personal satisfaction and indulgence.” James is being practical. He urges change, so our prayers may be answered.

To have a fruitful prayer life, we must consider our motives. Why are we praying? According to Scripture, God has always searched for His peoples' motives. And what is the correct motive? Jesus already stated it. *"And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, **that the Father may be glorified in the Son.**"* (John 14:13, emphasis added) That's the motive for which God answers prayers – that the prayer is prayed sincerely that God may be glorified, through Jesus Christ, in answering that prayer.

What is the purpose of coming to God and claiming His promises? **That God may be glorified.** The more we claim of God's promises, the more we glorify Him. The more we *fail* to claim God's promises, the less we glorify Him. The one who glorifies God the most is the person who claims God's promises, in Christ, the most. To summarize, the acceptable motive is that God may be glorified in answering prayer that is offered in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ.

#### **Points to Ponder:**

- Ask God to help you think of Him as a loving Father who delights to hear you pray and desires that you pray, expecting answers. If this hasn't been your concept, reread the devotional thoughts above. Yield your heart and mind to Him and to the Word of God, and you will watch your faith grow.
- Ask God to search your heart concerning your motives in praying. This may be painful, because we are so often unaware that our natural desires may be selfish and self-centered. But God is loving and gracious to help us purify our motives.
- Frequent advice from older Christians to younger ones is to keep a prayer journal and some systematic method to document one's life experiences in Christ. Mark the date that you prayed for a specific need and leave room (in faith) for when and how God answers your prayer.
- At the same time, invest a few minutes to record the Scripture verses offered in these daily devotionals.

## Day 2: Praying in the Name of Jesus

The first great characteristic for getting our prayers answered is that we pray “in the name of Jesus.” We have already referenced John 14:13-14. *“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.”* Why do we pray in the name of Jesus? Because, when we pray in the name of Jesus, it means this: We acknowledge that we have no right of access to God at all, apart from Jesus Christ.

Jesus came to earth to become our sacrifice on the Cross – our Substitute – and then rose from the dead to become our High Priest at God’s right hand. Without the intervention of the Cross, we would have no right of access to God with complete liberty and boldness. So, when we pray in the name of Jesus, we are reminding ourselves that the only basis of access that we have is through the Lord Jesus Christ and His present position now as our Mediator at God’s right hand in heaven. And on that condition, God opens all the treasures of heaven and makes them available to us in the name of Jesus. His name is our authority to pray.

Romans 8:32 is a most wonderful Scripture. It says, *“He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”* Think of that! *“Freely give us all things.”* But what’s the condition? *“With Him.”* Apart from Jesus, there is nothing. In and through Jesus, there is everything. That’s what we are declaring when we come in prayer in the name of Jesus.

Consider also Philippians 4:19: *“And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”* The source of supply is the riches of God in glory. You will never bankrupt God, no matter how much you pray. When God has supplied **all** your needs, He’ll still be just as rich as He was before. God is infinite and His supply is without limits. It’s out of His *“riches in glory,”* but the channel of supply is *“by Christ Jesus.”*

And then there is 2 Corinthians 1:20. *“For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.”* All God’s promises are available to us, but only *“in Him”* – Jesus Christ. All this is what we declare when we come to God in the name of Jesus.

We will consider other things necessary to achieve what one preacher from an earlier generation called “prevailing prayer,” but there is no forward progress without this foundation. It is not simply the words, “... in Jesus’ name I pray. Amen!” It is the understanding, clearly given in God’s Word, that all divine authority and power reside in that name and who He is.

**Points to Ponder:**

- Brother Prince’s initial use of the word “Conditions” is not to intimidate or push you away from anticipating God’s supply in your life, but to give you assurance of His commitment that you succeed in applying each principle, one step at a time.
- Learning to pray effectively is a process and not an “instant success.” If we come humbly to God as learners, the conditions become steps of achievement.
- Whether your storage device is a notebook, a pad, or your phone, please give each step the attention you need to gain mastery by recording and learning these steps, especially the associated Bible passages. Keeping your journal will help you grow stronger in your Christian journey.

### Day 3: The Power of Praise and Worship

The second characteristic of a successful prayer life is that we come to our faithful God with praise and thanksgiving from the heart. Many Christians do not realize this. A lady came up to me just two days ago and said that she had lost her joy. I asked her, “Do you continue to praise and thank God?” She said, “I did, but when I lost my joy, I more or less stopped.” So I said, “That’s the root reason why you’ve lost your joy.” I reminded her how vitally important it is to give God praise from a thankful heart. We should always remember that our praise to God reflects the atmosphere of heaven, where there is continuous praise. If God has ordained worship in heaven, we should understand His desire to hear praise from His saints on the earth.

You don’t praise God because of feelings. You praise Him because of facts. **We ought to praise Him because of who He is, and thank Him for all He has done and continues to do in, for, and through our daily life experience.** This is not to be a formula or a technique, of course, but should develop spontaneously to reflect our gratitude for God’s goodness and blessing in our lives, even before our specific requests are presented or answered. For many, this is still a learning process, and God gives grace to the humble as we learn. He looks at the heart attitude we bring and recognizes that all believers are still maturing.

God doesn’t change. *“For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations.”* (Psalm 100:5) If you do not praise God that His mercy and truth endure forever – indeed, if you do not come to Him with praise and thanks – you may soon feel that you are far from God and God is far from you. And the cause may not be sin in your life. It could be that God wants to motivate you to go deeper with Him into praise and thanksgiving. And so, as you learn to keep your heart tuned to praising God, you will receive new assurance of His presence.

Psalm 100:4 says, *“Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.”* The “gates” represent thanksgiving; the “court” of access is praise. To be effective, your prayer time should begin with praise and thanks.

After all, it doesn't take long to tell God what you need. But what is really important is to get into a relationship with God where you have the greatest confidence that when you *do* tell Him, you'll get what you asked for. And a major gateway into that relationship – the means of access – begins with praising Him.

Speaking of where God dwells, Isaiah 60:18 says, *"But you shall call your walls Salvation, and your gates Praise."* Every gate of access into the presence of Almighty God has got the same name over it. And that name is "Praise." This strongly suggests the most direct path into God's presence is the gate of praise. As for the importance of giving thanks, we have New Testament instruction also. *"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God."* (Philippians 4:6)

Never withhold your praise and thanksgiving. As you begin to thank God for His greatness and all He has already done, faith will rise in your heart for the next need you're going to pray for. And if you take time to offer God your praise before you begin with your petitions, you will find that those requests will come forth smoothly and simply. As we close this section, let's return to Psalm 100:4. *"Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name."*

**Points to Ponder:**

- If God ever seems remote or inaccessible, ask yourself if you are including an ample amount of time in praise and thanksgiving before presenting requests.
- Is your experience of praising God limited to your church services? God wants more than that. Will you allow this devotional to help you restore the balance you need?
- Write in your prayer journal positive developments you experience as you give thanks.

#### Day 4: Dealing with Doubt and Condemnation

The third characteristic of prayer is that we may approach God boldly, without condemnation, and yet many times we are not able to do so. Psalm 66:18 says, *“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear [me].”* To *“regard iniquity in my heart”* means that I come to God, but I’m conscious of something in my heart that condemns me. When I try to approach God with faith, either my conscience or Satan reminds me that something is not right.

Perhaps it is a sin that hasn’t been confessed. If that’s the case, and I truly desire freedom and free access to God’s presence, there are ample scriptural promises to bring release to my heart and the restoration of full assurance of God’s favor and His presence. It is accomplished by faith, because *“if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* (1 John 1:9)

However – and this is very important – if it has been confessed and I still “feel” far from God, it is most likely that I am believing a lie from Satan, who always wants to accuse me and confuse me about my rights (by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ) to enjoy God’s presence and be conscious of His favor as my loving God and Father.

So, you and I can settle the sin issue quickly as we confess, repent, and trust God for the forgiveness and the cleansing that He has promised. After that, do not go on worrying about your sin, because if you remain sin-conscious as you pray, you will be entertaining thoughts directly contrary to many promises of God. And where do they come from? They come from Satan who wants you and me to believe lies about God, not ever the truth.

But you know what the psalmist goes on to say in Psalm 66:19-20? *“But certainly God **has** heard me; He **has** attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, who has not turned away my prayer, nor His mercy from me.”* How do I know He has heard me? Because I have ceased harboring *“iniquity in my heart.”* Now, speaking as a New Testament believer, I have come in the name of Jesus. I have come with praise and thanksgiving, and, in God’s grace, I am not



condemned. The Bible says, *"if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things."* (1 John 3:20) We don't have to keep anything from God. We have to be open, honest, and sincere with Him, and confess every transgression, fault, and short-coming. (He knows everything about us anyway.) But then, when everything has been confessed, accept complete forgiveness and complete cleansing, and know that God will never remember it or hold it against us anymore. Then we can come without condemnation.

1 Timothy 2:8 speaks about prayer. *"I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting."* We've got to get rid of those dark inner emotions and attitudes that hinder our access. We've got to get rid of wrath and doubting. *"But let him ask [God] 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; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways."* (James 1:6-8) The Bible says that if we doubt, we are condemned. See, we cannot come into the presence of God (and we **need** not come) with condemnation. We have to (and we may) dismiss the whole question of guilt and of every negative and wrong attitude concerning ourselves and concerning other people.

And we must come boldly. *"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."* (Hebrews 4:16) Remember it's a *"throne of grace."* It's not justice we're coming for. It is grace, that we may obtain mercy and find help in our time of need. We do not come on the basis of our merit. We come in the name of Jesus.

Hebrews 10:19 says we have *"boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus."* So come to God with your prayers and without any condemnation. Do you know that the basic source of condemnation is self-righteousness? If I've got to justify myself, I will never do it to my own satisfaction. There must come a time when we lay aside every attempt to justify ourselves, and say, *"I receive, by faith, the righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed to me."* By my

faith in Him, according to the Word of God, I will not worry about my merit; I will not worry about my sin; I will not parade my good deeds; I will not blush for my bad deeds.

No, we may come boldly. We are invited. You need not examine or analyze your own heart all the time to see if you are good enough. You know that the blood of Jesus has cleansed you from all sin, and now you enter boldly right to the throne and right into the holiest of all. That's a glorious way of access.

*"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience."* (Hebrews 10:22) An evil conscience will always take you from successful praying. You must allow the blood of Jesus to be applied to your heart and receive, with complete assurance, the fact that you are forgiven, that you are cleansed because of what Jesus has done at the Cross, and then come boldly into the presence of Almighty God.

#### **Points to Ponder:**

- Do you ever have doubts about God's interest in you? If so, let Scripture reinforce the "welcoming" aspect of the God to whom you pray. Add this verse to your list: *"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."* (Hebrews 4:16) Note the invitation. We may come "boldly."
- For victory in this area, we must understand the difference between regrets and condemnation. You may have regrets, but if you are a Christian, your sins are forgiven and you will never be condemned. God's Word will help you learn the difference between the truth and Satan's lies.
- Trust God, who gives us assurance that our confessed sins are gone forever. He said that He has chosen not to remember them (Isaiah 43:25); also, our sins have been *"cast into the depths of the sea"* (Micah 7:19); and finally, note Psalm 103:12, where God says He has separated us from our sins *"As far as the east is from the west ..."* All of these are part of the great promises God gives His children.

## Day 5: The Power of Forgiveness

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught us how to pray. He said, *"In this manner, therefore, pray."* (Matthew 6:9) And one of the things He taught us to say (as I suppose we all know) is this. *"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."* (vs. 12) Forgive us, **as** we forgive. Do you realize that Jesus ties you down to asking for God's forgiveness **only** in the proportion that you forgive others? He is saying that we will be forgiven, **as** we forgive others.

**One major reason why many Christians do not receive the answers to their prayer is a failure to forgive others.** I find in counseling, this is one of the commonest sources of blockage to the spiritual life and a failure to receive answers to prayers. It is usually one specific person. I was talking with a lady last night, and I said, "Is there anybody you haven't forgiven?" She said, "Yes," and she mentioned a very distinguished person in the Judiciary of the United States. I said, "If you want relief, you'll have to forgive him. There's no alternative. If you don't forgive him, God doesn't forgive you." Forgive us, **as** we forgive others.

Are you willing to forgive? You say, "Brother Prince, I don't know whether I can." Well, God might say, "I don't know whether *I* can." What would you say to that? You'd better make up your mind. Forgiveness, my friend, is not an emotion. It's a decision. I call it this: tearing up the IOU. Suppose somebody owes you \$30,000. Alright, tear up that little IOU for \$30,000. But do you know how much you owe God? For comparison, try \$6,000,000. If you want Him to tear up that IOU, you tear yours up first. Then He will tear His up. You don't tear yours up, He is not obligated to tear His up. The Scripture is unambiguous. That's God's unvarying law. He demands that we forgive others if we would have God forgive us.

Let's look at what Jesus said in Mark 11:25,26. *"And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses."* Now that doesn't leave out anything, and it doesn't leave out anybody, does it?

Remember, this is spoken to Christians, because Jesus is speaking about those who have God as their heavenly Father. Before you pray, forgive.

Here is a very practical example. 1 Peter 3:7 is about the relationship between husband and wife. And it's a message to husbands. So many men preachers preach and teach about what wives should do, but this is for husbands. *"Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered."*

Did you ever realize that? A wrong relationship between husband and wife hinders the answer to their prayers. This can be on either side, husband's or wife's. But when there is a wrong relationship between them, their prayers are hindered. The first thing you have to do in your home, if you want God to answer your prayers, save your children, and provide your needs, you must get right with your spouse. That's where it begins.

So, while God is full of grace, His standards in these examples are without compromise. The best thing we can do is unconditionally surrender, obey His command, and forgive any and all who have ever offended us. That's the way to peace, to pleasing God, and to answered prayers.

**Points to Ponder:**

- Set aside some time to review and respond to the principles presented in this devotional. Carefully examine your heart concerning the issue of forgiveness.
- Seeking God's help, make a list of people who have hurt you, and whom you have not forgiven. Your list may even include people who have passed on.
- Continue adding notes to your journal and "store" the Bible passages for future study.

## Day 6: Directed by the Holy Spirit

### Editor's Note:

*Let us make it clear from the outset of today's devotional that there are many godly believers who are filled with and led by God's Spirit, but who do not share Brother Prince's position in every detail with regard to the baptism in the Holy Spirit. To differ in certain particulars, primarily the place of the gift of tongues, is perfectly acceptable across evangelical and charismatic lines. Some readers will recognize Brother Prince's Pentecostal "flavor" (his personal experience predated the Charismatic Renewal), whereby he places a very strong emphasis on speaking and praying in tongues. For most charismatic believers today, praying in tongues (as a "prayer language") is **available** to all but not necessary as **evidence** that one is baptized in the Spirit. However, those who knew him as a teacher of biblical truth acknowledged the "anointing" and compassion that accompanied his ministry.*

The next important condition for answered prayer is that we be directed by the Holy Spirit. Look at Romans 8:14. *"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God."* That's the continuing present tense in the Greek. *"As many as are regularly led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God."* Being continually led by the Spirit of God is the only way you can live as a child of God in this world.

Later on in Romans 8, the Apostle Paul applies this truth specifically to prayer. In verses 26 and 27 he says this. *"Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God."*

Paul says the Holy Spirit comes to help our weaknesses. Our weakness is that we do not know what to pray for as we ought. We do not know what to pray for, and we do not know how to pray. The Scripture is always right. This is a weakness which is shared by every one of us. You might know that your son needs prayer, or your husband (or wife) needs prayer, but you still don't know exactly how to pray. So, you have a weakness, but the Spirit of God comes to help. How? He takes over and makes intercession through you, and He prays according to the mind of God. We say, "Holy Spirit, you take over and pray through me."

The Holy Spirit gives the believer a language to speak, which he or she does not know, because at this point the believer has yielded himself for the Holy Spirit to pray through him. *“The Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”*

It is wonderful to know that when you cannot adequately pray in your own language, you may invite the Spirit of God, and He prays through you in an unknown tongue. Then you are praying the right prayer, because it's the Holy Spirit who is giving you that prayer, and He prays according to the revealed mind of God. That's God's glorious provision for every believer in Christ. Paul does not suggest that this is just for a few. He indicates it's for every believer who asks – this privilege of letting the Holy Spirit take over our vocal cords, our inner nature, and hold a prayer meeting inside us, praying through us.

I thank God for a praying wife. I've prayed with Lydia for over 25 years, and I know a certain moment when she turns over to the Holy Spirit and her prayer is prophetic. It isn't my wife praying; it's the Spirit of God praying through her. I'm also astonished at what she prays. It doesn't come from her mind; it was given by the Holy Spirit. My wife's favorite text on prayer is Psalm 81:10. *“Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.”* Just give the Holy Spirit a mouth and let Him fill it. He's longing to do it. When you've come to the end of your limited understanding and your own limited mental and physical resources, turn the situation over to the Holy Spirit. He's equal to the task.

The Bible says *“Pray without ceasing.”* (1 Thessalonians 5:17) Can any of us, in our own natural strength and understanding pray without ceasing? Absolutely not! But when you let the Holy Spirit in and turn over to Him, He can conduct a prayer meeting 24 hours a day. You can even pray in your sleep. Many, many people have been heard speaking in tongues hours on end, lying in sleep.

Do you understand the answer to our prayers depends on the power that's working in us? *“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according*

*to the power that works in us.”* (Ephesians 3:20) It is the power of the Holy Spirit working in us. That passage is fascinating. Paul seems to run out of language, so he says that God *“is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think.”* I’d like to illustrate it this simple way. Think of the highest you could ever ask from God, and then think about something that is *“exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think.”* How does He do it? Through the power of the Holy Spirit working in us.

When we’ve reached the limits of our natural thinking and reasoning as to what God can and should do, then let the Holy Spirit in and you move on to a higher plane in prayer. And that is the “prayer plane” that every child of God has got a right to experience – by grace, through faith. The plane of supernatural praying in the Holy Spirit is a power that’s able to do exceedingly, abundantly above all that we could ever ask or figure or reason or think with our natural mind.

**Points to Ponder:**

- Today’s devotional speaks of our weakness but emphasizes God’s supernatural power. However you understand the Holy Spirit’s ministry in your life, take comfort that God knows all the weaknesses of all His children. Let that lead you to seek Him for greater clarity in knowing how to pray.
- Continue to add to your prayer journal the names and requests of those you are praying for. You may never know the full depth of their needs, but you can trust the Holy Spirit to guide you. Give thanks that God providentially arranges our lives, and that the Holy Spirit is allowing you to *“bear one another’s burdens.”* (Galatians 6:2)
- Christians are exhorted to seek the fullness of the Holy Spirit every day. The Bible’s instruction is that we are to *“continually be filled [again and again] with the Holy Spirit.”* (Ephesians 5:18, expanded translation) This supersedes all denominations. Then, as “Spirit-filled” followers of Jesus Christ, we are best equipped to pray as He leads us.

## Day 7: Responding to God's Word, Part 1

The next condition – praying in accordance with the Word of God – has an intimate relationship with the previous devotional (being directed by the Holy Spirit). **The great issue in prayer is the will of God.** If I'm praying according to the Word of God, then the Scripture says I know that God hears me. And if I know God hears me, I know I have the petitions that I asked for. **Where is the will of God revealed? The answer is: in His written Word.**

The Word is packed from beginning to end with divine promises. Peter calls them *"exceedingly great and precious promises."* (2 Peter 1:4) Those promises are the revelation of God's will. When you find a promise that relates to your situation and meets your need, that promise is God's will for you, assuming other related conditions are met in your life.

God never promised anything that was not His will. Why would He be inconsistent and promise to do something and then, when we come to Him and say, "Lord, you promised," would He say, "Yes, I promised, but I don't want to do it"? Of course not! So the great secret that clinches our prayer is the seventh principle, that we pray according to God's Word.

I want to give you an example from the Old Testament to illustrate this. We see an incident in the life of David in 1 Chronicles 17. David was established in his kingdom. He was victorious, he had peace and abundance, and he had a beautiful house to live in. As he sat in his house, he thought, "Here am I, living in this house of cedar, but the ark of God is still in a tent." And so he said to the prophet Nathan, "I'm going to build a house for the ark of God." And Nathan said "That's a wonderful idea. Go and do it."

But that night, God spoke to Nathan and said, "Tell my servant, David, 'You are not to build a house for me.' Tell David that I am going to build *him* a house." Isn't that wonderful? You see, that's an Old Testament example of a New Testament principle from Ephesians 2:20: *"Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think..."* David wanted to bless the Lord, but God turns it to bless David, applying the principle of *"exceedingly abundantly*



*above.*” David thought, “What’s the greatest thing I can do for God? Build Him a house.” But God says to David, “No, your son Solomon is going to do that. I am going to build *you* a house.”

Let’s follow the Bible’s account. When David got the message, “[He] *went in and sat before the LORD*” (vs. 16), and said, “Lord, you’ve been so good to me. You know I wanted to build you a house, and now you’ve told me that you are going to build me a house.” We should understand that the word “house” in the Bible does not always mean a building. It can also mean a family, a household, or a lineage. God promised David that his posterity would endure forever and that one of his “sons” (the Messiah to come, the Lord Jesus Christ) would sit upon his throne forever and ever and would rule over all Israel and – ultimately – over all nations.

This is what David said. “*And now, O LORD, the word which You have spoken concerning Your servant and concerning his house, let it be established forever, and do as you have said*” (vs. 23). I believe this is a key to getting our prayers answered. Those five short words of one syllable contain the essence of effective praying. “*Do as you have said.*” Lord, You said it. Please do it. If God said He will do it, He will be pleased that you bring His Word to His attention. You are on very safe ground when you ask Him to do what He has declared is His will and purpose. In fact, you know He’s going to do it. His promises are the revelation of His will.

See the beauty of this prayer. “*The word which You have spoken...let it be established.*” I didn’t speak it, Lord; it’s far above what I could think of, but Lord, You said it. Please do it. And then notice David’s motive in praying. This is wonderful. “*So let it be established, that Your name may be magnified forever*” (vs. 24). Not that David may be glorified, but that the name of the Lord may be glorified. This is a perfect pattern prayer. You know the great key? It is in knowing the promises of God, because if you don’t know what God has promised in His Word, how can you go to Him and say, “Lord, You promised. Please do it”?

The secret of effective praying is the Word and the Spirit brought together, because then the whole creative power and ability of Almighty God is available to you. It is clear from many

Bible passages that God wants His children to remind Him of His promises. The most effective way to strengthen your prayer life is to praise and thank God for His many wonderful promises. Instead of leading with your needs, consider beginning again in the Psalms. Start by reviewing God's promises and offering Him a heart of praise.

How did God bring the universe into being? *"By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth."* (Psalm 33:6) The Word and the Spirit of God together brought all creation into being. And when God brings His Spirit and His Word together, you have the creative power of Almighty God operating in your prayer. Then He will do *"exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think."*

The highest you can pray with your natural understanding is on the earthly level. But the promises of God are on a divine level, which is totally different. The way to step out of your own ability and into the ability of God is by the Holy Spirit. Unite your will with the will of God, revealed in His Word, and then it will come to pass.

**Points to Ponder:**

- King David's response to God's promise gives a pattern for our prayers. This brings us back to our motives. Do you see areas where your prayers are too self-focused? For example, do we pray for good government in order to have a better life for ourselves and our children, or is it to glorify God? We might all let that thought challenge our thinking.
- Don't miss the "exceedingly above and beyond" moments in your own life. When they happen, record them for future reference and to help point your family and friends to God's grace and kindness.

## Day 8: Responding to God's Word, Part 2

Now let's look at a New Testament example of a proper response to God's Word. I sometimes ask people, what they consider to be the greatest miracle that ever took place in the life of a human being. I've gotten a variety of answers. Some say the raising of Lazarus after being four days in the tomb. I wouldn't argue, but my personal feeling is that the greatest single miracle that ever took place in the life of an ordinary human being was when the virgin Mary conceived miraculously in her womb and became the mother of the Son of God.

And how did it come about? When she said one simple phrase. When the angel told her what was ordained of God, she first said, "How can this be?" He told her the power of the Holy Spirit will overshadow you, and then she said, "*Let it be to me according to your word.*" (Luke 1:38) But in the margin of my Bible there's an alternative translation. "*No word of God shall be without power.*" We should let that sink in. **Every word of God contains within it the power for its own fulfillment.** When Mary received, by faith, the word of God through the angel, in that word was the power for its own fulfillment. And so Mary responded, "*Let it be to me according to your word.*" And that ushered in the greatest miracle in human experience.

And this is what I want to convince you of. If you want the great things, if you want the "*exceedingly abundantly above all that [you can] ask or think,*" the answer is "*according to God's Word.*" When you pray on the level of the Word, you pray on a level that is far above your own human ability to wish or to ask or to think.

Both King David's and Mary's responses are interconnected with the coming of the Lord Jesus. David was the great ancestor, and in the Chronicles passage we saw that God had promised him a "greater Son." The promise was fulfilled through the birth of Jesus, conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary. And notice, in each case, the key to the prayer is the same. God, You said it, so please, will You do it. You will never pray a higher or a more effective prayer than when you go to God, guided by the Holy Spirit, through the Word, find the promise that relates

to you and your situation, and say, “Lord, You said it. You do it, according to Your will and for Your glory.” This is one of the great principles of effective praying.

In closing this day’s devotional, let’s summarize the seven conditions for effective praying:

1. In the name of Jesus
2. With praise and thanksgiving
3. Without condemnation – but boldly
4. With the right motive – for God’s glory only
5. In right relationships – forgiving everyone
6. Directed by the Holy Spirit
7. According to God’s Word

**Points to Ponder:**

- Consider what one writer called the “extravagance” of Mary’s faith (i.e., far beyond “normal boundaries; almost absurd”). While we do not compare ourselves to Mary, we must be challenged by her example of faith coupled with humble obedience. Only God’s power could perform the extraordinary Incarnation miracle. Mary’s part was in yielding herself to God’s purpose.
- In the same spirit of worship and surrender, ask God how He might want to use your life in His purposes. What is His plan? It may be some way in your home or church. God is still looking for those who will say, “... *Let it be to me according to your word.*” (Luke 1:38)
- Meditate on this truth you just finished reading, “*No word of God shall be without power.*” Let that sink in. Continue to cultivate this truth in your prayers: **Every word of God contains within it the power for its own fulfillment.** This should motivate all of us to bring more of God’s Word into our prayers,
- Don’t hesitate to visit IFA’s website to avail yourself of resources to assist you as an intercessor. Read the weekly bulletins to keep abreast of all that is happening, as many join us weekly, praying for good government in America.

## Day 9: A Call for Unity

To close this series of devotionals on effective prayer, I want to bring you a further picture from Matthew 18:19-20. This is what I call “The Prayer Symphony,” and I use the word, “symphony” deliberately. Let’s begin with verse 20. *“For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”* Where the English says, *“are gathered together,”* the Greek says, *“have been led together.”* So, we have this statement. *“Where two or three have been led together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”*

When we talk about “being led,” we immediately have to ask, led by whom? And we’ve already seen the answer in Romans 8:14. *“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God.”* Therefore, Jesus says when two or three have been led together (brought together), in My name, by the Holy Spirit, then you can count on My presence.

Jesus has aligned Himself to those who are led by the Spirit of God to come together into His name. I call this the basic cell unit of the Body of Christ. The smallest body unit within the Body of Christ is when two or three people, brought together by the Holy Spirit in a meeting place, which is the name of Jesus. Then Jesus says, “I am there.”

In relationship to that, He says in verse 19, *“Again I say to you that if two of you [the absolute minimum] agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven.”* The key to understanding this is the word “agree.” It is not intellectual agreement; it is not simply putting something on a prayer list and saying, “That’s what we’re going to pray for,” because – let’s be honest – you and I have many times heard people say intellectually, “We’ll agree. We’ll pray for Brother Smith in hospital.” But Brother Smith stays in hospital and dies in hospital. Nothing happened. Why? Because Jesus was speaking of a deeper “agreement,” not merely about intellectual agreement or mental assent.

The Greek word for agreement is *sumphoneo*. It's a musical term from which we get the English word "symphony." If two of you shall "symphonize" – come together in harmony concerning anything they shall ask according to the will of God, it will be done for them.

I believe that this promise is so important that it's worth analyzing what Jesus really said. I understand it this way. I'm going to focus on the illustration of the symphony and the orchestra. I'm not a musician, but I have studied and enjoyed classical music, and I know that if you have a symphony orchestra, there are two things you will need for the symphony to be performed. You need a score (the music), and you need a conductor to bring the instruments together in agreement with the score. I believe this exactly illustrates what Jesus meant when He said if two of you shall "symphonize" as touching anything you ask. Who is the Conductor? The Holy Spirit. What is the score? God's will, revealed in His Word.

When the Holy Spirit brings two or more people into perfect harmony concerning the will of God, revealed and interpreted from the score (the Word of God) by the Conductor (the Holy Spirit), then anything they ask shall be done for them. When we have the Conductor, the score, and the orchestra, we have the results. But without that, it's just words. This is the basis of effective praying.

**Points to Ponder:**

- "Praying Christians are often their own most severe critics." That statement, from an earlier IFA publication, has encouraged many intercessors to press on in prayer. Because we are finite, we don't always know the ultimate purpose of God in His larger plan. Don't let that discourage you from continuing to pray.
- As another intercessor from the previous generation has said, "The only way you can 'fail' in prayer is to stop praying before the situation is resolved." So keep on keeping on.
- Let these devotionals encourage you to know that God wants to hear your prayers, and that He will answer according to His will. When perplexed, ask God for wisdom from His Word. *"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting..."* (James 1:5-6)