



**Twelve Keys to
Answered Prayer**

Twelve Keys to Answered Prayer

by Roderick C. Meredith

*Have you ever wondered,
“Why doesn’t God answer my prayers?”*

*Do you know how to pray in a
way that will get real results?*

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Twelve Keys to Answered Prayer

I know that what I am about to write is not “politically correct.” But let me put it this way: Why should you expect the God of the Bible to answer the prayers of people who pray to some other god? Who pray in a wrong manner? Who regularly *disobey* the true God? Who ask for the wrong things?

The answer is simple—you should not! Make no mistake. You have no reason to expect *real answers* to your prayers unless you pray to the *true* God in the *right* way. This may seem outrageous to those who take Christianity for granted—just another of the many religions in the world. But the truth is that literally *millions* of people in the Western, supposedly Christian world have *no idea* who the true God is or *how* they should pray to Him.

Oh, I am quite aware that many people repeat some kind of “mumbo jumbo” or “mantra” to themselves and end up “feeling better.” And since problems oftentimes work themselves out, many people feel that they received an answer to their prayers when they really did not. This often goes hand in hand with the practices of “mind science” or the “power of positive thinking.”

But that is *not* the kind of “answer” I am talking about in this booklet. What I mean is direct, divine *intervention* by the personal God of the Bible—the *Creator* of the heavens and the earth and active *Ruler* of the entire universe! How can you and your loved ones get *this kind* of answer to your prayers? Although other points could be offered, I want to set forth a number of basic “keys” to answered prayer. I am *positive* that if you follow these points literally, sincerely, and wholeheartedly, you will begin to receive genuine *answers* to your

prayers. And they may be so real and so forceful that it will *surprise* many who have never experienced this kind of power before.

Key One: Pray Sincerely to the True God

It is absolutely vital that you pray to the very *real* God of the Bible if you expect genuine answers to your prayers. He reveals Himself to mankind in many ways—in creation, in the Bible, in His foretelling specific divine intervention in world affairs, and in direct *answers* to those who seek and obey Him.

The Apostle Paul was inspired to describe the true God in this way: “For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords), yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live” (1 Corinthians 8:5–6).

In our modern, ecumenical approach to religion, we may *think* that praying to some vague “blob” off in the sky or to an idol of Buddha is the same as praying to the *Creator*—the God of Abraham, Isaac, Israel, and Jesus Christ. But it is not the same **at all!**

The true God was revealed by Jesus Christ (Matthew 11:27). To one of His disciples, He said:

Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me... ? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, “Show us the Father”? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me (John 14:9–11).

We read of Jesus Christ acknowledging that God was a loving, divine Person—a “Father.” And we see the Father acting *through* Christ to heal the sick, to comfort the downcast and to teach those whom He calls to keep the Ten Commandments as a *way of life* (Matthew 19:17). This should certainly help us to better understand God’s character and His desire for us.

Christ also set an example for us in praying to the Father: “Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: ‘*Father*, the

hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You” (John 17:1). Again, when He taught His disciples the outline—the proper approach—to prayer, He said:

In this manner, therefore, pray: Our *Father* in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen (Matthew 6:9–13).

So once again, Jesus revealed that the God to whom we should pray is a Father. And what does Christ reveal about Him? He is “in heaven.” He has a Kingdom or Government that will be set up *on this earth*. He—as our Father—is One who can give us daily bread, forgive our sins, deliver us from Satan, and bring us into that everlasting Kingdom.

In describing this true God, with whom so very few even today are acquainted, the Apostle Paul wrote:

Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you: God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men’s hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their pre-appointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings (Acts 17:23–26).

We learn more about the true God from the Old Testament. The great Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, was told that he would be driven from his kingdom “until you know that the Most High *rules* in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses” (Daniel 4:32). And this God will not share preeminence with any other. He inspired Isaiah to write, “Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, **and there is no other**. I have sworn by Myself;

the word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that to Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall take an oath” (Isaiah 45:22–23).

This is an *awesome* God, with limitless power and glory! When you get down on both knees and lift up your hands in prayer to the great *Creator* of the universe, you should think of to *whom* you are praying and “hallow” or praise His name, as Jesus instructed. Remember that He is not only the Creator, but the active *Governor* of the entire universe—guiding the rise and fall of nations according to His will. He is the One in charge of the weather—sending rain in its due season (cf. Deuteronomy 28:12)—or at times drought and destruction upon those nations that must be punished (vv. 24–25).

Yet if you *surrender* to Him, *obey* Him, and *serve* Him, God will become your loving Father, your Protector, your Healer, the Giver of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17), and the One who has abounding love and mercy. “For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father pities his children, so the LORD pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust” (Psalm 103:11–14).

Be sure you always pray specifically to *this* God—the *true* God—and to **no other**. As you begin your prayer, think about whom you are praying to and consciously worship this great God who gives you life and breath.

Key Two: Study the Bible

It naturally follows that praying to the true God involves *believing what He says*. And we find His words—instructing human beings how they should live—in the Holy Bible. It reveals essential knowledge that we could not acquire in any other way. It is God’s “Instruction Manual” for humanity. It tells us who God is, what He is like, and how we ought to serve Him. In its pages we find God’s own instructions as to how we ought to pray to Him.

But you will not receive this full instruction by just “going to church” or by carelessly reading bits and pieces of the Bible for comfort or inspiration. God commands us in His word, “Be eager, *study* to present yourself approved to God, a workman unashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth” (2 Timothy 2:15, *Green’s Literal Translation*).

To know God, to understand His will and to *believe* in His promises, you need to regularly *study* His inspired word in an orderly way—just as you might study a science textbook or a volume on history. A good place to start is the book of Matthew—the first book in the New Testament. Read it through slowly and carefully—noting *what Jesus actually said*, paying particular attention to the many examples of answered prayer.

It is beyond the scope of this booklet to thoroughly prove the divine inspiration of the Bible. But if you really want to, you can prove that the prophecies given *only* in the Bible have either already been fulfilled in *literal detail* in the past or are now *beginning* to be fulfilled in this exciting end-time age in which we live. When you understand the detail and the breadth of these prophecies, you can see that God practically *signed His name* to the Bible—clearly showing that this book is of *divine* inspiration! The Apostle Paul wrote, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16–17).

So when you read specific promises in the Bible, *ask* for the Almighty to fulfill them in your life. When you see that Jesus and others asked for certain things, realize that this is an *example* for you to follow. In *all* your prayers, follow the *example* of Christ and the Apostles. Let your prayers be the same as theirs when you face similar trials and difficulties.

What about King David of Israel and the other great prophets of the distant past? Their heartfelt prayers and the awesome *deliverance* God granted them likewise instruct us and bolster our faith: “Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come” (1 Corinthians 10:11).

One of the reasons King David was *a man after God’s own heart* (1 Samuel 13:14) is not only that he *obeyed* God, but that he walked and talked with Him and constantly worshiped and *adored* Him. You will clearly see this attitude *all through the psalms*: “Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, You are very great: You are clothed with honor and majesty, who cover Yourself with light as with a garment, who stretch out the heavens like a curtain.... I will sing to the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being” (Psalm 104:1–2, 33).

Leaving behind the memorized, often meaningless prayers of mainstream religion, begin to really *study* the teachings and examples relating to prayer *in your own Bible*. Let the inspired word of God teach you *how* to pray and *what* to ask for. And *believe* the teachings and the promises you find in that holy book.

Key Three: Deeply Repent of Your Sins

Although from time to time God answers the prayers of *anyone* who sincerely cries out to Him in time of need (see Key Five), He is not *bound by His word* to do this. That is why men and women sickened by the horrors of war have demanded, “Where was **God** at the Battle of Leningrad, when *hundreds of thousands* perished?” They have asked, “Where was **God** when the Jews, Poles, Czechs, Danes, and Dutch were being herded into gas chambers in World War II?”

God’s word answers, “Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear” (Isaiah 59:1–2).

The same principle is found in the New Testament. A man Jesus healed of blindness stated, “Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him” (John 9:31).

It is not our job to psychoanalyze or “spiritually dissect” those who have not had their prayers answered in the past. But we all have a *duty* to *ask ourselves*, “Do I worship the true God? Do *I* do His will?”

Please be *honest* with yourself. It is easy to rationalize or to “reason around” this very clear scriptural teaching about obeying God’s law. But if you want *real* answers to your prayers, you need to *repent* of breaking the Ten Commandments—which is defined as *sin* (1 John 3:4, *KJV*). And you need to accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior (Acts 2:38). Then—through the help of the promised Holy Spirit—you will need to *surrender* more and more each day to let Jesus Christ *live* His obedient life in you. Keep in mind what the Apostle Paul declared: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20, *KJV*).

You have probably heard certain mainstream evangelists use the word “repent” from time to time—though not nearly as often as

they should. However, in nearly every instance, they utterly fail to give a true biblical explanation of what repentance is all about. True repentance involves a **total surrender** of one's mind, heart, and will to the Creator God, and requires the acceptance of the death of His Son in payment for sin—for sin demands death. That is why Christ had to “pay” the death penalty on our behalf. As the Apostle Paul wrote, “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

Jesus said, “But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments” (Matthew 19:17). Do you keep the Ten Commandments? Or do you make excuses? The Apostle John was inspired to write, “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). This New Testament scripture clearly shows us that we receive **answers** to our prayers when we **keep God's commandments!**

If you would like more information about how to obey God, please write for our vital and informative booklet titled *Restoring Original Christianity*. It will be sent absolutely free upon request.

As you **grow** in *grace* and in the *knowledge* of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18), He will live His life in you more and more fully over the course of your Christian life. Certainly, you will not be “perfect” all at once! **No** human being has ever been perfect except Jesus Christ Himself. But you **will** be walking in the “way” of the Ten Commandments by surrendering to Him. By “walking with Christ” in this manner, you can be **assured** of having more *powerful* answers to your prayers than ever before!

Key Four: Forgive Others

Another vital key to answered prayer is our willingness to truly **forgive** others. Frankly, our loving Father in heaven simply does not hear those who come to Him in a spirit of revenge, bitterness, or hatred. Immediately after giving us the “Lord's Prayer”—the *outline* prayer describing the proper basic approach to talking with God—Jesus went on to instruct His followers that “if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew 6:14–15).

To sulk, to brood, to conjure up evil thoughts about another person—or to attribute improper motives to someone who has upset

you—is not just wrong; it is counterproductive. It only breeds more trouble and more discontent. Such an attitude will escalate a situation, not resolve it.

How did the Apostle Paul advise us to treat our enemies?

Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. Therefore “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (Romans 12:17–21).

The prophet Isaiah was inspired to warn us *not* to come into God’s presence while *oppressing* others, *accusing* others, or being wrapped up in serving only the *self*. He wrote, “If you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness, if you extend your soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul, then your light shall dawn in the darkness” (Isaiah 58:9–10).

Jesus gives us the same admonition: “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).

So we need to come to God in a humble, repentant, and *forgiving* attitude. Otherwise, as Jesus said, *God will not forgive us!* A spirit of humility and mercy is a key element in whether or not God will hear us as we pray. His inspired word tells us, “But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word” (Isaiah 66:2).

Key Five: God Often Hears the Unconverted

An important aspect of the above point about being merciful and forgiving others is the need to humbly realize that God often hears even the prayers of completely unconverted individuals who cry out to Him. Of course, we know that God has said, “Behold, the LORD’s hand is not

shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear” (Isaiah 59:1–2).

It is certainly true that God will virtually never hear those who are sinning and in a wrong attitude. But there are millions of sincere people who *think* they are truly worshiping God and are simply *deceived*. God Himself has allowed this! And in His inspired word, God explains that it is “the Devil and Satan, *who deceives the whole world*” (Revelation 12:9). Also, Jesus Christ tells us very clearly, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:44). If you wish for more information on this vital topic, please write us or call us and request a *free* copy of our eye-opening booklet *Is This the Only Day of Salvation?*

It is very important that we do *not* self-righteously *assume* that God only hears the prayers of those who are converted and are obeying Him. Again, what about those sincere people who are *not yet called*? And what about you and me before *we* were called and converted? As I look back on my own life, I definitely remember several times when God *absolutely intervened* in answer to my prayers. He was “calling” me. He was beginning to reveal Himself to me as a “real” God by intervening in my life. He has done and will do the same for many, many others all over the world.

Remember the story of the Pharisee and the publican in Luke 18:9–14:

Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’ And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

So the Creator will often hear the prayers of weak or spiritually blinded people who humbly pray to Him. He will *not* hear them if they knowingly disobey Him or are in a wrong attitude. He will *not* hear those who directly pray to idols or to false “gods.” But our merciful Father *will* hear those who—though ignorant of His full revelation—sincerely cry out to Him as the Creator and the true God.

The above understanding is beautifully expressed in Psalm 107:23–24, 27–31:

Those who go down to the sea in ships, who do business on great waters, they see the works of the LORD, and His wonders in the deep.... They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end. Then they *cry out* to the LORD in their trouble, and He brings them out of their distresses. He calms the storm, so that its waves are still. Then they are glad because they are quiet; so He guides them to their desired haven. Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!

We all know of vain, disobedient, or even “worldly” professing Christians who, frankly, “brag” about answered prayer or tell wild stories of constant “miracles” in their churches or in their lives. This religious boasting and even falsifying is a real detriment to true Christianity and could easily be a stumbling block to those being called who see through this sham. *But*, if your friend or neighbor *sincerely* and *wholeheartedly* prays to the God of heaven, he or she may be heard because God knows that their ignorance of His ways is not deliberate and that their sincerity is very real.

Key Six: Seek God's Will

Another key to successful prayer is to be absolutely sure that—as far as possible—you align *your* will and *your* requests with *God's* will.

We must “feed” on Christ by saturating our minds and hearts with God's word—by constantly reading with an open mind, meditating on, and honestly seeking God's will as revealed in His inspired Scripture. Then we will learn how to walk with God, how to pray to God, and how to fellowship with God. Otherwise, like most of the billions of confused

people in this world, we will end up serving God with our human imagination—in the wrong way—perhaps by following a false religion or simply letting our human imagination tell us what to do. Yet the Bible strictly warns us not to do that! “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death” (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25).

What may seem like the right way of life may be directly contrary to the will of our Creator! So we must all be willing to study, to meditate, and to “Prove all things”—to compare any and all of our ideas and philosophies with what God tells us in the inspired pages of the Bible (1 Thessalonians 5:20)! Then we can truly “pour out our hearts” to God in fervent and continual prayer! We can then, in absolute faith, ask Him to guide our lives, lead us, and use us in His service—and bring us into His everlasting Kingdom!

This desire must be first in our minds and in our lives, as expressed by the actions we take. As Jesus said, “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:33).

Many Old Testament scriptures show us how God truly blessed all the men and women who put forth the effort to “seek” Him. Notice: “Now the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded. And he went out to meet Asa, and said to him: ‘Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin. The LORD is with you while you are with Him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you’” (2 Chronicles 15:1–2). How did they respond? “Then they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul” (v. 12).

The Bible describes how Uzziah was blessed when he walked with God. “He sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God; and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him prosper” (2 Chronicles 26:5).

Again, God’s word helps us see how and why these righteous kings were blessed. “Thus Hezekiah did throughout all Judah, and he did what was good and right and true before the LORD his God. And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, in the law and in the commandment, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart. So he prospered” (2 Chronicles 31:20–21).

The lesson is that if we truly want to do the will of the great God—who created us and who gives us life and breath—we should zealously

“seek” Him with all our hearts. We should do this by urgently making time to focus on God’s will by studying what He has revealed in the Bible, then meditating carefully on what the Bible says His will truly is—then fervently praying to our Father in heaven for the strength and understanding to know and do His will. Finally, we must act on His will and “walk with God”—as did Abraham, David, Jesus, and the many others whom God sets for us as examples in inspired Scripture.

Then, absolutely, God will hear us and answer us if we respond to His will, as He has done for those before us. Remember, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8).

As you zealously *study* the Bible and yield to let Christ live within you, His will increasingly replaces your own. It affects *how* you pray. You come to realize that God has made *all* men and women in His image—that He will “call” *all* mankind to understanding and repentance *in His time*. With this in mind, you will not be praying just for your *own* good, but for the good of others as well. Then you can sincerely say to God, as Jesus did, “Father... not *My* will, but *Yours*, be done” (Luke 22:42).

Remember this key phrase from the outline prayer in Matthew 6: “**Your will** be done on earth as it is in heaven” (v. 10). We *all* need to focus on this as we pray. What is really best for us and everyone concerned *in the long run*? Only **God** knows for sure.

On the other hand, the Bible contains literally dozens of promises and direct indications of what God has done or will do in regard to answered prayer. If we pray *in faith* that God will hear us—and *in accordance with His will*—we may be sure that He is listening. “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, **He hears us**. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him” (1 John 5:14–15).

Key Seven: Have Faith in God

The more you drink in of the Bible, the more deeply you will realize the importance of *faith*. “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6).

So you cannot please God without real *faith*. And, generally speaking, the Bible makes it clear that God will not hear and answer

your prayers unless you come to Him 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).

Like the other keys we have examined, building faith is accomplished by truly *surrendering* to let Jesus Christ *live His life* in you through the Holy Spirit! “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). So *all* of us need to daily read the Bible and *drink in* of the examples of faith and obedience set by the great men and women of God. In this way, we “feed” on Jesus Christ (John 6:57). We come to think like *He* thinks, want what *He* wants. And, through the Holy Spirit, He increasingly *lives* within us as we grow spiritually. Thus united with Christ, we can have *total confidence* that God the Father will hear our prayers. And this absolute, unwavering confidence in God is what faith *is!*

Note carefully this vital teaching of Jesus Christ with respect to prayer and faith: “Have *faith* in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, *believe* that you receive them, and you *will* have them” (Mark 11:22–24).

By continually drinking in of the Bible and praying for faith, you will find that your faith will increase more and more. Understand that *living faith* is produced by God’s Holy Spirit within us (Galatians 5:22–23). And Jesus said, “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who *ask* Him!” (Luke 11:13).

God wants to give you these things if you humbly ask for them. So pray to Him continually to give you the *faith* you need. Learn to *believe* in the promises of God. Learn to believe that God is real—that He has perfect wisdom, perfect love, and perfect *power*. Realize that He will *keep* all His promises! Learn to imitate Abraham, the father of the faithful (Romans 4:16), for he “did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also *able* to perform” (vv. 20–21). This is *real faith*. This is the attitude you *must have* to receive genuine answers to your prayers.

Key Eight: Be Persistent

If your son asks you just once for a bicycle, then seemingly forgets about it and never brings the subject up again, how *deep* was his desire for it? How much do you think he would appreciate it if he did get one? And so it is when *we* ask for something from our heavenly Father. Before He supernaturally intervenes, God wants to know that we *deeply desire* whatever we ask for and that we will *respect* and *worship* Him for answering our prayer.

In other words, God uses our need or desire as a “vehicle” to draw us closer to Him spiritually—to cause us to focus on *His will* and on what is really best for us and for any others who might be involved. If we carelessly ask for something and then virtually forget that we ever did, what would that indicate? It might tell God that we are not all that interested in His doing what we ask! Or it could be that *all* our desires are shallow, perhaps constantly changing, and that we would not feel a *deep sense of appreciation and worship* even *if* He constantly answered such shallow prayers!

Perhaps you are familiar with Jesus’ parable of the “unjust judge” (Luke 18:1–8). This is the story of a certain widow who *kept coming* and *kept coming* to the “unjust” judge until he finally said that “because this woman troubles me I will avenge her [thus honoring her request], lest by her continual coming she weary me” (v. 5). Then Jesus said, “Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out *day and night* to Him, though He bears long with them?” (vv. 6–7). When you have a really deep desire for something, you should cry out to God *day and night*—*never* giving up.

God wants us to be persistent. He wants us to walk with Him, talk with Him, and commune with Him continually—day after day in this age and ultimately throughout eternity! The Apostle Paul instructs us to “*pray without ceasing*” (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

When I was courting my wife-to-be, I just could not spend enough time with her. We talked in person, we talked on the phone, and I thought and prayed about her until we finally married! The true Church is pictured as the affianced bride of Christ. We *need* to spend *a lot of time* with Him and with the Father to become *deeply acquainted*. Remember, what we do in this life prepares us to spend *eternity* together with these two divine Personalities. This is a *real* relationship and, as with any other, it must be developed over time.

So learn to *pray regularly* to God—spending *enough time* in prayer to become genuinely “acquainted” with Him. For He is the One in whom “we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). According to the Scriptures, Jesus often rose *early in the morning* and spent long, uninterrupted *time* praying to His Father (cf. Mark 1:35).

The prophet Daniel rose to be one of the highest rulers of the greatest empire of his time—the Babylonian Empire. Nevertheless, he constantly *took time* to pray to God *on his knees*—three times each day (Daniel 6:10). This relationship with the Eternal God was *so important* to Daniel that he finally risked *death* in order to continue this vital part of his spiritual life (vv. 5–10)!

King David also customarily prayed three times each day to his Creator: “As for me, I will call upon God, and the LORD shall save me. Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice” (Psalm 55:16–17).

So *pray regularly*. Spend plenty of *time* communing with Jesus Christ and your heavenly Father. And never—*ever*—stop praying to God! For, in more ways than one, *your very life depends upon this contact!*

Key Nine: Pray Fervently

I once knew an extremely dedicated and zealous servant of God who often said, “Brethren, one of the reasons we in our modern society do not receive more answers to prayer is that we do not put our *hearts* into our prayers!” One of the key Scriptures he would then cite was Hosea 7:14, which describes one reason that God *did not hear* the prayers of the ancient Israelites. James Moffatt’s translation perhaps renders this verse the most clearly: “they never put their *heart* into their prayers....”

What about us? Do you and I pray with our *entire being*? Or do we just rattle off a memorized prayer like some pagan chant, or perhaps sleepily mumble a few half-hearted requests to God just before drifting off to sleep?

Again, remember Jesus’ example of getting up *early* to pray to the Father! For prayer was vitally important to Christ. That is why He apparently put it *first* on His schedule—before anything else could interfere. And He probably came back to God repeatedly as the day progressed. The book of Hebrews tells us about Christ’s passionate, heartfelt prayers, saying that Christ, “who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement

cries and *tears* to Him who was able to save Him from death... was heard because of His godly fear” (Hebrews 5:7).

It is good to go to a “private place” to pray as Jesus instructed in Matthew 6. Alone, we can occasionally *cry out* to our Creator to *help* us, to *chasten* us, to *deliver* us from temptations or difficulties where only the help of God Himself can fully take care of the situation. The last night of Jesus’ human life, when He *knew* He was about to be arrested and crucified, He *poured out His being* to the Father in fervent prayer for help and deliverance: “And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Luke 22:44).

Jesus was *crying out* to His Father in such an intense and passionate manner that some of His capillaries may have literally *burst*—filling certain sweat ducts with blood! In our modern, secular, hedonistic, “laid-back” society, we need to grasp that the truly *vital* issues of life are not material! Rather, they are *spiritual*—having to do with our Creator and with *all eternity*. They are certainly worthy of getting excited about!

So let us put our hearts into our prayers. Let us be *fervent*. Let us be *passionate* as we pour out our hearts to the awesome Personality who wants to be our real Father, “the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity” (Isaiah 57:15).

Key Ten: Ask God to Fashion and Mold You

A genuine man or woman of God is one who has *totally surrendered* to the will of the Creator. Through the prophet Isaiah, God tells us, “But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word” (Isaiah 66:2).

This attitude of seeking *God’s* will rather than our own—of *total submission* to our Heavenly Father—is *vital* to our prayer life if we are to receive constant and *powerful* answers. Note again Jesus’ attitude in one of His final prayers to God while He was still in this human flesh: “Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not *My* will, but *Yours*, be done” (Luke 22:42).

Do you want to truly *grow* spiritually—“till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13)? If so, you need to spiritually “wrestle with God” in

your prayers as Jacob *literally* wrestled with Him and prevailed (cf. Genesis 32:24–32). We need to engage Him in long, thoughtful conversation about how we can more fully yield to Him, walk with Him, and honor Him in our lives. We need to constantly ask God to help us fulfill the great *purpose* for which we were born. (Please write for our free booklet on this subject, titled *What Is the Meaning of Life?*)

It is fine—within limits—to pray for “physical things.” But the ultimate purpose of prayer is to help us focus on *God*, yield to *Him*, and surrender our will to *His* as we cultivate a vital, interactive relationship. In this way, He becomes increasingly *real* to us. Through constant and heartfelt *Bible study* and *prayer* we must *seek* God’s will. We must grasp that our past ideas and attitudes about God and religion in general need *much improvement*. God tells us through Isaiah, “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways.... For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8–9). And the Apostle Paul instructed, “Let this *mind* be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5).

Learn to walk with Him, talk with Him, quietly “commune” with Him off and on *all day long*. Sincerely ask Him to *mold* you into His own image. The prophet Isaiah was inspired to write, “But now, O LORD, You are our Father; we are the clay, and You our potter; and all we are the work of Your hand” (Isaiah 64:8). The approach of *yielding* to God as you pray, of *asking* Him to rebuke and chasten and fashion you, is one of the vital keys to really powerful prayer.

Key Eleven: Give Praise and Thanks to Almighty God

Another of the qualities that made King David a man after God’s own heart was the sincere love, worship, and *adoration* that he continually expressed toward the great *Creator* who blessed him, sustained him, and guided him. The entire book of Psalms is *filled* with David’s prayers of worship and adoration. Notice Psalm 18: “I will love You, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised; so shall I be saved from my enemies” (vv. 1–3).

Clearly, God—in the person of Jesus Christ, who was the “Rock” of Israel (1 Corinthians 10:4)—was David’s personal Hero, his Champion,

his Protector and personal Friend. David rejoiced and *exulted* in the wisdom, power, and *majesty* of the great God! Today, when tens of millions in our “civilized” Western world tend to virtually *worship* rock stars, rap stars, movie or television “idols” (aptly named!), and sports celebrities, it has become unfashionable to worship and adore our *Creator* as David did. But rather than worshiping these vain, often misguided human “stars,” why not give praise to the great God, who gives us life and breath—the “Father of lights,” who, as we have seen, is the Giver of every “good gift and every perfect gift” (James 1:17)?

Why not truly worship Jesus Christ—through whom God the Father created *everything* that is (cf. John 1:1–3; Ephesians 3:9)? Why not worship the One who “emptied” Himself of His divine *glory* in order to set us a perfect example (cf. Philippians 2:7–9, *NRSV*)? Why not worship our merciful and faithful High Priest (Hebrews 2:17–18), who willingly *died* for us? Why not worship *Him*?

It is true that human beings want someone to “look up to.” But we are guilty of *idolatry* when we *pervert* this desire to worship, using it to idolize or sometimes even to shout, scream, and stand in awe of degenerate, God-rejecting men and women.

Rather, we *all* need to redirect this hero worship, including the *awe* and sense of *excitement* it sometimes engenders, and rather worship the most truly “exciting” Personality in the entire universe—Almighty God! We need to picture how God flung out the stars across the blackness of space, how He made this earth, put man upon it, and made us in His image to be His full sons—*literal brothers* of Jesus Christ forever (Romans 8:29)! We need to appreciate every beautiful sunrise and sunset, every moving work of music, art, or literature, every beautiful human being and the talents and love they possess—and realize that they *all* came from *God!* *And He has a lot more in store for us!*

We need to constantly thank and praise God for every good gift and for His help and blessing in *every* situation (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Instead of *losing control* in our enthusiasm for sports figures, rock stars, or any other human “idols,” let us unashamedly pour out our *whole being* in thanking, praising, and *worshipping* the God who made us and who gives us life and breath. This is the God who *forgives* us time and time and time again, who guides and blesses us, and who, in the end, plans to share His *eternal glory* with us if we will only respond and learn to love Him as He loves us!

Key Twelve: Pray in the Name of Jesus Christ

In ancient Israel, the high priest *alone* was allowed to go into the Most Holy Place of the tabernacle or temple—which pictured entering into the direct presence of God. And even he was commanded to go there *only* once a year—on the Day of Atonement (cf. Leviticus 16). With this sole exception on but one single day, anyone entering this sacred room would be immediately put to death by God Himself! Likewise, mankind, as a whole, has been *cut off* from direct contact with God.

But today, because Jesus of Nazareth *died for our sins*, true Christians have direct access to the Father. Instead of fearing *death* in coming before God, we are rather instructed, “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).

Through the “name”—the office and authority of Jesus Christ—we can directly approach God in prayer and worship. We do not need any *human* priest as a kind of intercessor, for we already have the *greatest* High Priest—Jesus Christ (v. 14). And He taught His true followers, “Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father *in My name* He will give you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full” (John 16:23–24).

Of course, many misuse the name of Christ. For example, citing Isaiah, Jesus described the religious leaders of His day, saying that “*in vain* they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men” (Matthew 15:9). Again, Jesus said, “But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46).

To truly and correctly use Jesus’ name, we must *obey* Him and ask according to His will. Remember that in the Sermon on the Mount, Christ warned:

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. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’ (Matthew 7:21–23).

Frankly, those who teach or practice *lawlessness*—preaching that obedience to the Ten Commandments is not necessary—are not *authorized* to use the name of Jesus Christ, for they are teaching and practicing a *false* Christianity that is completely contrary to *everything* that Jesus lived and died for!

The Apostle John explained, “He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 John 2:4). One does not genuinely “know” God—is not *acquainted* with God—unless he truly *surrenders* to let Christ live in him, practicing the Ten Commandments as a *way of life*. Likewise, you cannot know God unless you are growing, overcoming, and *experiencing* within your own life the very *character* of God that is expressed in these commandments!

Those who do not really know the true God or His way are simply not *capable* of properly coming before Him in the name of Jesus Christ. However, as we have seen, a merciful God will sometimes even hear the prayers of sinners *if* they are sincerely ignorant and *if* they turn to Him with all their hearts. But for those who want *consistent answers* to their prayers, we must serve and obey the true God. As God’s word tells us, “Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin” (James 4:17).

So as you approach God in heartfelt, regular prayer, be sure you are *obeying* your Lord and Master Jesus Christ. Though He does not expect instant spiritual maturity, He does want us to walk *in this way* through the help of the Holy Spirit. Then come to the Father through Christ *alone* to make the direct contact of effective prayer. And remember that coming through Christ’s name—that is, through His office or authority—includes most of the other keys to prayer given in this booklet. For coming fully and perfectly in Christ’s name would certainly include praying to the *true* God, being *filled* with the Scriptures, *obeying* God, *forgiving* others, having deep *faith* in God, being *persistent* and *fervent*, learning to *yield* as malleable clay in God’s hands, and heartily worshiping and *adoring* your Creator.

Finally, for your own good, please *study* and *review all* of these vital keys! Learn to constantly pray to God—communing and walking with Him. Then, as the end of this age approaches and the awesome *trials* and *tests* of the full Christian life come upon you—as they surely will—you will know *exactly* what to do and how to do it. In fact, you will

be able to follow Christ's own footsteps. Since He had cried out to God for strength and courage, He was *not afraid* when His time had come to die. In fact, as Judas and an entire detachment of troops came to seize Him, Jesus calmly "went forward" and asked them, "Whom are you seeking?" (John 18:4). For Jesus had done what He always did: Earlier, in the Garden of Gethsemane, He had fallen on his face and fervently *prayed*, calling out, "O My Father" (Matthew 26:39).

God grant that you will learn to pray as Jesus did, for you should now understand how to use one of the most powerful tools in the entire universe. You have now been given *real answers* to unanswered prayer—twelve keys to *answered* prayer!

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