

A Biblical Formula for Answered Prayer

Something that *we all* need to continually learn about, is the matter of prayer. One of the greatest privileges that we have is the privilege of prayer. One of the greatest failures that we have, however, is in the area of prayer.

Prayer is so powerful, because prayer can do anything that God can do; and God can do anything! Prayer brings God into action.

Any failure we have in our life can be traced back to a prayer failure. There's not a sin in our life that proper prayer would not have helped us to avoid. Every need in my life --- if I learned how to pray—those needs would be met.

Therefore, I've called the following: The Biblical Formula for Answered Prayer. If you pray this way, according to the scripture, God is going to hear your prayer and when God hears your prayer, your life is going to be changed—transformed—blessed. You can count on it!!

Take your Bible now and turn to John chapter 14 and let's look in verse 6.

*Jesus *said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."*

Now, many times we assume He's talking about salvation and I'm certain that salvation is included. But when we come to God in prayer, we're coming to the Father, and the only way we can come to the father in prayer is through the Lord Jesus Christ. He makes that plain.

Look in verse 13-14 of this same chapter 14 of John.

Whatever you ask in my name, that will I do, so that the father may be glorified in the son... If you ask Me anything in My Name I will do it."

Turn to John chapter 16 and look in verse 23, In the NASB and the NLT; Jesus said,

"In that day you will not question me about anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the father for anything in my name, he will give it to you.." NASB

I tell you the truth, you will ask the Father directly, and he will grant your request because you use my name. (NLT)

So the first ingredient in the formula to answered prayer is;

I. To Ask In Jesus' Name

Clearly, plainly it is the Father that we need to reach in prayer and the only way we can come to the Father is through the Son. Jesus said, *I'm the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father but by Me. Jesus Christ brings us to the Father.*

Look at it like this. If you're lost and you ask someone for directions, they may say:

- Go down here three blocks and turn left until you come to a red light.
- Go through that, you'll come to a caution light,
- Veer to your right, go several more blocks.
- You'll see a white picket fence on the left hand side,
- Turn left there and you'll see a circle,
- Swing around to the right and go seven more blocks and through an intersection.

About that time you say, *hold it, give me that again*, and then maybe they'll say....

Well, listen, just follow me, I'm going that direction anyway, just stay with me, and I'll take you there.

You see—The Lord Jesus doesn't just tell us how to get to the Father, the Lord Jesus is our way to the Father. We don't get to the Father by just listening to His words—we get there by following Him—He is the way.

And listen---we can't follow Jesus if we already have our route planned out. In other words we can't follow our directions and His at the same time (until our directions become His directions). We have to decide either this route our His route.

Now let's address this first. It's pretty clear and plain – the reason that many people don't have their prayer answered is because they've never been born again---they're not a follower of Jesus. And if they're not born again, they cannot pray in Jesus' name. Because if they're not born again they don't have Christ in their heart. And if they don't have Christ in their heart, they do not have the Savior who brings them to the Father.

A wonderful verse that you might put by these verses in John 16 is **Ephesians 2:18**. It speaks of the Lord Jesus and it says, *"For through Him we both have access by one spirit to the Father."* That tells us what prayer is about. *"Through Jesus we have access by the Spirit to the Father."* By the Spirit, through Jesus, to the Father.

So, to pray in Jesus' name is not a little phrase that you tack on at the end of the prayer. And it may surprise you to know that there's not a single prayer in the Bible that ends with this

statement, 'In Jesus' name, Amen.' I don't know of one, do you? You don't—and that's because there are none. So obviously that is not what he meant when He said to pray in Jesus' name.

To pray in His name means three things primarily.

First of all, praying in Jesus name means;

A. Authority.

When a man says to stop in the name of the law, what does he mean? Stop in the *authority* of the law. Well—Jesus has given us the power of attorney—so to speak. I can act on His behalf and I can request of the Father those things that *He* wants, but I am to use His authority...

The second thing praying in Jesus' name means is this;

B. Approval.

Let's say you head a department at ABC Corporation. When you send out a purchase order, for resources you need for your department, whoever the purchasing manager is, he signs that purchase order at the bottom and he's saying, I approve this purchase and he has been given the authority to do so. So, when we pray in Jesus' name, what we're saying is that we're praying with His authority. And because we have His authority, we also must have His approval—THAT'S A GIVEN.

Now, here's where we may misunderstand: Jesus is not going to give His authority for anything He doesn't approve. But name means something else. Name means also a claim,

C. Acclaim.

For example, when I was in Israel the last time, I attended a service to receive The Good Shepherd Baptist Church into the Israeli Baptist Association. It was held in a mid-size Baptist church. In a particular room off the sanctuary, there was hanging on the wall a plaque and picture of the great preacher, Dr. R.G Lee in honor of his coming to preach a revival there in 1959. They even called the room 'The Lee Room' in his name. Why did they do that "in his name?" Well they did it for his honor. They were trying to honor him by bringing acclaim to his name.

So you see, when I pray in Jesus' name, I say,

--Lord Jesus, I'm doing this with Your Authority,

--Lord Jesus, I'm doing this with Your approval,

--Lord Jesus, I'm doing this for Your honor.

Do you pray that way?

Then listen----

- You cannot pray for Jesus' honor and
- You cannot pray with His Authority and approval....
- Unless you are born again.

So the very first key to answered prayer is that you must learn to pray in the name of Jesus. That's the **first ingredient** in the formula for answered prayer - **to pray in the name of Jesus**. And to pray in the name of Jesus you have to have Christ in your heart as your Lord and Savior.

Second ingredient, not only pray in the *name* of Jesus, but:

II. You Must Pray In The Spirit.

This time turn, if you will please, to **Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 18**.

Here, the Apostle Paul is giving us a marvelous lesson on prayer, and he says, "*...praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.*"

First of all we pray in His name, and now we pray in the Spirit. You see, the Holy Spirit is called in the Bible the Spirit of Prayer. Did you know that? In **Zechariah chapter 12 and verse 10** the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of grace and of supplications. **So, it is so important, therefore, that you not only be saved, but that you be Spirit filled.**

Now, understand this---a person can be saved and *still* not be praying in the Spirit. If you could just automatically pray in the Spirit when you're saved, then the Bible would not **command** us to pray in the Spirit. So, when the Bible commands us to pray in the Spirit of course we have to admit the possibility that we could be a Christian and yet not be praying in the Spirit. And in the book of Jude, there's just one chapter, in **Jude verse 20** the Bible says this, "*But you beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit.*"

So, the Bible tells us to pray in the Spirit. Why is it so important to pray in the Spirit, that is, to be yielded to the Holy Spirit? Well, Paul makes it clear. In **Romans chapter 8 and verse 26**, Paul explains why we must pray in the Spirit and this is what he says:

In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words;

Anybody here weak, anybody here infirm? Well hallelujah, you have a helper. The Spirit helps our weaknesses. Now this verse is very interesting because in the original language, the word help has a double prefix in conjunction with it— and it means instead of **and** together with. It almost sounds contradictory, that the Holy Spirit prays instead of us and then the Holy Spirit prays together with us. What does that mean? Well, it's very beautiful when you think about it. It means that we cannot do it without Him, and it means that He will not do it without us. It is the Holy Spirit that so fills us when we pray – When we're surrendered to Him, when we're in the Spirit – Then He molds our prayers and makes our prayers acceptable to the Father.

So--to help means that;

He *inspires* our prayers,
He *guides* our prayers,
He *energizes* our prayers,
He even *sustains* our praying.

We're so weak that without His help we would not get it done. If you have difficulty praying—staying centered and focused: If you have difficulty praying for longer than a few minutes at best, then it's a sure-fire sign that you're not praying in the Spirit—you're praying in your own strength.

The Holy Spirit will always inspire—guide—energize—and sustain you in prayer. And, as a matter of fact, the Bible says that He does it with groanings. That speaks of sounds that are uttered at child birth. The 'pains of child birth' is literally what that word means, when He makes intercession for us with groanings. We may know what we're feeling, but we don't know how to express it in words. We are utterly helpless to articulate our grief or pain or hurt.

Hallelujah for the Helper!

Prayer is hard work. The devil will attack you when you pray, your mind will get clouded when you pray, but hallelujah for the Helper. Have you ever tried to pray without the Spirit? If you have, you'll understand how important it is to pray in the Spirit of God.

Pray in the name, pray in the Spirit. Not only because of our weakness, but because of our ignorance. Listen, we don't know what we should pray for as we ought.

Listen to **Romans 8:26** again. *In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words;."*

Also, we can't pray for every possibility. Sometimes folks will come to me and say pastor, pray for this particular situation. Well, I try to pray for that particular situation at that moment lest I forget it, but I tell you, I cannot pray for everything. Neither can you pray for everything. And I

believe that the Holy Spirit of God makes prayer assignments to us.

I've said before and I want to say again – For your prayer to be effective, your prayer must be selective and specific. You can pray in general, God bless the world, but listen, when you get down to *specific* praying, the Holy Spirit of God *gives* you that prayer assignment—that prayer burden. And not only does He tell you who to pray for, but He tells you how to pray for whom you pray. Or if He doesn't tell you, then He'll just make groanings for you, words that you can't utter or understand—But God will.

For example, there's a sick saint. Let's suppose that your grandmother is 90 years old and she's sick and you're starting to pray. Well, what are you going to pray? Lord, God, *heal* her. Or Lord God, *bring her to heaven with you*. Which is it?

That's kind of hard, isn't it, to know what to pray? I mean what is the *Lord's* will? That is ultimately what we should want. But sometimes we ask selfishly for Grandma to be healed because we don't want to lose her. But again, what will glorify Him? Well, *God* knows what to pray and you don't. Many times, it's God's will to take her to Heaven. As a matter of fact, that's the more wonderful thing, if God takes her to Heaven.

But, have you ever noticed that as we gather in prayer meetings on Wednesday nights, and most times we spend much more time praying for the saved who are sick to be healed, than the unsaved who are lost. It's almost like we spend more time trying to keep the saints out of Heaven than the lost out of Hell. Do you ever think about it? Because many times – we're just not burdened for the unsaved *as much as we're burdened for the saved*.

So how do we pray? Here's another example from a fictitious church. Suppose there's a troublemaker in that church. Let's just suppose that in this church, someone just made up his or her mind they were going to cause trouble in the church. And we begin to pray about it. Well, how would we pray?

Many of us might be praying Lord, remove him. As a matter of fact, some of us might be saying, Lord, fix his wagon. But I think about the Apostle Paul when he brought havoc on the church. Those early saints prayed and I suppose some of them might have been saying,

'Lord, stop him---he's hindering the very work you commanded us to do. Lord, strike him dead.' And that would be a valid prayer—we'd all agree. They probably concluded that Paul could never change as he was such a Pharisee of Pharisees. But the Lord didn't strike him dead, He struck him alive in Acts chapter 9. The Lord just saved him and made a mighty apostle out of old Saul who later became Paul the great soul-winner and church planter.

Many times, we don't know what to pray for, but here's the wonderful thing about the Holy

Spirit. He takes our prayers and even sometimes when we ask for the wrong things with the right heart, He takes the *right* thing and *applies* it to the right heart.

He is like a transformer. That electrical energy goes into the transformer on one side and one cycle, one voltage, and it comes out on the other side, in another form so it can be used. If you were to drop that power off those high tension wires into your toaster, you'd toast more than the bread. But what happens is this. It goes through the transformer – It's the same power, but it is made acceptable, it is made adaptable, it is made usable.

And many times our prayer-power, our energy, because it comes from a heart that is right with God, the Holy Spirit says to the Father, now Father, this is what he thinks he wants but this is what he actually needs. Have you ever thanked God he didn't answer your prayers exactly as you prayed them; that He didn't give you what you wanted? He always gave you something better than you wanted. Think about it and take a moment to thank Him

Ingredient number one; pray in the name of Jesus as defined above.

Ingredient number two; pray in the Spirit.

Stay tuned for ingredients numbers three and four over the next few days.