



St. Joseph's  
Episcopal Church

# How to Pray Effectively: A Biblical Way to Pray for Results

Week 1 | What is Effective Prayer?

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# Prayer Before Bible Study

Blessed Lord, who has caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant that we may hear them, read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which You have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.

— Collect for Proper 28:  
Book of Common Prayer, p. 236)





## A Note About Bible Verses

Unless otherwise noted, all Bible verses are taken from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) of the Bible. The NRSV is authorized by the Episcopal Church for use in worship. It was published in 1989 under the authority of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA (NCCCUSA). It was the work of committees of scholars drawn mainly from Protestant churches, but also including Roman Catholic and Orthodox scholars, and a Jewish representative for the OT. The committees operated under certain principles laid down by the NCC: 1) to continue in the tradition of the King James Version; 2) to depart from that tradition only when required for accuracy, clarity, euphony, and current (American) English usage, with the result to be “as literal as possible, as free as necessary”; 3) to eliminate masculine-oriented language where the original texts were intended to be inclusive.

– An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church

# Why Must We Pray?

## Why must we pray?

We must pray because God delights in our prayer. We must pray because Jesus wants us to pray.

For in Him we live and move and have our being.

—Acts 17:28

Prayer is our communication with God.

Without God, we are nothing; but with God, we are everything. Without God, the possible can be impossible; but with God, all things are possible and absolutely nothing will be impossible.



# Why Must We Pray?

The Bible says that God delights in the prayers of His people. So don't think that God will get tired of you, or would rebuke you for praying too much.

The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is his delight.

—Proverbs 15:8



# What is Effective Prayer?

Effective prayer is to pray and receive results.

In the gospels, we read that Jesus wants us to pray and to receive what we pray for. There are at least four expected results:

1. God will reveal Himself;
2. God will answer;
3. God will change you;
4. God will change your circumstances.

Ask and it will be given you; search and you will find; knock and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. —Matthew 7:7-8



# What is Effective Prayer?

Now many of us are sometimes afraid of asking. Oftentimes, we find that “it’s better to ask forgiveness than to ask permission.” But we should not be afraid to ask.

Whatever you ask for in prayer with faith, you will receive.

—Matthew 21:22

Pray with faith and positivity. Don’t begin with a negative thought. Believe that God wants you to pray. And begin with the thought that your prayer will be answered.



# What is Effective Prayer?

So I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

—Mark 11:24

Our initial attitude in prayer should be of faith and certainty.

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

—Hebrews 11:1

If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

—John 15:7





# Seven Keys for an Effective Prayer

## 1. Pray in the Name of Jesus

Prayers to the Father should be in the name of Jesus, who suffered our sins, died for us, and cleansed us from all unrighteousness. The love and grace of God, the omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent, was shown in his willing sacrifice of his own Son.

He who did not withhold his own Son but gave him up for all of us, how will he not with him also give us everything else?

—Romans 8:32



# Seven Keys for an Effective Prayer

## 2. Pray to God with Praise and Thanksgiving

- a. God, who created us, has given us everything. Through prayer, we seek to tap into this source of inspiration and strength. It is only right to approach the Lord our Creator with praise, and with thanks.
- b. While we sometimes pray out of worry for situations or people, filled with fear and anxiety, that is not the right attitude with which to approach God. The right mindset for prayer—praise and thanksgiving—gives the petitioner a sense of peace and an ordered mind.



# Seven Keys for an Effective Prayer

## 2. Pray to God with Praise and Thanksgiving

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus

—Philippians 4:6-7

- c. Begin your prayer with song, “a joyful noise unto the Lord,” (Psalm 100 KJV) to facilitate the proper attitude.



# Seven Keys for an Effective Prayer

## 2. Pray to God with Praise and Thanksgiving

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.

Worship the Lord with gladness;  
come before him with joyful songs.

Know that the Lord is God.

It is he who made us, and we are his;  
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving  
and his courts with praise;  
give thanks to him and praise his name.

For the Lord is good and his love endures forever;  
his faithfulness continues through all generations.

—Psalm 100 NIV



# Seven Keys for an Effective Prayer

## 3. Confess and Repent your Sins

Guilt hinders prayer. God understands that we are sinners, but we must understand that same truth. In prayer, confess and repent from your sins to receive absolution so that your heart, mind, and soul will not be corrupted by sin.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

—1 John 1:8-9



# Seven Keys for an Effective Prayer

## 4. Approach God with the Right Motives

### a. Examine your motives:

In the Letter of James, he admonishes the early Christians to always choose, “wisdom from above,” and not the “wisdom from below.” Ask yourself why and for what are you praying? Although one may attach an “in Jesus’ Name” to a prayer does not necessarily mean that prayer has the right motivations.

I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.

—John 14:13-14



# Seven Keys for an Effective Prayer

## 4. Approach God with the Right Motives

- b. The glory of God is central to our prayers and supplications:

John Wesley, the Anglican priest, theologian, and evangelist who was a leader of the revival movement called Methodism wrote a prayer that includes this:

*Christ has many services for us to be done. Some are easy, others difficult. Some bring honor, others bring reproach. Some are suitable to our natural inclinations and material interests; others are contrary to both. In some, we may please God and please ourselves; in others, we cannot please God except by denying ourselves.*



# Seven Keys for an Effective Prayer

## 4. Approach God with the Right Motives

b. The glory of God is central to our prayers and supplications:

The answers to our prayer may or may not lead to our comfort, safety, and prosperity, but they will be what we need. The Westminster Catechism quotes St. Irenaeus who said, “the glory of God is man fully alive.” Man fully alive means that as human beings, we can become mature in Christ, growing to the full measure of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:13).





# Seven Keys for an Effective Prayer

## 5. Pray with a Right Relationship with God and Others

### a. Prayer and forgiveness are intertwined:

God is both love and forgiveness; when we forgive those who sin against us, we align ourselves with the character of God. As noted in the Lord's Prayer, forgiveness of others is proportional to God's forgiveness of us. Prayer without forgiveness is not effective.

Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.

—Mark 11:25-26



# Seven Keys for an Effective Prayer

## 5. Pray with a Right Relationship with God and Others

### b. Discord can hinder prayer:

Prayer, if it involves more than one person, is like a symphony. Any discord will create disharmony in the melody.

Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.

—Matthew 18:19-20



# Seven Keys for an Effective Prayer

## 5. Pray with a Right Relationship with God and Others

### b. Discord can hinder prayer:

Derek Prince, an Anglican Bible teacher said of prayer, “it is like two or three musicians playing a symphony where the conductor is the Holy Spirit, and the musical score is the Word of God.”

In group prayer, and in prayer in Church, there should be harmony and unity. The group must be united in intent for their prayer.



# Seven Keys for an Effective Prayer

## 6. Prayer Must be Directed by the Holy Spirit

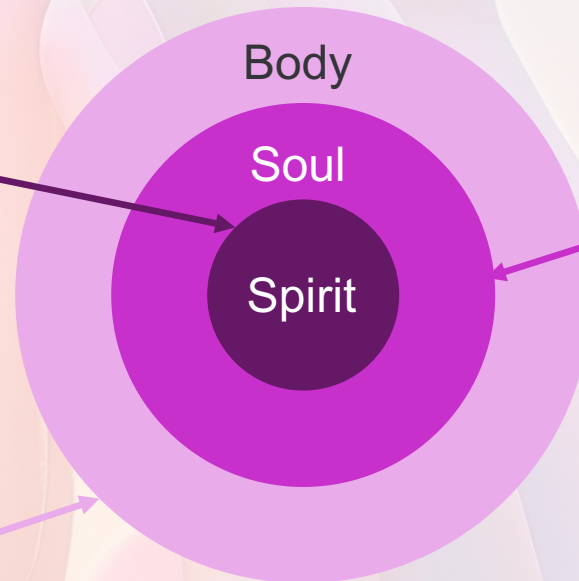
### a. The Holy Spirit is within us

#### SPIRIT

Created to contact and receive God, and contain the Indwelling Holy Spirit.

#### BODY

Physical shell that maintains contact with the world through our senses of sight, smell, taste, touch and hearing.



#### SOUL

Maintains our psyche; composed of mind, emotion, and will. Our soul thinks, feels, and chooses.

Human Being

# Seven Keys for an Effective Prayer

## 6. Prayer Must be Directed by the Holy Spirit

### a. The Holy Spirit is within us:

In prayer, we must connect with the Spirit within us to ensure that our prayers are directed by that right and willing Spirit.

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God. —Romans 8:14-16



# Seven Keys for an Effective Prayer

## 6. Prayer Must be Directed by the Holy Spirit

### b. The Holy Spirit helps us pray:

Prayer may be comprehensible words, but prayer may also be silent, prayer may be movement, prayer may be sounds, prayer may be your heartbeat. A connection with the Spirit within will aid and interpret our prayers.

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with groanings too deep for words. And God, who searches hearts, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. —Romans 8:14-16



# Seven Keys for an Effective Prayer

## 6. Prayer Must be Directed by the Holy Spirit

- c. Charismatic prayer is the Holy Spirit dwelling within us responding back to the love of the Father.

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine...

make you complete in everything good so that you may do his will, as he works among us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever. Amen.

—Ephesians 3:20 and Hebrews 13:21



# Seven Keys for an Effective Prayer

## 7. Pray in Accordance with the Word of God

The will of God is revealed in His Word, the Holy Bible. God never promises something that He cannot fulfill. Knowing the Word of God enables us to pray according to His will. Prayer that creates results is prayer that aligns with God's Word.

By the word of the Lord the heavens were made and all their host by the breath of his mouth. He gathered the waters of the sea as in a bottle; he put the deeps in storehouses.

Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him, for he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.

—Psalm 33:6-9





# Seven Keys for an Effective Prayer

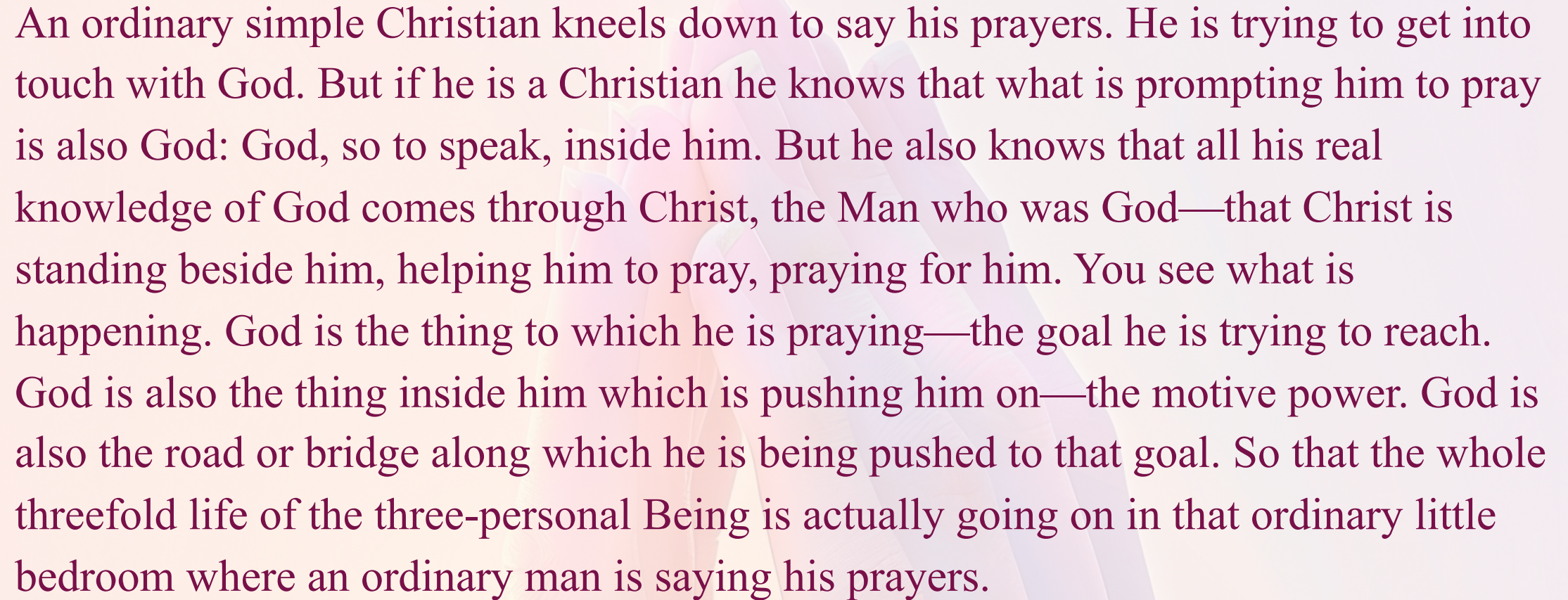
## 7. Pray in Accordance with the Word of God

The Lord's Prayer gives us an outline to prayer. It says, "thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Prayer that is in alignment with the Word of God will be done.

Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God.

—Luke 1:34-35, 37





An ordinary simple Christian kneels down to say his prayers. He is trying to get into touch with God. But if he is a Christian he knows that what is prompting him to pray is also God: God, so to speak, inside him. But he also knows that all his real knowledge of God comes through Christ, the Man who was God—that Christ is standing beside him, helping him to pray, praying for him. You see what is happening. God is the thing to which he is praying—the goal he is trying to reach. God is also the thing inside him which is pushing him on—the motive power. God is also the road or bridge along which he is being pushed to that goal. So that the whole threefold life of the three-personal Being is actually going on in that ordinary little bedroom where an ordinary man is saying his prayers.

—C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

# Summary

- We pray because prayer is our communication with God and He delights in our prayers.
- Effective Prayer is to pray and receive results: that God will reveal Himself, God will answer, God will change you, or God will change your circumstances.
- Keys for Effective Prayer
  1. Pray in the Name of Jesus;
  2. Pray to God with praise and thanksgiving;
  3. Confess your sins and repent;
  4. Approach God with the right motives;
  5. Be in the right relationship with God and with others;
  6. Prayer must be directed by the Holy Spirit;
  7. Pray in accordance with the Word of God.

A background image showing several hands clasped together in a prayerful gesture, rendered in a soft, semi-transparent purple and pink color scheme. The hands are positioned centrally, with fingers pointing upwards.

# Discussion Questions

1. What are the changes in your condition or circumstance that you pray would happen in your life?
2. What things do you regularly request from God? Do you think God will answer you? Why?