

FOURTEEN CONDITIONS TO ANSWERED PRAYER

Will God answer our prayers? We want to be sure that we will receive the things we need from God - but how can we be certain that God will hear and respond?

The Bible is full of promises that we will receive the things we ask for in prayer. There are conditions for obtaining answers, however. If our prayers are to bear fruit, we must know those conditions and comply with them! Lets see what the Bible says about whether we will receive what we request of God.

WE MUST ASK

Although God knows our needs, He requires us to make a request of Him. Perhaps He allows us to have needs we can't fill on our own in order to draw us to Him. Perhaps He wants us to learn the relationship between the request and the answer. If our needs were fill spontaneously, without prayer, we would not know that God was satisfying our needs. He wants us to recognize Him as the source of every good gift. Maybe He just wants a reason for us to spend more time with Him in prayer. For what ever reason, God does, in most cases, require us to ask Him for the things we need and desire.

In his letter to the twelve scattered tribes of Israel, James reminds them that one principle reason their wants were not being filled was that they had not asked.

JAM 4:2 Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, *because ye ask not.*

Lets be sure that we are bringing all our legitimate requests and needs to God. We should realize that God will listen to us no matter how small a request we make of Him. We should not let pride get in the way of our potential request. God causes us to have needs so that we must come to Him. We must be humble enough to ask for His help. If we are too proud to ask, we won't receive.

Christ often asked those who requested His help what specific blessing was required. A good example is in Matthew 20.29 Two blind men begged Christ to have mercy on them. Although He surely knew of their affliction, He asked them what they required of Him. Only after they had stated their specific need did He heal their blindness. When we ask God for anything, we must state our exact requirement. God appreciates specificity.

SEEK GOD'S KINGDOM FIRST

Christ assures us that we shouldn't be anxious about being provided with the physical resources needed to support us.

MAT 6:31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? 32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knows that ye have need of all these things. 33 *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness;* and all these things shall be added unto you.

He also emphasizes that it is far more important that the focus of our lives and energies should be on attaining the Kingdom of God and the righteousness of God. If these are not our first priority, we will not be able to make requests of the Father in the correct spirit and attitude.

Its likely that God wants us to put any other needs and wants into the proper perspective. We must appreciate the temporary nature of this life. If we understand the big picture, we know that God's kingdom and character are eternal. It is most important that we inherit the nature of God, His attributes, His personality and character. If we are not seeking these things, God will be less willing to answer our less important requests.

BELIEVE GOD'S WORD

If our authority to petition God comes from the pages of the Bible, why do we sometimes lack faith in the promises and instruction in the Bible concerning prayer? Why do we sometimes have little confidence that we will receive our

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request? Perhaps we are not familiar enough with the many promises about answered prayer, made by Christ and the apostles. Perhaps we are not doing the things which the Bible tells us will generate supreme confidence that our prayers will be answered. Perhaps the promises of Christ are simply too wonderful to believe!

We need to immerse ourselves in the scriptures which are incredibly jam-packed with rock-solid promises of answered prayer. Lets look at the promises of Christ that our prayers will be answered. Each promise contains a condition, which we should also be careful to study and apply.

BANISH THE DOUBTFUL MIND

Luke 12:29 is the parallel reference to Matthew 6:33. In Matthew 6:33, Christ tells us not to be anxious about physical resources. The scripture in Luke uses an interesting word, when Christ tell us not to be of "doubtful mind":

LUK 12:29 And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of *doubtful mind*. 30 For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. 31 But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.(KJV hroughout)

The word "doubtful" is translated from the Greek, "meteorizo". It literally means "up in the air". This word describes the plight of a ship which is being tossed by the wind and the waves of the sea. This word metaphorically describes the mental condition of one who is fluctuating or wavering in belief. It is similar to the confused condition of the "double minded" man of James 1:6-9. James tells us that a man in this mental state should not expect to have his prayers answered.

It is obvious that we must avoid and eliminate this kind of thinking. It indicates a lack of faith or trust that God will answer. The Bible tells us how to overcome the doubtful, double mind. We must grow in faith and trust in God.

Faith comes by three routes. The first we can control at will:

Romans 10:17 So then faith [cometh] by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Faith results from being immersed in and absorbing the word of God. It is up to each of us how deeply we will wade into the scriptures, how deeply we drink of God's word. If we will spend an extended time in a diligent study of Biblical promises, we can, over a period of weeks and months, feel more faith, more confidence in God. Even in severe trials, a sense of peace and calm can be experienced.

Opening the Bible is like opening a valve and letting faith flow into your being. We need to understand that we, not God, have control of the valve! We must put forth the effort and spend the time. It is entirely under our control! We will have faith in proportion to the effort and diligence we expend!

If our study habits wax and wane, so will our faith, and we will feel the difference. We know that spiritual things are not physically discerned, but our level of faith is discernible if we are in a fiery trial! Believe me, if your back is against the wall, you will study or you will experience despair. Great confidence and strong faith are the result of regular, intense, diligent study!

Coupled with our own efforts in Bible study, we must rely on God to compliment the faith we may receive from the scriptures with the faith that He will supply. The Bible tells us that faith results from the working of God's spirit in us (Galatians 5:22). Faith is described as a fruit of the spirit and the spirit is likened to water. We must ask God to water us liberally with His spirit that we might bear a lot of the fruit of faith.

Christ assured us in Luke 11:13 that God was more willing to provide that spirit to us than we are to provide food for our own children. You need to look that scripture up, read it several times and write it down in a journal. Refer back to it periodically. We constant need reminders of the promises of God. If they don't naturally slip away from us, they can be taken away. More of that later. Just look up all these verses and make them a part of you!

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Remember, God wants us to have His spirit, His mind, and He wants it to bear a lot of the fruit of faith in us. We'll talk a lot about God's will later. Remember that God has specifically said many times that it is His will that we should have His spirit bearing fruit in our lives! Therefore, ask for it in confidence that you will receive it.

There is a third way to grow in faith. The spirit bears the fruit of faith in our lives but faith is also given as a special gift of the spirit. Some will have more faith or less as a result of the bestowal of this gift. This point is brought out in 1 Corinthians 12:9 and Romans 12:3. How may we receive this gift? We've got to ask.

God promises that we will never encounter any circumstance that we can't somehow cope with (1 Corinthians 10:13). One way God helps us to cope is by granting the gift of faith. We must ask Him to give us faith to endure the trying circumstances which we all encounter.

SIMPLY BELIEVE

MAT 21:18 Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered. 19 And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away. 20 And when the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away! 21 Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. 22 And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

This is one of many examples wherein Christ has promised to answer any request we might make. Look very hard at verse 22. Christ has just promised us that we will receive anything, ANYTHING we ask for in prayer. These are the words of God, our savior. This is the God who can't lie (Heb. 6:18), who doesn't change his character (Mal. 3:6), who remains the same forever (Heb 13:7). These are some of the words Christ told us should be the foundation of our lives (Mat. 7:24). This is a promise from the mouth of God, recorded for our benefit. This is a part of a written contract between the Christian and his God which God is bound by His own word to honor.

There is, however, a condition. As with the other promises we will study, this promise hinges on an explicit condition. We must have faith and not doubt. If we do not doubt, we will receive the promise. We must become increasingly familiar with God's ironclad promises and to begin to trust and believe that He will do what He has promised!

DON'T FEAR

Christ knows how our minds work. He is aware that we can be gripped with fear in a life-threatening situation. He knows that we can be consumed with worry. He wants us to understand that we have no reason to succumb to fear. Before Christ healed the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue, he comforted the father by telling him not to fear, but to believe instead. Its is two gospels and both accounts appear below:

MAR 5:35 While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further? 36 As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe.

LUK 8:49 While he yet spake, there cometh one from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master. 50 But when Jesus heard it, he answered him, saying, Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole.

Faith is the opposite of fear. If we know that we are in God's hands, we can be confident that things will always turn out right for us. That promise is stated in Romans 8:28.

ROM 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

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As we come to know God better through the years, our confidence in this scripture and in God's good intentions for us grows and grows. It is a general principle of Christian living that we should not and need not fear. Realize how important we are to our loving Father:

LUK 12:7 But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.

We should never have any doubts about God's generosity toward us:

LUK 12:32 Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

God has equipped us to deal with fear.

2TI 1:7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

A sound mind focuses on the power and love of God, not on distressing circumstances. His spirit engenders confidence in us. Therefore, we should exercise put the faith of God to work and use it to combat fear.

FORGIVE OTHERS

MAR 11:24 Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. 25 And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

This account is parallel to Matthew 21:18. Notice that there is an additional condition in this verse. We found out in Matthew 21 that God requires that we believe Him. Not to do so is to assume He is a liar. Now we read that we must get rid of hatred and grudges when we pray. We must forgive others if we are to be forgiven of our sins.

If we do not forgive men their sins against us, we are not going to be heard by God and we cannot expect an answer to our prayers. Another important condition to answered prayer is that we must be as merciful to others as God is to us.

PRAYER MUST BE SINCERE AND EARNEST

We should not make a show or a pretense of prayer. The purpose of prayer is to communicate with God, not to impress our fellow man. The Pharisees were guilty of this and were condemned by Christ:

Matthew 23:14 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayer : therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

Christ's instructions about prayer were quite different:

MAT 6:5 And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. 6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

In verse five, Christ labeled as hypocrites those who made a show of public prayer. The lesson is that we must be absolutely sincere when we pray. God can discern our intents and is not fooled by hypocrisy.

Our prayers should be earnest. When we pray, we should keep in mind that we are attempting to stir God to action. Even short prayers, offered passionately, have had great effect. In the ninth century, B.C. Israel was confused about

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the identity of God. Worship of the idol, Baal, had been introduced by Jezebel, the Sidonian wife of Israel's King, Ahab. The prophet, Elijah, asked the Eternal to demonstrate that He was God by consuming his offering with fire.

1KINGS 18:36 And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. 37 Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again. 38 Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. 39 And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God.

This was a short prayer, but it carried tremendous weight with God. Imagine the emotion in Elijah's voice as he implored God to demonstrate to Israel that He, and not Baal, was their God. God answered this prayer by performing a dramatic and convincing miracle! James tells us that prayer must be *fervent* to be effective:

JAMES 5:16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The *intense* prayer of the righteous is very powerful. (Holman Christian Standard Bible)

DON'T GIVE UP ON PRAYER

Another infallible promise of answered prayer appears in Matthew 7.

MAT 7:7 Ask, and it shall be given you; Seek, and ye shall find; Knock, and it shall be opened unto you: 8 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. 9 Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? 10 Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? 11 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

Everyone that asks receives. If we are willing to seek, *we will find*. When we knock on doors, *they will be opened to us*. Remember this promise. You see that we are learning more and more about praying. We are discovering that Christ guarantees that we will receive what we are asking for. But with every promise, we are also learning another point on which the promise is conditional.

Ask, Seek and Knock. We should not be shy about asking. There is no request too small for God to hear and grant. God is always willing to listen to the prayer of the righteous. Remember, however, to ask!

Go beyond asking one time if your prayer is not answered! Seek out the answer by praying again and again. Look for a reason the answer has not come. Examine yourself. Ask God for insight, wisdom. Remember that He will be quick to answer this request generously. Fast and meditate. Put forth effort -- don't spare. Perhaps one of these conditions in not truly being satisfied. God has promised to show this to you (Philippians 3:15)! Praying takes work and persistence. If the answer does not come at once, don't lose heart, don't quit.

There will sometimes be an extended period between our request and the answer from God. Remember that God is infinitely patient. He will do what we ask when His time is right. In the interim, **PERSIST!**, Don't lose heart, don't faint, don't quit! Adam Clarke said, "Ask with confidence and humility. Seek with care and application. Knock with earnestness and perseverance."

There is a terrific example of the application of this principle in Matthew 9:27. Let's set the stage: Christ is departing from the house of Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue and is returning to His own home. He has just resurrected the man's young daughter. As he is leaving Jairus' house, he is accosted by two blind men who desperately need Him to heal them:

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Mat 9:27 And when Jesus departed thence [from Jairus' house], two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, Thou son of David, have mercy on us. 28 And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord. 29 Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you. 30 And their eyes were opened;

Despite the familiarity of this story, there is something here that is easy to overlook. Did you notice that these blind men had to follow Christ all the way back to His own home? Apparently, they were crying out to Him (that is, praying) all the way! It was necessary for them to persist in these prayers to Jesus on the trip and actually follow Him into His house. They had to *ask* for healing, they had to *seek* Him out, and they undoubtedly had to *knock* on His door. It was only when they were in Christ's house that He countenanced their request. Their persistence and faith was rewarded, though. Christ finally healed them both! This is a lesson to us. NEVER GIVE UP ON GOD!! He does not always answer at once. Sometimes he defers the reward so that we may learn patience (James 1:3). Notice also that Jesus wanted them to affirm their faith to him! Tell God you know He is capable of doing what you ask!

The Bible is full of these wonderful and reassuring examples of answered prayer. It is by reading the record of Jesus' compassion and mercy that our faith grows. Remember (and *search* it out for yourself), the Bible is filled with examples of answered prayer, not examples of faith and prayer denied!!!

Don't let the attitudes or lack of faith of others discourage you from persisting in prayer. Your prayers can be inhibited in this way. Look at the following example of the healing of two blind men:

MAT 20:30 And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David. 31 And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David. 32 And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you? 33 They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened. 34 So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him.

Sometimes, when you are in need of God's intervention, you may encounter someone who has a faithless attitude or a negative, uninformed opinion about prayer in general, or in your chances for an answer. These people can interfere with our contact with God just as surely as the multitude in the example above. They might be doctors, friends or fellow church members. They may, perhaps not intentionally, try to discourage you from calling out to your Father and elder brother, Christ. They will cast doubt on your conviction that God will answer you. For example, if you are ill and are requesting healing, the doctors will frighten the faith right out of you. Your friends may deny that God will heal you. When this happens, follow the example of these blind men. Intensify your prayers. Redouble your efforts. You will be rewarded just as surely as they were. Their example is in the scriptures to encourage us in this way.

Other profitable examples of persistence in prayer are that of Jacob (Genesis 32:24-30), who struggled with God all night to receive a blessing, and the parable of the unjust judge:

LUK 18:1 And He spake a parable unto them to this end, that **men ought always to pray and not to faint:** 2 Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: 3 And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. 4 And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; 5 Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. 6 And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. 7 And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long [is long-suffering] with them? 8 I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

Many times we assume that God has answered "no" because the prayer has *not yet* been answered "yes". Luke tells us that Christ gave this example so that we would be encouraged to persist in prayer. To become faint and weary to prayer is to lack faith. We need to assure Christ that when He returns, He will find His people faithfully persevering in prayer. Persistence and perseverance are a key to success in any endeavor. Prayer is no exception. Do not forsake prayer if the answer does not come as quickly as you would wish.

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GO TO GOD BOLDLY – DO NOT BE SHY

The disciples asked Christ to teach them to pray. This story is in the eleventh chapter of Luke. In verses two, three and four, He gave them a general outline for prayer. Then, He illustrated how we must approach God in prayer by example:

LUK 11:5 And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; 6 For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? 7 And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. 8 I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his *importunity* he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.

The word in verse eight translated, "importunity" is the Greek word, "anaidia". It means "without shame or bashfulness". The man making the request seemed unconcerned that he was disturbing his friend in the middle of the night. He was not shy about demanding what he needed. His honor and reputation were at stake, since hospitality in that place and time were of the utmost importance. He needed food for his guests and that intense need compelled him to ask shamelessly. The man who needed bread should probably have been better prepared for his guest. Perhaps he had been negligent in some way, and might have been embarrassed or reluctant to ask someone else to help him compensate for his error. The lesson for us is this: When we also have a genuine need, even one arising from our own foolishness or negligence, we must come before God and ask shamelessly. We must ask in the confident expectation that God is going to appreciate our need and satisfy it. God is not going to upbraid us for asking, even if we have been negligent. This scripture in Hebrews confirms it:

HEB 4:15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Christ has experienced life in human flesh. He has compassion on us for our needs and our weaknesses. He is more than willing to grant our requests. After the parable, Christ went on to show that God is pleased to give us what we need:

LUK 11:9 And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. 10 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. 11 If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? 12 Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? 13 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

PRACTICE THE GOLDEN RULE

At the end of the promise in Matthew 7, we find another condition to answered prayer. It is the familiar "Golden Rule":

MAT 7:12 Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

I've found that God often answers my prayers by causing others to be helpful or giving or compassionate. By doing unto me as they would have done to them, these generous and loving individuals have become the instrument God used to answer my prayers. It is a convicting experience to be blessed in this way. It reinforces in my mind the need to be outgoing, serving and giving. If we practice the principle of Matthew 7:12, we can be the resource God uses to answer the prayers of another individual. We should be just as eager to have the prayers of others answered as our own.

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KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS

The book of First John supplies another key element in the quest for answered prayer.

1JO 3:21 Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. 22 And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

When we ask for something, we need to have confidence that we will receive it, that God will back up His word. Much of this article has been dedicated toward building our confidence that we will have our request. This is the essence of faith. We can have this confidence if we are keeping His commandments. It is often taught that God's law is no longer in effect. The Bible does not teach that! If you are not keeping God's commandments, all ten of them, this may be the answer to your unanswered prayers!

Commandment keepers may be unaware of a transgression. David asked God to cleanse him from secret faults and save him from presumptuous sins (Psalm 19). We also must ask God to show us if we are falling short of His expectations, or if we are blatantly sinning. Remember that the Bible defines sin as the transgression of the law (1John 3:4). As previously mentioned, God must be faithful to His promise to show us if we are not in compliance with His desires (Philippians 3:15). Ask God to show you the meaning of His law and reveal to you His desires for your life. Ask Him to grant repentance to you for any sins or shortcomings. Fast in order to draw close to Him and learn His mind. The result will be answered prayer!

ASK IN ACCORDANCE WITH GOD'S WILL

Here is another faith building scripture, First John 5:14:

1JO 5:14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing *according to his will*, he hears us: 15 And if we know that he hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

When we ask God for the things that are in the realm of what He is willing to do, we know that He is listening! When He is listening, He will grant what we ask. The condition mentioned in this verse is that we ask according to His will. Can we know God's will? How can we know if any particular request is within the realm of God's will?

First, we must know that God wants us to know what His will is. The proof is in Colossians 1:9.

COL 1:9 For this cause we also, since the day we heard [it], do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be *filled with the knowledge of his will* in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

God is reasonable and intelligent. He desires that we should ask according to His will and that we should know His will. Paul tells us that He wants us to be "filled" (to abound, to be filled to the full) with the knowledge of His will. He says we are to be filled in "wisdom", that is, in the ability to apply that knowledge prudently. When we know God's will and apply it in our lives, we do the things which are pleasing to Him. That will assist us in complying with the condition that we do the things which are pleasing in His sight. This ought to answer the question, "Can we know God's will?" Yes we can, and must know the will and the mind of God!

How can we learn God's will? How can we know if a request is within the scope of the things God will grant us? For example, how can we know if it is God's will to heal us when we are sick? So many people pray to God that He would heal them or their families, "If it is Your will to do so." If we aren't sure that it is God's will to heal us, why ask? How can we ask in faith and confidence as John suggested, if we are not sure we are asking something that it is God's intention to give us? Surely, God is merciful with our ignorance and unbelief (Mat 9:24), but would it not be better to

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be able to ask in faith and confidence than in ignorance and unbelief? Asking in faith and confidence is better. Therefore, we must become better acquainted with God's will.

Here is how we do it: Spend time with God. The more time we spend with another individual, the more we learn about him. God is no exception. The more time we spend in His presence, the better we get to know Him. There are four things we can do to bring us into contact with God :

- Prayer (We speak to God)
- Study (God replies to us through His word, the expression of His will and promises)
- Meditation (We give careful consideration to these conversations and how we may apply them)
- Fasting (Puts us in the correct frame of mind to listen to God)

Study, meditation and fasting are subjects worthy of several articles each and we can't go into them in detail. They are the tools for learning God's mind and will. Let it suffice to say that the Bible is the expression of God's will. It tell us what He likes, what He hates, what He has done, what He never intends to do, what He has promised to do. There are many, many examples of answered prayer, showing what God has been willing to do in the past. We all need to spend far more time immersed in the scriptures. One reason that faith comes by hearing the word of God is that we become more confident that we know God's will as we know more scripture. We must spend a lot of time in study. If we do this, we will grow enormously in the knowledge of God's will and in faith!

By the way, don't ever qualify your prayer by saying, "if it is your will." You should know in advance that what you are asking is within the will of God. Praying, "Please grant this request if it is your will", is saying to God that you haven't bothered to try to learn His will. Don't worry – if your request is outside of God's will, you don't need to say this. God isn't going to do something contrary to His own will.

ASK IN CHRIST'S NAME

One of the last things on the mind of Jesus, just before His execution, was that His followers would be able to pray effectively. In His last training session with the disciples, He reiterated some of His previous instruction about prayer and also gave additional information:

John 14:11 Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake. 12 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works [referring to His miracles] that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. 13 And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

He had just told the disciples that the Father, not Christ was responsible for His teachings and miraculous abilities (works). Again, Jesus emphasizes the need for rock-solid belief and the keeping of the commandments. He adds new information with the condition, "If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it." Now we know that we must ask in Christ's name. What does that mean?

Here is what Vine's dictionary says about the use of the word, "name" in this context:

"...for all that a "name" implies, of **authority**, character, **rank**, **majesty**, **power**, excellence, etc., of everything that the "name" covers....."

We must pray to the Father by the authority of Jesus Christ. In other words, Christ has delegated to us His authority to make a request of the Father. How much authority does Christ have? The answer is in Matthew 28.

Matthew 28: 18 ...All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

The word, "power" in this verse means authority or prerogative or the right to act. The Father has given all power and authority in heaven or on earth to Christ. Christ has told us to ask in His name when we have a request of the Father.

FOURTEEN CONDITIONS TO ANSWERED PRAYER

We have the right to ask that all of the stupendous resources of Christ be made available and put at our disposal, but remember, within the restrictions of the conditions God imposes.

Christ has so much power to expend on our behalf that we cannot begin to comprehend the scope of it without the intervention of God to enhance our understanding:

EPH 1:18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; *that ye may know* [God wants us to know these things] what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, 19 *And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,* 20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, 21 *Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion,* and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: 22 *And hath put all things under his feet,* and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,

EPH 3:20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly *above all that we ask or think,* according to the power that worketh in us,...

Christ has been given ultimate power to expend on our behalf. In verse 19, above, Paul is struggling to employ every superlative in order to communicate to us the incredible magnitude of Christ's power and His willingness to bring it to bear on behalf of those who believe! Christ has been put in charge over every other spiritual authority. Remember that He is our Advocate and High Priest.

When we pray, we must remember that we do so upon the authority and great power of the Lord of all creation and of all other authorities in heaven and on earth! We should expect results when we pray in Christ's name.

It has been said that we must give more earnest heed to a saying of God that is repeated in the scriptures. God repeats the things that are of the utmost importance. The principle of asking in the name of our Savior was reiterated within the hour it was first spoken. Christ wanted the disciples as well as Christians throughout the ages to know the importance of asking in Christ's name:

John 16:23 And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you.

Lets believe every word, then. Christ says, "Truly, truly, I tell you, anything you ask the Father in my name, He will give it to you." Does it say He might, or there is a chance He will or He might say no? No, men say that. Christ promised we would have what we ask if we ask in His name.

Lets remember that in order to understand what the Bible says about any subject, we must get all the scriptures that deal with that subject. We must put all the scriptures together to come to a complete and accurate understanding. Therefore, we must observe all the other conditions that apply to prayer as well as asking in Christ's name. If we do, Christ has promised us, out of His own mouth, an affirmative answer! Christ cannot, does not lie! God is faithful toward His promises (2Peter 3:9). We will have our prayers answered.

FOURTEEN CONDITIONS TO ANSWERED PRAYER

DON'T ASK AMISS -- DON'T LUST OR COVET

There are unlawful desires which God will not grant. James 4:3 tells us what kind of desires God will not honor.

JAM 4:3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss [in an evil way], that ye may consume [spend] it upon your lusts.

God is not saying that all our desires are evil. What does He mean? If we continue to read down the page, we find that James is condemning the lust of adultery and the lust of the world (see 1John 2:16). God will not answer a prayer that which has as its goal to satisfy some unlawful desire such as adultery. This principle synchronizes with the one which dictates that we must ask according to God's will. It is clearly not His will to help us sin.

We should not think that it is unlawful for us to ask for other things which we rightly desire. Remember that God has expressed as His will that we should prosper and be in good health (3John 2). We should be careful not to be selfish or greedy or express covetousness in our prayers.

ABIDE IN CHRIST -- LET HIS WORDS ABIDE IN YOU

Christ told us that we must abide in Him and His words must abide in us.

JOH 15:7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

The word, "Abide" simply means "to remain". Remember that we were called to Christ by the Father (John 6:44) and that we were baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:27) and have put Him on (same verse). Having been called to Him, we must remain with Him. We must continue to practice the things He taught us. We must not forsake His way of life. Christ said that His words were the foundation of a Christian's life the same way that bedrock is the foundation of a strong house (Matthew 7:24). We must hear His words and do them. We must always remember them and apply them in our lives.

We must never let any person or any circumstance take His words of wisdom away from us. Realize that this is a constant struggle! Christ described the perils which threaten our understanding of His message. Read the parable of the sower in Matthew 13. Read Christ's own interpretation of the parable in verses 18-23. Christ's words can be lost! Paul also warned us that the truth could slip away from us if we neglect Bible study.

HEB 2:1 Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.

We must develop a habit and maintain a constant regimen of study if the truth is to be retained, if Christ's words are to "abide" or remain in us. When severe trials come to us, we must constantly renew our faith by reviewing what we have learned from the Bible. If we neglect to do this, the truth and our conviction of the truth will surely slip away from us.

FOURTEEN CONDITIONS TO ANSWERED PRAYER

SUMMARY

God promises that whatever we ask of Him he will do for us. He does, however, enjoin several conditions on us. Here they are in a list:

- 1.** Ask.
- 2.** Seek God's kingdom and His righteousness as first priority
- 3.** Believe God's word
- 4.** Banish doubt and fear.
- 5.** Be forgiving.
- 6.** Pray in sincerity and with fervency.
- 7.** Don't give up on prayer.
- 8.** Ask God boldly.
- 9.** Be giving -- Practice the "Golden Rule".
- 10.** Keep the commandments.
- 11.** Ask only in accordance with God's will.
- 12.** Ask in Christ's name -- By His authority.
- 13.** Don't ask amiss -- Don't lust or covet
- 14.** Remain with Christ. Let His words remain in you.

This is the prescription for answered prayer from the Bible, most of it, from the mouth of Christ Himself. We can believe the words of our Creator and Savior. We must stake our lives on His truthfulness and reliability. If we can put these principles into practice, we can have absolute assurance that our prayers will be answered. The answer will be, "YES".