

Keep on Praying

BY RICK WARREN

Why is it important to be persistent in prayer? The Bible says, *“Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere”* (Ephesians 6:18 NLT).

The purpose of prayer is to turn our focus toward God and away from our circumstances—taking our eyes off the problem and putting our eyes on him—so we can talk to him and not at him. Prayer helps us maintain a positive outlook of hope, gratitude, patience, and peace in the midst of our trials. Colossians 4:2 says, *“Be persistent in prayer, and keep alert as you pray, giving thanks to God”* (GNT).

Prayer Is Essential

The Bible says, *“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 4:6-7 NIV).

Begin by Praising God

Why should we praise God? Because he is worthy of our praise. Matthew 6:9 says, *“This, then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven: May your holy name be honored’”* (GNT). We can all find things in our lives for which we can praise him.

Pray With a Clean Heart

Confess your sins and ask God to bring to your mind any unconfessed sin. Then you can deal with it and he will hear your prayer. Isaiah 59:2 says, *“But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear”* (NIV).

Even When We’re “At Our Wits End” and Don’t Know How or What to Pray

Remember, as believers—those who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior—God sends his Spirit, the Holy Spirit, into our lives. When we don’t know what to pray, the Holy Spirit will pray for us! *“God’s Spirit is right alongside helping us along. If we don’t know how or what to pray, it doesn’t matter. He does our praying in and for us, making prayer out of our wordless sighs, our aching groans”* (Romans 8:26 The Message).

Be Forgiving

In your life, you will be hurt by others; sometimes intentionally; sometimes unintentionally. How you handle that hurt determines your happiness.

The Bible says forgive and be forgiven. In fact, Jesus says, *“If you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive the wrongs you have done”* (Matthew 6:15 GNT). You might say, “I just can’t forgive that person! They hurt me too badly.” If that’s the case, then I hope you never sin.

For your own sake, let go of the past. If someone hurt you, let go of it, and release them. Prayer helps you unload the hurt. And forgiveness is the only way to leave the past in the past. Forgiveness erases the videotape of the hurt memory that keeps playing over and over in your mind. The antidote is always to forgive. If you’re struggling with forgiving, tell God you want to forgive but need his help.

God Already Knows Your Needs

Jesus says, “When you pray, don’t babble on and on as some people do. They think their *prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. Don’t be like them*, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him!” (Matthew 6:7-8).

God Wants You to See Him Alone as the Source of Your Needs

When we pray about something over and over, who do we look to? We look to the Lord. Persistent prayer focuses our attention. Some people look to everybody else to solve their problem except the Lord. We often look to our friends, family, counselors, or anyone else—except the Lord. God often delays an answer to force you to focus on him.

Persistent Praying Helps You Focus on God

Keep on praying when there’s no answer—God wants us to remember that he alone is the source of the answers to our prayers. The Bible says, “*My God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus*” (Philippians 4:19 NIV).

- If your request is wrong, God says “no.”
- If your timing is wrong, God says “slow.”
- If your character is wrong, God says “grow.”
- If your request is right, God says “go.”

Persistent Praying Clarifies Your Requests

A delayed answer gives time to clarify “what do I really want?” Time separates deep longings from mere whims. I’ve prayed for things and sometimes during the delay decided I didn’t really want or need them after all.

God Sometimes Delays the Answer to Test You

It’s not that he doesn’t want to give it to you, he wants to know if you really want it. Do you want it enough to keep praying? God says, “*You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart*” (Jeremiah 29:13 NIV). Nothing worthwhile is accomplished with half-hearted prayers.

Persistent Prayer Will Prepare You for the Answer

God usually wants to do more than just what you are praying for. God wants to do something greater and he needs time to get you ready for it. There are changes God wants to make in you.

Ephesians 3:20 says, “*Now glory be to God, who by his mighty power at work within us is able to do far more than we would ever dare to ask or even dream of—ininitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, or hopes*” (TLB).

It’s Been Said, “Prayer Changes Things”

It is God who does the changing. But praying changes you. And God is more interested in you than he is in circumstances. Often, as soon as you’ve made the change in your life, the answer comes. Expect a miracle.

Persistent Prayer Strengthens and Develops Your Faith

A mark of maturity is how long can you wait. Galatians 6:9 says, “*Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up*” (NIV). God is saying, “Be patient. The harvest is coming. Don’t give up, look up.”

Pray “According to Your Will, God”

“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us” (1 John 5:14 NIV). We should always desire and strive to be in the center of his will.

Recruit Others for Prayer Support

Connect with other believers and ask them to be praying for you. Be proactive; you’ll otherwise be depriving yourself of prayer support. Let others be blessed by involving them and keeping them updated.

Keep a Prayer List

Write down your prayer requests and note the date you began praying. You’ll see God answer your prayers as you trust him fully.

Pray Believing

The person who prays trusting God, does not determine how God will answer, but will be confident knowing that God will answer. The person who asks but doubts should not expect to receive anything from the Lord because the request was not genuine. When our loyalties are straightened out, God’s answers to prayer are restored to us (see James 1:6-7). With God all things are possible (see Matthew 19:26).

Listen for God’s Responses

God speaks to us through his Word, prayer, nature, devotionals, Christian speakers, Christian radio and TV, and the circumstances he brings into our lives. When you receive an answer and wonder about it, ask God to confirm it.

The great tragedy of life is not unanswered prayer, but unoffered prayer. So, I encourage you to take time daily to focus on God by reading the Bible and talking to him. You need to spend time with God daily to get to know him better.

In happy moments, praise God; in difficult moments, seek God; in quiet moments, worship God; in painful moments, trust God; in every moment, thank God (1 Thessalonians 5:16). No matter what, always pray, as Jesus did, *“Not what I will, but what you will”* (Mark 14:36 NIV).