

How to Pray Effectively

Yirmeyah Tan-15 Sep 2025

Shalom,

Today, we are exploring a very important topic on “**How to Pray Effectively**”. My observations over many decades of ministry are that most Christians do not know how to pray properly. In fact, many prayers are like witchcraft, manipulative, trying to get Yahweh to force other people to fulfil their desires.

We shall see examples of this very shortly. Let us look at the Book of James 5:16 – *Jas 5:16 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*

Here are examples of manipulative witchcraft prayers.

I. Manipulative Witchcraft Prayers

- a. Dear God, I pray that Mr. Wong will give me that job that I want very badly.
- b. Dear God, I pray that Elder Yirmeyah will give me \$5,000.
- c. Dear God, I pray that my wife will obey me.
- d. Dear God, I pray that my husband will love me and provide for me.
- e. Dear God, I want that house on the corner of Kulai Street.
- f. Dear God, I pray that my father will leave all his money to me in his will.

What's wrong with these kinds of prayers?

Note:

1. Such prayers are manipulative, trying to get your will done. Those who pray like this are practicing witchcraft, which is harnessing the power of the devil to get whatever people want. There is witchcraft practiced in churches where Christians try to harness the power of YAHWEH to get the things that they want from people who are not willing to give to them.
2. YAHWEH gave each one of us free will, so that He cannot and does not violate it. If YAHWEH can violate our free will, no one will end up in Hell. Everyone will go to heaven, because, if He can force our will to obey Him and walk in His ways, then everyone will go to heaven. When He created Adam and Eve, He gave them free will. That is why they could sin against Him, choose to eat the forbidden fruit and get condemned by Him along with their descendants.

Every individual has free will. What then is the right way to pray to YAHWEH without violating the free will of anyone? This will give you an inkling of what lies ahead. You can pray -

- a. Father, change my heart.
- b. Father, help me to be obedient to you.
- c. Father, help me to be obedient to my husband.
- d. Father, help me to be a better husband to my wife.

These kinds of prayers are excellent prayers because they involve us as individuals surrendering our free will to Father YAHWEH and allowing Him to change our lives. We cannot pray for Him to change other people's decisions and lives. That's demonic!

Let us go to another very serious matter: why are a lot of prayers not answered by YAHWEH? The first reason is what the Bible says: "God does not hear sinners." In the Book of John 9:29-31 –

II. God Does Not Hear Sinners

a. Unrepentant sinners:

Jhn 9:29 We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is.

Jhn 9:30 The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvelous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes.

*Jhn 9:31 Now **we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth His will, him He heareth.***

God does not hear sinners who are unrepentant. Look at the Book of Isaiah 59:1 & 2 –

Isa 59:1 Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear:

*Isa 59:2 **But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.***

If you have iniquity in your heart, God will not hear you.

In the Book of Psalms 66:16-20 -

b. Having iniquity in the heart:

Psa 66:16 Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.

Psa 66:17 I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue.

*Psa 66:18 **If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me***

Psa 66: 19 But verily God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer. Psa 66:20 Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me.

By way of illustration, suppose you call your friend using your phone, the line will keep ringing if he does not pick up your call and so your message cannot get through to him. If the phone line is dead, there is no way of communication. It is the same way with YAHWEH. When we are in sin, are unrepentant, and we have regard for iniquity, no matter how hard you pray, He will not hear us. Your prayer cannot get through to him. You are wasting your time.

The third reason why YAHWEH does not hear the prayer of many people is because of their insincerity and hypocrisy. Look at the Book of Isaiah 29:13 –

c. Insincerity and hypocrisy

Isa 29:13 Wherefore the Lord said, forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:

Note:

1. God does not hearken to the prayers of people whose hearts are not right with Him. Their lips proclaim to honour Him but their hearts do not.
2. Neither does He accept the prayers or worship of those who follow false doctrines and the traditions of men.

False doctrines are preached in many churches. The traditions of men override the word of YAHWEH. What do you think of the worship of these people? What do you think of the prayers of the Christians in those churches? Do you think YAHWEH will accept the worship? Do you think YAHWEH will hearken and answer to their prayers? The answer is NO!

Another reason why prayers are not answered is wrong motives. In the Book of James 4:2 & 3 –

III. Wrong Motives

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

Jas 4:3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.

Note: Prayers with wrong motives for the purpose of satisfying our lusts, our desires, our evil desires of our hearts and our covetousness in our hearts are not answered by Father YAHWEH. He does not want us to lust. He does not want us to desire things that are not in His will for us. Just because you desire doesn't mean that He will give you.

Look at another reason: lack of faith. The Book of Hebrews 11:6 and Matthew 13:57 & 58 tell us –

IV. Lack of Faith

Heb 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Mat 13:57 And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house.

Mat 13:58 And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

Note:

Unbelief is the opposite of faith. Unbelief blocks the power of God and prevents miracles and answers to prayer. We must walk in faith and faith means trusting Him, believing in Him and believing in His word. You cannot trust Him to fulfil the lust and every desire of your heart. Things that you lust with your eyes and covet with your eyes, do you think you can pray and get them? Surely not!

Next is doing evil and oppressing the poor. In the Book of Isaiah 1:15-20 –

V. Evil Doing, Oppressing the Poor

Isa 1:15 And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

Isa 1:16 Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;

Isa 1:17 Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

Isa 1:18 Come now and let us reason together; saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

Isa 1:19 If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land:

Isa 1:20 But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken.

These are important verses that warn us not to do evil and oppress the poor.

Another important reason why prayers are not answered is the worship of other gods. In the Book of Jeremiah 11:11-14 –

VI. Worshipping Other Gods

Jer 11:13 For according to the number of thy cities were thy gods, Oh Judah; and Jer 11:11 Therefore thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon them, which they shall not be able to escape; and though they shall cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them.

Jer 11:12 Then shall the cities of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem go, and cry unto the gods unto whom they offer incense: but they shall not save them at all in the time of trouble.

Jer 11:13 For according to the number of thy cities were thy gods, O Judah; and according to the number of the streets of Jerusalem have ye set up altars to that shameful thing, even altars to burn incense unto Baal.

Jer 11:14 Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up a cry or prayer for them: for I will not hear them in the time that they cry unto me for their trouble.

Note:

Idolatry is not only about the worship of other heathen gods. It is also about objects like houses, money, people, including spouses and children who become gods and goddesses.

Take the example of Abraham: he desired a son, and he was promised Isaac. When Isaac came, he and his wife idolized Isaac. So, YAHWEH had to challenge him to sacrifice Isaac unto Him. The Bible says He is a jealous God. He will not like it when there are other gods in our lives. For many people, money is a god, a house is a god, their spouses and children or maybe their parents are their gods, a career is their god. We must check our hearts very carefully and get rid of all the idolatry in our lives.

Next is unworthy service. Look at the Book of Malachi 1:7-9 –

VII. Unworthy Service

Mal 1:7 Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, the table of the LORD is contemptible.

Mal 1:8 And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts.

Mal 1:9 And now, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious unto us: this hath been by your means: will he regard your persons? saith the LORD of hosts.

Note:

1. When the temple was around, all the temple sacrifices had to be of clean animals that were spotless. This gives us the benchmark by which we are to do service and sacrifice unto YAHWEH.
2. We should ask ourselves: what kind of service and sacrifice do we give unto YAHWEH?
3. Failure to give Him our best will result in His rejection of us our prayers/worship. We are to give Him our best.

Next is neglecting God's law. In the Book of Joshua 1:7 & 8 –

VIII. Neglecting God's Law

*Jos 1:7 Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe **to do according to all the law**, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that you mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.*

Jos 1:8 This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written.

Then look at the Book of Proverbs 28:9 -

Pro 28:9 He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination.

The word 'abomination' means something disgusting to Father YAHWEH. **Note:**

1. When we meditate on and obey YAHWEH's laws called the Torah, this will bring prosperity to us: good health, material provisions, success in our endeavours.
2. So many Christians believe that the Torah has been abolished and therefore they disregard God's commandments and ordinances. At the mention of YAHWEH's commandments, they all run away from you and from the church. Such people will be rejected by Him, and their prayers will be an abomination to Him.

If you believe the commandments of God have been abolished, then what is the basis of sin? Sin is disobeying YAHWEH's commandments and walking contrary to His commandments. By saying that the commandments have been abolished, it is to say that you have no sins. The truth is He has never abolished His commandments. He fulfilled His commandments in Yeshua and He expects us to obey his commandments with the help of the Holy Spirit.

We don't get saved by trying to obey His commandments because that is impossible! You fail in one commandment, you will likely fail in other commandments. Failure to observe one commandment was enough to condemn Adam and Eve and, through them, the human race.

When we come to Christ, He gives us the power to overcome sin plus the power to obey Him. This power comes from the Holy Spirit. If we disregard YAHWEH's commandments, we shall be rejected by Him when we face Him in judgment. Secondly, our prayers will be an abomination to Him in this life. He finds our prayers and efforts detestable to Him.

Praying for prosperity in word of faith and charismatic churches where prosperity preachers encourage covetousness. Look at the Book of 3 John 1:1-3 –

IX. Praying for Prosperity

3Jn 1:1 The elder unto the well-beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth.

3Jn 1:2 Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

3Jn 1:3 For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth.

Note:

1. So many people want to be prosperous, especially in terms of money, property and worldly success.
2. Prosperity teaches leverage on this, encouraging covetousness in the heart, encouraging wrongful prayers for wealth. I preached in the biggest church in the world in South Korea many years ago and the church pastor was David Cho Yongi. I saw a quote from 3 John 1:2 "I wish you may prosper and be in health." placed upon the church entrance. They truncated the verse and omitted the words, "even as our soul prospers."

The Bible teaches us clearly that true prosperity comes to us only when our souls prosper: when we are walking right with YAHWEH, walking in obedience to Him and asking Him to take away the evil desires, the covetousness of our hearts, the desire to be rich, the love of money.

Next, the Bible tells us that our prayers must not be self-righteous. Look at the Book of Luke 18:9-14 –

X. Self-Righteous Prayer

Luk 18:9 And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:

Luk 18:10 Two men went up into the temple to pray: the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

Luk 18:11 The Pharisees stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

Luk 18:12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all I possess.

Luk 18:13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

*Luk 18:14 I tell you, **this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.***

YAHWEH does not like self-righteous people. YAHWEH likes people with humility, with contrition of heart and who are repentant of all their sins.

The next point is that Yahweh doesn't like us to make prayers that are repetitive. In the Book of Matthew 6:7 & 8 –

XI. Repetitive Prayers

*Mat 6:7 But when ye pray, use not **vain repetitions**, as the heathen do: for they think they shall be heard for their march speaking.*

Mat 6:8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

It is self-evident: if you keep on repeating your prayer, Father YAHWEH will get fed up with you.

Next is helping the oppressed. In the Book of Proverbs 31:8 & 9 –

XII. Helping the Oppressed

Pro 31:8 Open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction.

Pro 31:9 Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and the needy.

In other words, if you want YAHWEH to hear and answer your prayers, you should help the oppressed.

The next point is where a lot of men do not understand that their prayers are hindered and cannot reach up to the throne of God. In the Book of 1 Peter 3:7 –

XIII. Honouring Wife

1Pe 3:7 Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

If husbands do not take care of their wives, give them honour, provide for them, protect them, their prayers will not be heard by YAHWEH.

You can see how your prayers appear before YAHWEH. Most people watching this video will recognize why their prayers are not being heard and answered.

Next, we are to pray in the will of God. Every one of us has been taught the so-called The Lord's Prayer. In the Book of Matthew 6:9-11 –

XIV. Praying in God's Will

Mat 6:9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

Mat 6:10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

Mat 6:11 Give us this day our daily bread.

Then look at the Book of 1 John 5:14 & 15 -

1Jn 5:14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us:

1 Jn 5:15 And if we know that he hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

Then look at the Book of John 15:7 -

Jhn 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.

Note: Prayers will be answered if we

- a. ask according to His Will.
- b. abide in Him and His word by walking in obedience to Him.

How do we know His will? Look at what Paul said in the Book of 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.

Do you want to find out the will of God in your lives? A lot of Christians do not want to know His will or they know His will but purposely walk away and do their own things. You can never get to heaven unless you walk in accordance with His will. Your prayers will not be answered unless they are in accordance with His will.

When we walk in obedience to Him, when we empty our hearts of our own evil desires and ask Him to fill our hearts with His desires, His will, then, whatever we ask will come to pass. If you are walking in His ways and in obedience, He will provide for you.

Another point is that although we are told earlier not to have vain repetitions but, if we have a legitimate prayer that is in His will, we should persist in that prayer and not give up. In the Book of Luke 18:1-8 –

XV. Persistent Prayer

Luk 18:1 And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;

Luk 18:2 Saying, there was in the city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man:

Luk 18:3 And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.

Luk 18:4 And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God nor regard man;

Luk 18:5 Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.

Luk 18:6 And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith,

Luk 18:7 And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them?

Luk 18:8 I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

Next, we are told to pray in secret in the Book of Matthew 6:5 & 6 –

XVI. Pray In Secret

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.

Mat 6:6 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.

Another point is that we need the intercession by the Holy Spirit: Book of Romans 8:26 & 27 -

XVII. Intercession by the Holy Spirit

Rom 8:26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

Rom 8:27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

Note:

1. We do not always know how to pray or what to pray for.
2. The Holy Spirit intercedes for us with groanings.
3. He intercedes for us according to the will of God.

Again, we see it is according to the will of God, not your will, not my will, not man's will.

Finally, we come to the opening verses that I quoted earlier, the prayer of a righteous man in the Book of James 5:16.

*Jam 5:16 Confess your faults one to another, pray one for another, that ye may be healed. **The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth for much.***

Note:

A righteous man is one who is walking in the fear of God, being conformed to His Will and who do not hope or plan for gain through the prayer. Before we ask for a prayer, we are to confess our sins. That is, be repentant for our sins then confess to someone who is going to pray for us and the results will be obtained. This is how we ought to pray.

Shalom.