



# How Does Prayer Work?

## Getting God's Help

Have you ever prayed for something that was really important to you and God didn't give it to you? The important thing is, what would it take to get God's help with it?

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## Jesus Gave You Permission

Jesus said in **John 15:7 (NIV)**: “If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.” When you read Scriptures like this, it sounds like all you have to do is be a Christian and you can ask **whatever you wish, and it will be given you**.

Jesus also said in **Mark 11:24 (NIV)**: “Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.” This one doesn’t even require that **you remain in Him and His words remain in you**. But, it does require that you **believe that you have received it**. Have you ever tried to do this? How do you know when you are doing it right? How do you get to a place where you are doing what it takes to get your prayers answers positively? Let’s start with inviting Jesus into this discussion. See if this prayer is something you would be willing to pray.

Jesus, how do I remain in You and Your words, so I can ask whatever I wish, and it be done for me? How do I ask for something in prayer and believe that I have received it and it be mine? Help me find out why I ask for things that are really important to me and not get them from You. Help me realize that just like I have to learn how to get money from the bank, I have to learn how to get answers from You. Remind me about all the procedures I had to learn to open a bank account, deposit money in it, and then learn how to get it out. Help me realize that I have to follow procedures with You similar to those for working with the bank.

## These Are Important Issues

**Gen 1:26-27 (NIV)** Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, in Our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” So, God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

It is vital you understand at least the basics of what this means. Out of all the incredible things this did for you, one big one was, you got a God’s-given free will. That means God *will not* give you *anything* you don’t want. It also means that, if you want to do eternally important things like reject Jesus’ salvation and spend eternity without God, you can.

**2 Pet 3:9 (NIV)** The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. Jesus, help me understand that, if God won’t keep me from *perishing*, if I want to, then He is honoring my God-given free will with great intensity. Help me see that I have to let You know that I want certain things, by praying and asking for them. Also, help me find out why I *have* prayed and didn’t get the answer I wanted. Help me learn Your Biblical principles, so I can start getting my prayers answered positively.

## Don't Underestimate God

**Mat 7:11 (NIV)** If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, *how much more* will your Father in heaven give *good* gifts to those who *ask Him*! When you ask for something that God knows isn't good for you, He *does* answer your prayer--His answer is "No." But, if you sincerely think it *is* good for you, you will think God is holding something good from you. Have you ever asked God for something, it appeared to you that He didn't answer it, and you took matter into your own hands and got it anyway? Have you ever had it start out looking good and then turn out bad?

**Phil 4:19 (NIV)** And my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus. Jesus, help me understand that it is my heavenly Father's desire to **meet all my needs according to His glorious riches in You**. Help me understand that, if I pray for something and don't get what I want, it is because of a problem with what I ask for or a problem with me. Help me never misunderstand His love and generosity to me.

## When You Are In A Right Relationship With God

**John 15:7 (NIV)** If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. What if you are remaining in Jesus and His words are remaining in you. But, what if you **ask whatever you wish, and it is not given you**. What if you know what you are asking for is God's will, Jesus has given you faith for it, you believe you have it, but, you just don't see it.

**2 Cor 5:7 (NIV)** We live by faith, not by sight. Jesus, help me understand the requirements of faith. Help me **live by faith, not by sight**. Help me realize that, when I pray and ask for something You are willing to give me, I must believe that You heard and answered my prayer. Help me learn what to do, once you have given me what I asked for. Help me not be waiting *to see*, if it happened. **I live by faith, not by sight**. Also, help me not hope it happened, **I live by faith, not by hope**.

## Living On The Basis Of The Fact

**James 2:17 (NIV)** In the same way, *faith* by itself, if it is not accompanied by *action*, is dead. If you are sure you received what you prayed for, then it becomes your responsibility to act on it. Jesus won't force you to **live by faith**. When He gives you what you prayed for, He will wait for you to start living on the basis of the fact that you have it. That is the definition of faith-action. It may be your first time to start taking faith-action, so, it is your responsibility to start *trying* to live by it. It will take *practice* using **faith** to take **action**.

**James 2:20 (NIV)** You foolish man, do you want evidence that *faith* without *deeds* is useless? Jesus, help me learn how to pray for something that I know You are willing to give me and take action on it. Help me not wait *to see* if my prayer worked or *to see* if You did what I asked. Help me realize that, if I don't take *action* based on *faith*, Your answer will lay dormant in my life. It will not be forced on me or give me proof it is there. I must *believe* it is there and start *trying* to live of the basis of that fact.

## Doubting Ruins Everything

**James 1:6-7 (NIV)** But when he asks, he must *believe* and not *doubt*, because he who *doubts* is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive *anything* from the Lord. In order to live on the basis of the fact, you must believe that you have it. And, you must *constantly* believe that you have it. If you try to take faith-action and nothing happens, you must realize that you are just learning how to do it. Faith-action takes a lot of practice. You won't automatically be good at it. But, while you are learning how to do it, if you doubt you have it, doubt will take it away from you.

**When he asks, he must *believe* and not *doubt*:** Jesus, help me realize that *asking* invites You to give me the thing I need. If I don't *ask*, You won't give it to me. Then teach me what I must do to not doubt. Help me understand that doubting will keep me from getting things You are wanting to give me. Show me how to **believe and not doubt**.

## Human Faith Will Not Work

**Heb 12:2 (NIV)** Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfector of our faith, Who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. When Peter got out of the boat and started walking on the water to Jesus, as long as his eyes were on Him, everything was going well. But, the moment he took his eyes off of Jesus, he started sinking; that is the way it is with you.

**Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfector of our faith:** Jesus, help me realize that I can't use human faith. It will fail me and I will doubt; and, when I doubt, I **should not think I will receive *anything* from You**. Teach me how to **fix my eyes on You** and let You speak Your faith into me. You are **the Author and Perfector of my faith**. You author or start it and You perfect it and keep it from doubting. Give me Your faith, by You speaking it into my heart, so I will **believe and not doubt**.

## How Do You Get Jesus' Faith?

**Rom 10:17 (NIV)** Consequently, faith comes from *hearing* the message, and the message is heard *through* the word (rhema) of Christ. In the language that the New Testament was originally translated into, from Hebrew to Greek, it was much more powerful than English. Greek has two words for "word." Rhema means it was a spoken word. Logos means it was a written word. **Faith comes from hearing** a spoken *word* from Jesus. **The message is heard through the word (rhema) of Jesus**. He speaks His faith into you, so you can believe you got what you prayed for.

**Mark 11:24 (NIV)** Therefore I tell you, *whatever* you ask for in prayer, *believe* that you have received it, and it will be yours. Jesus, help me see that the word, "***whatever***" would put me in charge of getting everything I ask for. But, since I can't *believe* without You speaking faith into me that doesn't doubt, this limits what I get. Show me that I can ask for anything; but, I will only get what You speak faith into me, so I can believe for it and not doubt. Show me that this is how you protect me from getting something not good for me.

## How Does Something You Don't Have Become Yours?

**Believe that you have received it, and it will be yours:** The only way you can *believe that you have received it* is for Jesus to speak faith into you. So, when you, all of a sudden, know you have the answer to your prayer, that is Jesus speaking faith into you. Jesus' faith is a powerful **message** that is spoken into your heart. It is supernatural; it doesn't doubt; it isn't just a hope or wish. It is **being sure** and it is being **certain**.

**Heb 11:1 (NIV)** Now faith is being *sure* of what we hope for and *certain* of what we do not see. Jesus, help me understand that when You speak faith into me, I will suddenly be **sure** and be **certain**. Help me keep my eyes fixed on You, as I *ask* You to give me the faith to believe for the thing I know You want to give me. Help me realize that, when You speak faith into me, that will empower me to **believe that I have received it, and it will be mine.**

## Faith-Action

**Luke 6:46-47 (NIV)** Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say? I will show you what he is like who comes to Me and hears My words and puts them into practice.

A lot of Christians get the answer to their prayers and it lays dormant--waiting for them to take faith-action. You have a God-given free will that God honors intensely. When you have done everything you must do to get the thing Jesus is willing to give you, if you take faith-action, that is the moment you start to live on the basis of that fact. The problem is, Satan will be right there trying to keep you from taking faith-action. He will be trying to convince you that Jesus didn't give it to you. So, that is when you keep your eyes fixed on Jesus.

**Luke 6:48 (NIV)** He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. Jesus, help me realize that Satan will be the **flood** that will try to convince me that You didn't give me the thing that You have given me the faith to believe. One minute I will be **sure** and be **certain**, and the next moment I will feel doubt. Help me not accept that doubt as being my doubt. Show me that if I embrace that doubt, as being mine, that is when Satan wins and it becomes mine.

## No Faith-Action

**Luke 6:49 (NIV)** But the one who hears My words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. **The *moment* the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete.** This happens to a lot of Christians. Jesus speaks faith into them, they become **sure** and **certain**, and then they fail to take faith-action and **put them into practice.**

**James 4:7 (NIV)** *Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Jesus, teach me how to take faith-action and put the faith that You spoke into me into practice. Help me resist the devil and know that You have made me **sure** and **certain**. Help me **resist the devil** and make him **flee from** me. Show me how to live on the basis of the fact and not allow Satan to talk me out of it. Show me that there are times, when You answer my prayers and give me what I pray for and I fail to take faith-action.*

### **An Example Of Faith-Action**

**James 2:21 (NIV)** *Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he **did** when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?* When Jesus hears your prayer and answers it positively, He expects you to use it--to take advantage of it. But, this may be new to you; you may not be used to having to **live by faith, not by sight (2 Cor 5:7 NIV)**. However, if you don't study and pray over this issue, it will remain a problem in your life.

Jesus, help me look at the extreme assignment You gave Abraham. You told him to take his only son and offer him on the mountain where You, God's only Son, was offered. Help me see that Abraham had to take faith-action and not just believe in God. Show me that You wait for me to take action before You allow me to experience the results, in many cases.

### **The Results Of Faith-Action**

**James 2:22 (NIV)** *You see that his **faith** and his **actions** were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did.* It wasn't until Abraham did what he was told to do that he headed into the miracle of God. There was an incredible, supernatural life waiting for Abraham. But, it was based on him *doing* what he was told. When you pray for things and Jesus speaks faith into you, the first things you are empowered to do it *believe*. You experience **being sure and certain**. **Heb 11:1 (NIV)** Now faith is being **sure** of what we hope for and **certain** of what we do not see.

Jesus, help my **faith** be **made complete by what** I do. Help me realize that there are things I must do, after You hear and answer my prayer. Once You speak faith into me and I am **sure of what I hope for and certain of what I do not see**, join me in living on the basis of that fact. Help me yield to You and Your life, so I can have Your power-life to start living those things You have given me. Help me *practice* yielding to You making me **sure** and **certain** and then You making it happen in and through me.

### **You Aren't Perfect**

**James 2:23 (NIV)** *And the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham **believed** God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend.* This is how Abraham got his perfect record with God. Even though he still thought, felt, said, and did things that hurt him and those around him, God didn't hold them against him, because he did what it took to get this perfect record with God. This put Abraham in a place where he could start doing what it took to start improving in his relationship with himself and those around him. This also set him up for getting his prayers answered positively.



**Rom 10:8-10 (NIV)** But what does it say? “The word is near you; it is in your *mouth* and in your *heart*,” that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you *will* be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

Jesus, I thank You for giving me an assignment, so I could have a perfect record with God. But, help me not stop there. Help me realize I don't have a perfect record with myself or those around me. Help me start praying for healing and transformation in those areas, so I can take faith-action and start treating myself and others with the results of Your answers to those prayers. Help me grow in my thoughts, feelings, words, and deeds, so I can be a good representative of Who You are.

### **You Need To Work On Your People-Record**

**James 2:24 (NIV)** You see that a person is justified by what he *does* and not by faith alone. No doubt you have a lot of things you would like God to do for you and give you. But, another thing that holds up your prayers being answered positively is, your behavior. Jesus considers how you treat others, as how you treat Him. So, some of your first prayers need to be about that.

**Mat 25:40 (NIV)** The King will reply, “I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me.” Jesus, help me start noticing how I treat myself and others. As I notice things I do wrong to others, help me pray and ask You to set me free and empower me to start treating them better. Then help me start looking for opportunities to take faith-action and believe that You did hear and answer my prayer. Help me act on the basis of Your power to treat them with better behavior.

### **It Doesn't Matter How Wrong You Have Been**

**James 2:25 (NIV)** In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she *did* when she *gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction*? This was how Rahab got a perfect record with God. The Old Testament system was different from what is require of you; but, it brought about the same results. As you start basing your life on your perfect record, you must take advantage of your direct access to God and start asking for things that you know Jesus wants to do for you.

### **But, It Does Matter How Wrong You Are**

**James 4:3 (NIV)** When you *ask*, you do not receive, *because* you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. Jesus, help me start practicing praying and taking faith-action on those things I know You want to do for me. Help me start praying about my attitudes and character. Help me see that if I **ask with wrong motives**, I still won't get my prayers answered positively. You will answer my prayer; but, Your answer will be “no.” You won't speak faith in me to believe for it; You won't give me the power to take faith-action, and You will wait until I get my attitudes and character healed.

## General Prayers And Specific Prayers

**James 2:26 (NIV)** As the body without the spirit is dead, so *faith* without *deeds* is dead.

No doubt it is now clear that faith-action is mandatory. But, when do you apply faith-action? It is fine, when you pray a general prayer asking God to help you with your behavior. It is good to ask God to make you a nicer person. If you don't, He won't. But, what if you *ask* and it seems like nothing happened? This is where you learn how to *really live by faith, not by sight* (2 Cor 5:7 NIV). The Christian life is lived moment-by-moment and issue-by-issue. The really important prayer is at the *moment* you face an *issue*.

**1 Th 5:17 (NIV)** Pray continually. Jesus, as I go about my day and mistreat someone, help me stop, at that *moment*, and pray over that *issue*. Help me understand that *after* You hear and answer my prayer about helping with some specific way I treat people, your answer is in my life. But, help me realize that I have to activate it. Help me pray and then believe I have *that* change in my attitudes and character. Show me that it will be just one attitude changed and that I will have Your power to use it. But, it will be laying there dormant, waiting for me to believe it is there, and believe I have the power to live on the basis of it.

## Coming To Y's In Your Path During Your Day

**Gal 5:16 (NIV)** So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. Christianity has to do with you coming to a "Y" in your day. If you go one way, it will be a Jesus decision. If you go the other, it will a human or satanic decision. Christianity is Jesus-powered with supernatural abilities. But, it isn't lived in general; it is lived all during your day. Jesus doesn't just give you general power to live the Christian life. He is there at that moment you face an issue and have to make a spiritual decision.

**Gal 5:14 (NIV)** The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Jesus, show me that this isn't just talking about a general love; it is talking about demonstrating Your love at a *moment* of decision. You are expecting me to make a love-decision about each *issue* all during my day. And, help me realize that You are empowering me to believe that I have Your answer to my prayer, waiting for me to use it. Help me see it is a specific love and is always available to help me deal with specific issues all day long.