

# *The Prayer Key*

by

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***“If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.” John 15:7 (ESV)***

I don't think there is a Christian alive who would not want a prayer life that allows us to ask anything of Jesus and it is done for us. I know there are those who will say that His promise about answered prayer was only to the disciples and it doesn't apply to Christians who followed them. The problem with that argument is that Jesus told His disciples to go and make other disciples and teach us what they were taught by Him. This would mean they were told by Jesus to teach us the same thing He taught them on the subject of prayer. Therefore I believe we need to understand that this *prayer promise* Jesus made is for all Christians, and we need to earnestly seek the “key” that unlocks this promise Jesus made.

There are some people who would incorrectly teach that Jesus' *prayer promise* is to simply make Christians prosperous financially, health wise and otherwise. They say that all disease or financial need is a result of sin in their life, and repentance and prayer is the way to be healed and be made happy... to prosper. Have you heard this taught or have you thought this? The problem with this *prosperity* reasoning is the fact that history and current world events tell a different story. For example, the Apostle Paul had a “thorn in the flesh” that he in prayer asked God to remove. God said no, and furthermore he was to live with the “thorn” for God wanted to teach something to Paul about the sufficiency of His grace. This in turn would enable Paul's ministry in greater ways. Another problem about the thought that Jesus wants us to live happy lives and prayer is the way, is the fact that all of the disciples were persecuted, and all but one died a martyr's death while being beheaded, or crucified, or being put to death by knives, spears, or stones. Jesus wouldn't expect them to be happy about this. Joyful? Yes. Happy? No. After the original disciples were martyred, the disciples who followed them also experienced severe persecution and were beaten, property taken, or put to death by fire, wild animals, and all manner of cruel deaths because they would not deny Jesus Christ. I'm sure these people prayed and asked God to remove the torture and death sentences imposed on them. But He didn't. Instead He took them into heaven for a better life. What would they say from their personal experience to hear that prayer is being taught as a way to get a car, or house or anything that prospers someone? What would they say about the goal of prayer being to simply make Christians happy and have a

better life? These were the courageous followers of Christ whose legacy of faith serves as the foundation we stand on today. I think you would hear a different prayer from them. You would likely hear, ***“Lord, help me to have the strength and courage to not deny You when they come after me or my family. Help me to stand firm when they take everything from me.”***

Even today we see an evil movement of Satan called ISIS that is persecuting Christians as was done in the first Century, and I'm sure Christians in those countries are praying with all their hearts that God will help them. You can understand why I have a real problem with anyone who teaches that God wants all of His children to be happy, happy, happy, with houses, cars, boats, or even goats, and that all disease and hardship is because of sin, and the way to get ahead and prosper is to ask God for these things through prayer. The people who teach this false message and manipulate people with their false promises need to look at the many godly people in this world today who are heroes of the faith as they struggle through life, and they will see that these people have very little of the material things that these ministries are telling their people to proclaim and expect, but they have unspeakable joy. The Gospel is not about prospering by the world's standards in this life. It is about standing strong in spite of the tragedies and persecutions we face, or not prospering financially. It is to be rich and have nothing, to be poor and have it all. It is about being content in all things, for the Treasure we have is not of this world. When we abide in Christ, we come to see things as Jesus saw things and we learn to appreciate the things He appreciated, and believe me, of all the people of the world who could have had all the riches this world and Satan offers, He turned it down. He was not into being prosperous by the world's standards as a means to find significance or safety. You can bet that if we are His disciple, we can expect it to be no other way with us. But there is good news about answered prayer, which I want to show you.

I mentioned a “key” that unlocks the promise Jesus made about prayer, so let's start with motive. I believe that many of our prayers are motivated by selfish wants, and this is a big reason for many of our unanswered prayers. James said it in his Epistle:

*You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.” James 4:3 (ESV)*

Therefore we need to understand that a selfish prayer is offensive to God and is likely not answered. But understand, just because we become selfless in our prayers we have not found the “key” to answered prayer. Our selfishness is a hindrance to prayer, and it needs to be removed. But it is not the “key.” Even our selfless prayers can be hindered if we are not using the “key” to unlock Jesus' promise. So, what is the “key”? We see it in the John 15 passage. What did Jesus say was the key? He said ***“If you abide in me, and my words abide in you.”*** We see the “key” in that verse. It is the prayers of a Christian who abides in Christ.

I continue to be amazed at the simplicity, but as well the all-encompassing benefit of the abiding relationship

we are given with Christ. We tend to dwell on the benefit of fruit being produced. But there is much more, and a prolific, fruitful prayer life is one of those benefits. Consider:

- Jesus said that our prayers would be answered *if* we abide in Him. (Note the *if*, meaning there is a condition) Why is this? I believe that abiding in Him creates a dynamic where we know the mind and heart of Christ in an issue and we know what to ask for. In other words our prayers harmonize with His Spirit within us, and this counters any selfish reason that slips in. If we do not abide in Him, we miss this needed insight. In 1 John 5:14 we are told, *“And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.”* Abiding in Christ causes us to ask according to His will, for we know His heart.
- Jesus also mentioned that if His words abide in us, He would answer our prayers. Along with wrong motives, I believe His words teach us to eliminate other hindrances to answered prayer such as unforgiveness, dishonoring our spouse, doubt, or even neglecting other people in need. His **words** become a “voice” of the Spirit to teach us how and what to pray for, and any hindrances that we do not see may be removed. Again, this causes our prayers to harmonize with His Spirit.
- Another benefit of abiding in Christ is that it is a faith-building endeavor, and faith is critical to answered prayer. This is why our prayer life is empowered by abiding in Christ, for like Jesus said, *“According to your faith be it done to you” Matthew 9:29 (ESV)*. Therefore, our abiding relationship with Christ creates greater faith, and this faith harmonizes with His Spirit within us as well.

I could make many more examples of the benefit of abiding in Christ as it relates to our prayer life. But I will only leave you with this one thing to remember. Jesus gave us a promise with a condition. Look at the condition if you want to find the “key” to unlock His promise. He said it clearly. **We must abide in Him, and this unlocks His promise of answered prayer.**