

# 10 Most Important Verses on Prayer in the Bible

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Prayer is both marvelous and mysterious. The idea of communicating with the Creator of the universe seems almost ludicrous. And certainly presumptuous. Not to mention intimidating.

Why would God want to talk with us? Is there a right and wrong way to pray? Why does God answer some prayers but not others? Does it matter that we only have a little [faith](#)?

Thankfully, the [Bible](#) gives us insight into the hows and whys of prayer. Since God invites us to talk with him, it's no surprise he gives us guidelines. I've compiled a list of what I consider the ten most important verses on prayer:

**1. Luke 18:13-14:** *“But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”*

These verses, from the well-known story of the Pharisee and the tax collector praying in the temple, reveals the prayer that allows us to

enter into a relationship with God: “God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” The tax collector was honest with God about his sin. He humbled himself, repented, and acknowledged his need of God’s mercy. God answered his prayer and saved him.

**Bottom line—the first step in developing a prayer life is calling upon God for salvation.**

**2. Psalm 66:18:** *“If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.”*

This verse from David’s psalm shows us a major hindrance to God’s willingness to hear our prayers—unconfessed sin. Some might ask, “If sin prevents God from hearing our prayers, then none of us have a chance, because we all sin, even after we’re saved.”

A careful reading of [Psalm 66:18](#), however, draws our attention to the word “cherished.” “If I had *cherished* sin...” To cherish sin means to embrace it. To love it, hold on to it, and refuse to give it up. This is vastly different from committing a sin that we regret, confess, and forsake as soon as the Holy Spirit brings it to our attention. God doesn’t expect us to be sinless, but he does call us to deal with our sin as soon as possible ([1 John 1:9](#)).

**Bottom line—we can’t live a consistently sinful lifestyle and expect God to hear our prayers.**

**3. Psalm 34:15:** *“The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry.”*

If we have a right relationship with God and are earnestly seeking to follow and honor him with our lives, we never have to wonder if he’s listening to our prayers. On the contrary, this verse assures us that he is carefully attuned to our lives and eager to hear every prayer that comes from our lips.

**Bottom line—God hears the prayers of those who put their trust in him.**

**4. Daniel 9:18:** *“We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy.”*

This beautiful excerpt from Daniel’s prayer on behalf of the Jews exiled in Babylon shows us a profound truth about prayer—that God answers

our prayers because of his mercy, not our good works. Many believers think their good works obligate or persuade God to act on their behalf. And while God does call us to live holy lives, it is not our obedience that moves God to answer our prayers, it is his great mercy toward us.

**Bottom line—God’s mercy, not our goodness, is the basis for answered prayers.**

**5. Psalm 5:3:** *“In the morning, O LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation.”*

The psalmist who penned [Psalm 5:3](#) models the attitude we should have when we pray—that of eager expectation. We should believe God will answer our prayers and diligently watch for his hand at work. The psalmist also shows us that when we pray early in the day, we have the rest of the day to anticipate God’s answer.

**Bottom line—when we pray, we can wait in eager anticipation for God to work on our behalf.**

**6. 1 John 5:14:** *“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.”*

God delights in answering prayers that align with his will. But how do we know what God’s will is? The most reliable way to know is by reading his Word. As we seek God through Bible reading and prayer, we get to know his heart and gain wisdom and spiritual insight. This gives us a greater understanding of how to pray according to his will, and a greater chance of having our prayers answered.

**Bottom line—God answers every prayer that aligns with his will.**

**7. James 4:3:** *“When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.”*

This verse from the book of James tells us why God says “No” to many of our prayers—they are selfish, self-centered, and sometimes downright bad for us. Because God is wise and loving, like any good parent, he will not give things that will harm us or others.

**Bottom line—God will say no to our prayers if we ask for something for the wrong reason or for the wrong purpose.**

**8. Matthew 26:42:** *“He (Jesus) went away a second time and prayed ‘My*

9. **Matthew 26:12:** *He (Jesus) went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done."*

Jesus set the supreme example of surrender and submission to the Father's will when he prayed for God to spare him from dying on the cross. Because he was fully human, he was fearful and reluctant to experience the agony of the crucifixion. Because he was fully God, he could have refused to die, but instead, in humble trust and submission, he prayed, "may your will be done."

On the surface, death by crucifixion seemed to end Christ's ministry. In reality, his death on the cross paved the way for countless believers to receive eternal life by believing in his death and resurrection.

**Bottom line—we can surrender our will to God's in complete confidence that he knows what's best.**

**9. Mark 9:24:** *"I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"*

This honest confession comes from a man whose son was demon-possessed. He wasn't fully convinced Jesus had the power to deliver his son, but he asked anyway.

This passage debunks two of the greatest misconceptions about prayer—that if we have enough faith, God will answer our prayers, and if we don't, he won't. Scripture doesn't support the idea that great faith produces great miracles and small faith prevents them. Instead, God tells us to ask in faith, believing that he can and will answer our prayers in the way he knows is best. Even frightened, tiny, mustard-seed faith like this father had can and does move the hand of God.

**Bottom line—it's not how much faith we have that matters, but who we have faith in.**

**10. James 5:16:** *"The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."*

What a beautiful affirmation James, the half-brother of Jesus, gives in this short verse. When we wonder if prayer accomplishes anything, he encourages us—not only is prayer powerful, but it's effective. "You're not wasting your time," he seems to call to us. "Keep praying! God is using your prayers to accomplish his will."

**Bottom line: The prayers of godly Christians work.**

I don't know why God uses the prayers of his people to accomplish his work in the world, but I'm glad he does. I'm humbled to think we can talk to him at any time of the day or night. I'm grateful that he's never too busy to hear our prayers and act on our behalf.

My prayer for us all is that we will never take for granted the privilege and the power of prayer.

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