

Elements of Powerful Praying: The Person, the Prayer, the Power

The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results (James 5:16 NLT).

THE PERSON

The best definition of prayer is conversation with God. The person talking with God and God Himself are participants in the conversation -- the prayer.

What kind of person has such access to God that he feels at ease talking with Him at any time, in any place and about anything? According to Scripture, a righteous person has such access.

What makes a person righteous? There is no natural righteousness in man (Isaiah 64:6, Ecclesiastes 7:20, Romans 3:23). The righteous man is righteous only because Christ's righteousness has been transferred to him through faith (Isaiah 53:11, 1 Peter 3:18).

David said the person with clean hands and a pure heart is allowed to stand in God's holy place (Psalm 24:3-4). The writer of Hebrews tells us that we can enter God's holy place with confidence by the blood of Jesus (10:19).

Once a person is washed clean, however, access to God is unlimited. Abraham, who walked and talked with God, was considered righteous because of his faith (Romans 4). God called Abraham His friend (James 2:23). *For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers.* . . . (1 Peter 3:12).

Recently on a beautiful bright sunny day, my husband and I were out for a walk. I observed a driver round a corner in front of us very slowly. She was driving through a deep puddle left from a heavy rain the day before. Her van was spotlessly clean. It was obvious to me that she was trying to keep it that way, so she was taking much care to keep dirt off her clean vehicle.

Christians need to take that same care with their spiritual lives. Although it is true that the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7), as long as we are on earth, there is the need for constant cleansing. There are spiritual mud puddles all around us. It takes work to go around them and stay clean. When, not if (1 John 1:8-10), we do get dirty again, we must go back to the wash and remove the road dirt. Satan loves to put obstacles in our path and get us dirty and distracted. He knows that the dirt can obscure our spiritual vision. Sometimes we are so lazy that we do not want to take the time to clean up. Our communication with God can be interrupted during those times.

Jesus promised that He and the Father would make their home with the one who loves Him and keeps His word (John 14:23). In the discourse about the true vine, He put home in terms of abiding with one another (John 15:4). The righteous person who abides in Jesus is a person of prayer who pleases God. The person of faith who seeks God is rewarded (Hebrews 11:6).

The righteous person lives by faith (Romans 1:7, Galatians 3:11). That person of faith is rewarded and pleases God (Hebrews 11:6). An essential element of a powerful prayer is the person: a righteous person.

THE PRAYER

What is an earnest prayer? For the answer, let's look at the what, where, when, why and how of prayer itself. Using James 5:16 as our guide, note "the earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results" (NLT).

WHAT

An earnest prayer is one in which the person praying is serious about his prayer. He is not flippant. He doesn't pray just to say he prayed. He doesn't pray to appear to be righteous. He prays because he is righteous. However, he is only righteous through a relationship with God through His Son Jesus Christ.

Earnest praying comes from the heart. The person praying honestly wants to hear from God. He wants God's will to be done. He wants God to be glorified in his life.

WHERE

A relationship with God is unlike any other relationship. He is always with you. An earnest prayer can be made anywhere. It is good to have a prayer closet, but a certain location is not necessary in order to pray. Even if you have a special place of prayer, when you leave that place, your prayer life should go with you.

WHEN

You can talk to God at any time: upon rising in the morning, driving, cooking a meal, before making an important decision at work, and at home. His word tells us to be in an attitude of prayer at all times. He is always ready to listen and respond.

WHY

Prayer is not necessary to tell God anything He does not already know. He knows who you are and what you need. Prayer is the opportunity to get to know God better. You need God: His salvation, His forgiveness, His guidance, His comfort, His healing, His strength, His Spirit in your life. You get to know God better through earnest prayer.

HOW

There are three types of prayers. Since God can hear your thoughts, you can talk to Him in your mind: silent prayer. It is possible to have a conversation with God at any time and in any place because He is always listening.

Spoken prayer is out loud: during a worship service, a fellowship meeting, before meals, etc. Voiced prayers can be either individual or group prayers. When you pray in public, it is possible for others to join you silently as well.

Written prayers of Scripture contain a treasure trove of information about God and His relationship to His children. Examine the prayers of David, Abraham and Paul. Many other faithful men and women of the ages have recorded their prayers.

Using a prayer journal has made a big difference in my own prayer life. Recording my prayers helps me see God's hand in the details of my life. Sometimes God said no to something that I did not need or that would not have been good for me. Many times I have recorded a request, but been guilty of forgetting to say "thank you" for the answer. Having a journal helps remedy that neglect.

An essential element of a powerful prayer is the prayer itself: an earnest prayer.

The Power

There is energy in the prayer of a righteous person. It is powerful, not because of the person praying, but because of the relationship he has with the Father through the Son. Family members who live (abide) together and have a good relationship with each other, are comfortable when they are home together. What an incredible thought that Jesus said He and the Father would make their home with us! The opportunities for conversation (prayer) are unlimited because we live together. At any time, day or night, a child of God has access to the Father, even calling him "Abba," the equivalent of our "Daddy." The Christian who stays clean knows that his prayers will not be hindered by sin in his life. *If our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God* (1 John 3:21). It is with this confidence that a righteous man can approach God with his fervent request. That prayer will be powerful and effective (1 John 3:22). Jesus reminded those with an earnest request to never give up (Matthew 7:7, Luke 18:3-5).

The New Century Version renders James 5:16 this way: *When a believing person prays, great things happen.*

For further study, examine the following: 2 Chronicles 7:12-15; Psalm 62:5, 109:4; Proverbs 15:8; Matthew 21:22; Acts 6:4; Philippians 4:6