

1 John 3:22 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

CLICK VERSE

To go directly to that verse

[INDEX FOR ALL VERSES ON 1 JOHN](#)

- [1 John 3:1](#)
- [1 John 3:2](#)
- [1 John 3:3](#)
- [1 John 3:4](#)
- [1 John 3:5](#)
- [1 John 3:6](#)
- [1 John 3:7](#)
- [1 John 3:8](#)
- [1 John 3:9](#)
- [1 John 3:10](#)
- [1 John 3:11](#)
- [1 John 3:12](#)
- [1 John 3:13](#)
- [1 John 3:14](#)
- [1 John 3:15](#)
- [1 John 3:16](#)
- [1 John 3:17](#)
- [1 John 3:18](#)
- [1 John 3:19](#)
- [1 John 3:20](#)
- [1 John 3:21](#)
- [1 John 3:22](#)
- [1 John 3:23](#)
- [1 John 3:24](#)

FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD AND HIS CHILDREN

Click chart to enlarge

Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission
Another Overview Chart - [1 John](#) - [Charles Swindoll](#)

BASIS OF FELLOWSHIP		BEHAVIOR OF FELLOWSHIP	
Conditions of Fellowship	Cautions of Fellowship	Fellowship Characteristics	Fellowship Consequences
Meaning of Fellowship 1 Jn 1:1-2:27		Manifestations of Fellowship 1 Jn 2:28-5:21	
Abiding in God's Light		Abiding in God's Love	
Written in Ephesus			
circa 90 AD			
From Talk Thru the Bible			

STUDY GUIDE

1 JOHN 3

What is this? On the photograph of the Observation Worksheet for this chapter you will find handwritten 5W/H questions (Who?

What? Where? When? Why? How?) on each verse to help you either personally study or lead a discussion on this chapter. The questions are generally very simple and are stated in such a way as to stimulate you to observe the text to discern the answer. As a reminder, given the truth that your ultimate Teacher is the Holy Spirit, begin your time with God with prayer such as Psalm 119:12+ "Blessed are You, O LORD; Teach me Your statutes." (you can vary it with similar prayers - Ps 119:18, 26, 33, 64, 66, 68, 108, 124, 135, 171, etc) The questions are generally highlighted in yellow and the answers in green. Some questions have no answers and are left to your observations and the illuminating/teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. Some qualifying thoughts - (1) Use "As is" - these are handwritten and will include mistakes I made, etc. (2) They may not be the best question for a given verse and my guess is that on some verses you will think of a far superior 5W/H question and/or many other questions.

Dr Howard Hendricks once gave an assignment to his seminary students to list as many observations as they could from Acts 1:8. He said "So far they've come up with more than 600 different ones! Imagine what fun you could have with 600 observations on this passage. Would you like to see Scripture with eyes like that?" (P. 63 [Living by the Book](#) - borrow) With practice you can! And needless to say, you will likely make many more observations and related questions than I recorded on the pages below and in fact I pray that the Spirit would indeed lead you to discover a veritable treasure chest of observations and questions! In Jesus' Name. Amen

Why am I doing this? **Mortimer Adler** among others helped me develop a questioning mindset as I read, seeking to read actively rather than passively. Over the years I have discovered that as I have practiced reading with a 5W/H questioning mindset, it has yielded more accurate interpretation and the good fruit of meditation. In other words, consciously interacting with the inspired Holy Word of God and the illuminating Holy Spirit has honed my ability to meditate on the Scripture, and my prayer is that this tool will have the same impact in your spiritual life. The benefits of meditation are literally priceless in regard to their value in this life and in the life to come (cf discipline yourself for godliness in 1Ti 4:8+.) For some of the benefits - see Joshua 1:8+ and Psalm 1:2-3+. It will take diligence and mental effort to develop an "inductive" ([especially an "observational"](#)), interrogative mindset as you read God's Word, but it bears repeating that the benefits in this life and the rewards in the next will make it more than worth the effort you invest! Dear Christian reader let me encourage you to strongly consider learning the skills of [inductive Bible study](#) and spending the rest of your life practicing them on the Scriptures and living them out in your daily walk with Christ.

Although Mortimer Adler's advice is from a secular perspective, his words are worth pondering...

Strictly, all reading is active. What we call passive is simply less active. Reading is better or worse according as it is more or less active. And one reader is better than another in proportion as he is capable of a greater range of activity in reading. (Adler's classic book [How to Read a Book is free online](#))

[John Piper](#) adds that "Insight or understanding is the product of intensive, headache-producing meditation on two or three verses and how they fit together. This kind of reflection and rumination is provoked by asking questions of the text. And you cannot do it if you hurry. Therefore, we must resist the deceptive urge to carve notches in our bibliographic gun. Take two hours to ask ten questions of Galatians 2:20+ and you will gain one hundred times the insight you would have attained by reading thirty pages of the New Testament or any other book. Slow down. Query. Ponder. Chew.... (John Dewey rightly said) "People only truly think when they are confronted with a problem. Without some kind of dilemma to stimulate thought, behavior becomes habitual rather than thoughtful."

"Asking questions is the key to understanding."

--Jonathan Edwards

That said, below are the [5W/H questions](#) for each verse in this chapter (click page to enlarge). This is not neatly typed but is handwritten and was used for leading a class discussion on this chapter, so you are welcome to use it in this "as is" condition...



1 John 3:22 and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight:

Greek - kai o ean aitomen (1PPAS) lambanomen (1PPAI) ap autou hoti tas entolas autou teroumen (1PPAI) kai ta aresta enopion autou poioumen .

KJV 1 John 3:22 And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

BGT 1 John 3:22 καὶ ὅταν αἰτῶμεν λαμβάνομεν παρ' αὐτοῦ, ὅτι τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ τηροῦμεν καὶ τὰ ἠρεστὰ ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ ποιοῦμεν.

NET 1 John 3:22 and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do the things that are pleasing to him.

CSB 1 John 3:22 and can receive whatever we ask from Him because we keep His commands and do what is pleasing in His sight.

ESV 1 John 3:22 and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.

NIV 1 John 3:22 and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him.

NLT 1 John 3:22 And we will receive from him whatever we ask because we obey him and do the things that please him.

NRS 1 John 3:22 and we receive from him whatever we ask, because we obey his commandments and do what pleases him.

NJB 1 John 3:22 and whatever we ask we shall receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what is acceptable to him.

NAB 1 John 3:22 and receive from him whatever we ask, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.

YLT 1 John 3:22 and whatever we may ask, we receive from Him, because His commands we keep, and the things pleasing before Him we do,

MIT 1 John 3:22 And whatever we ask, we receive from him because we comply with his commands and in his presence we do what he considers pleasing.

GWN 1 John 3:22 and receive from him anything we ask. We receive it because we obey his commandments and do what pleases him.

BBE 1 John 3:22 And he gives us all our requests, because we keep his laws and do the things which are pleasing in his eyes.

RSV 1 John 3:22 and we receive from him whatever we ask, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.

NKJ 1 John 3:22 And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.

ASV 1 John 3:22 and whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments and do the things that are pleasing in his sight.

Wuest - and whatever we are habitually asking we keep on receiving from Him, because His commandments we are habitually keeping with solicitous care, and the things which are pleasing in His penetrating gaze we are habitually doing. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used by permission)

- **Whatever** - 1Jn 5:14 Ps 10:17 Ps 34:4,15-17 Ps 50:15 Ps 66:18-19 Ps 145:18,19 Pr 15:29 Pr 28:9 Isa 1:15 Isa 55:6,7 Jer 29:12,13 Jer 33:3 Mt 7:7-8 21:22 Mk 11:24 Lu 11:9-13 John 9:31 Jn 14:13 Jn 15:7 Jn 16:23-24 Jas 1:5 Jas 5:16
- **because:** 1Jn 3:23,24 Mt 7:24,25 17:5 John 15:10 Ac 17:30 20:21
- **do:** John 6:29 8:29 9:31 Php 4:18 Col 1:10 Heb 13:21
- [1 John 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

Ps 17:1 (David) Hear a just cause, O LORD, give heed to my cry; Give ear to my prayer, which is not from deceitful lips.

Ps 34:15 The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous, and His ears are [open] to their cry.

Psalm 66:18 If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear; 19 But certainly God has heard; He has given heed to the voice of my prayer.

Psalm 145:18-19 The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, To all who call upon Him in truth. 19 He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He will also hear their cry and will save them.

Proverbs 15:8 The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, But the prayer of the upright is His delight.

Proverbs 15:29 The LORD is far from the wicked, But He hears the prayer of the righteous.

Proverbs 21:13 He who shuts his ear to the cry of the poor Will also cry himself and not be answered.

Proverbs 28:9 He who turns away his ear from listening to the law, Even his prayer is an abomination.

Isa 1:15 "So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you, Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood.

1 John 5:14-15 And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 15 And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.

John 14:13 "And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

John 15:7 "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you.

John 9:31 "We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing, and does His will, He hears him.

James 1:5 But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

James 4:2-3+ You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

1 Peter 3:7 You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

1 Peter 3:12 "FOR THE EYES OF THE LORD ARE UPON THE RIGHTEOUS, AND HIS EARS ATTEND TO THEIR PRAYER, BUT THE FACE OF THE LORD IS AGAINST THOSE WHO DO EVIL."

Hebrews 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

AMAZING GRACE: WE CAN HAVE CONFIDENCE TO RECEIVE ANSWERS FROM GOD!

And - John continues to elaborate on the advantages **when our heart does not condemn us** (1Jn 3:21) and here unites communion with God with answered prayers from God. It logically follows, that if we are conscious of our acceptance before Him (1Jn 3:21), we will be comfortable in our asking of Him.

Whatever we ask ([aiteo](#) - present tense) **we receive** ([lambano](#) - present tense) **from Him** - **We ask** in the present tense signifies keep on asking (persistence in prayer, cp 1Th 5:17+). **Receive** is in the present tense which balances the continual asking with continual receiving, not always exactly what we want or think best but what God knows to be the best. Our habitual practice should be to **ask!** Are you asking? The pronoun **whatever** leaves the "door wide open" (so to speak) for requests of God - anything, anytime, but with qualifications. Indeed, this is a "dangerous" passage if taken out of context! Some have done so and presumptively sought to **ask** God for things that are clearly not in His will for us. This verse is not a "genie in a bottle" to be rubbed and receive what one wishes! The one who can claim this verse, is the one who is obeying His word (**keep...do**). In the next chapter John adds "And this is the confidence (boldness) which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him." (1Jn 5:14-15+)

Spurgeon on ask... receive - Notice the link between confidence as to our rightness and power in prayer. When a child has done wrong, and knows it, he cannot run to his father, and ask for favors as he used to do; he feels timid in his father's presence because of the sense of his guilt. But if you and I know that we have endeavored with all our heart to love the Lord and our fellow-men and to act righteously in all things, we have a saved confidence which enables us to speak with God as a man speaketh with his friend; and this kind of confidence God greatly loves and he listens to those who possess it. Such people may ask what they will of God; they have learned to bring their minds into conformity with the will of God's, so the desire of their heart shall be granted to them.

Reuben Archer Torrey calls 1 John 3:22 "One of the most significant verses in the Bible on prayer." (See his chapter below on [OBEYING AND PRAYING](#))

Hiebert on **we receive from Him** - The present tense, "receive," indicates the repeated answers received, while "of Him" makes clear that these answers are not merely fortuitous circumstances but come from Him as His specific response. John at once adds that this blessed experience of answered prayer is conditioned by our obedient and willing service.

John MacArthur - The second benefit of love is answered prayer (see 1Jn 3:19). Since love is the heart of obedience to the law (cf. Mt 22:37–40; Ro 13:8–10), its presence in a life evidences submission to God which He blesses by answered prayers (Borrow [MacArthur Study Bible page 1970](#))

Reformation Study Bible - Jesus expressed such confidence in the Father (John 11:41, 42) and encouraged His disciples to have similar confidence (John 14:13, 14). This confidence depends on the awareness that our desires are attuned to God's (1 John 5:14, 15).

The answer may not always be in the form that we expect, but it will be better.

A T Robertson writes that "no limitations are placed here save that of complete fellowship with God, which means complete surrender of our will to that of God our Father. See the clear teaching of Jesus on this subject in Mark 11:24; Luke 11:9; John 14:12; 16:23 and His example (Mk 14:36 = Mt. 26:39 = Lk 22:42). The answer may not always be in the form that we expect, but it will be better."

Jesus makes a similar promise to His disciples in John 15 declaring that **if you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you.**" (Jn 15:7+) While all believers positionally remain in (abide in) Jesus by virtue of God's immutable covenant, not all believers are abiding in fellowship with Him. In context clearly disobedience (sin) disrupts our fellowship - so if we fail to keep His commandments (in context especially loving the brethren) or failing to do the things that please Him, we are clearly not fulfilling the conditions to assure receipt of the promise that He will give us whatever we ask!

John MacArthur makes the point that "Boldness in prayer is therefore clear evidence of a changed heart. Because they know God as "Abba! Father!" (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6), believers realize that anything they ask within His will (cf. John 14:13–14) He is going to hear because He has promised to meet all their needs (Phil. 4:19; cf. Ps. 23:1; 2 Cor. 9:8)." (See [1-3 John - Volume 5 - Page 146](#))

God answers every prayer, but many petitions receive a negative answer. In his wisdom God knows exactly what serves our spiritual welfare.

Simon Kistemaker - God answers our requests when our objective is to glorify Him, to promote His rule, and to do His will. God answers every prayer, but many petitions receive a negative answer. In his wisdom God knows exactly what serves our spiritual welfare. ([Epistles of John- Simon J. Kistemaker](#))

Prayer is the most characteristic and the most fundamental relationship that a Christian can experience. Prayer is the expression of dependence on a loving God...

Ray Stedman: "What John is saying is, the condition by which prayer is answered, and answered abundantly (cf Eph 3:20), is that we make repeated decisive acts of fulfilling the demands of love toward another, depending upon the power of Jesus Christ (HIS SPIRIT) within us to perform it. That is 'believing on the Name of the Son of God,' counting on His authority, on His power."... "Part of the reason why so many are finding Christianity to be boring and mediocre and often sterile is because they are not experiencing this kind of Christian living. Many young people have almost lost all hope that Christianity can ever do or be what its glowing terms describe. The reason is that they have not entered into this kind of relationship, where each day, every day, they experience the glorious adventure of seeing a living God at work, answering prayer and giving to them things that they ask. But in this passage we have a beautiful picture of the normal life of a Christian. It is all centered in prayer, because prayer is the most characteristic and the most fundamental relationship that a Christian can experience. Prayer is the expression of dependence on a loving God, and the whole Christian life, as we have learned in many other passages, is to be characterized by a continuous attitude and spirit of prayer. 'Pray without ceasing' {1 Th 5:17 KJV}, says the Apostle Paul. This is what exciting Christian living demands." ([Power in Prayer](#))

CONDITIONS FOR ANSWERED PRAYER

Because ([hoti](#)) is a term of explanation. What is John explaining? How believers can be assured to receive what they ask from God. He goes on to explain that it is when they obey (keep... do), then they receive when they ask.

We keep ([tereo](#) - present tense) **His commandments** ([entole](#)) **and do** (poieo - present tense) **the things that are pleasing** ([arestos](#)) **in His sight** ([enopion](#)) - John explains why one can receive what he asks of God. In a few words, the conditions to be met to assure receipt of divine answers are (1) obedience and (2) walking/living in a manner pleasing to the Lord. In fact **do what is pleasing to Him** is simply another way of expressing obedience. God is pleased when we obey him. Clearly obedience is the path to pleasing God.

We keep ([tereo](#)) in the present tense means we observe, keep watch over, heed, guard His commandments as our habit practice. John is not saying that keeping commandments earns God's answers to prayer, but keeping God's commandments does show we are saved. Why does this show one is saved? Because there is no way we could "**keep**" the commands in our own, natural strength, the strength of the flesh. What we could not do, God did in the New Covenant declaring "I will put My Spirit within you and **cause you to walk in My statutes** (GOD'S PART), and you will be **careful to observe** (OUR PART) My ordinances." (Ezekiel 36:27+) In short, the fact that an individual can habitually keep God's commands is clear evidence of that such a person has **passed out of death into life** (1Jn 3:14), **is of the truth** (1Jn 3:19), is born again and can expect his/her prayers to be answered.

*Obedience is the indispensable condition,
not the meritorious cause, of answered prayer.*

John Stott - John does not mean to imply that God hears and answers our prayers merely for the subjective reason that we have a clear conscience and an uncondemning heart. There is an objective, moral reason, namely because we keep his commandments, and, more generally, do those things that are pleasing in his sight. Obedience is the indispensable condition, not the meritorious cause, of answered prayer. Whatever we ask, we receive describes the Christian's habitual experience (the verbs are in the present tense), and Candlish ([1 John 3:22, 23 Righteousness Essential to our Pleasing God and to His Hearing Us](#)) is right to point to the incarnate Son as the supreme example of pleasing God and so being heard by God (Jn. 8:29+, Jn 11:41-42+). The statement echoes our Lord's promise, where the same two verbs occur: "**Ask**, (present imperative = Keep on asking) and it will be given to you...for every one who **asks receives**." (Mt 7:7-8+)... **Law** is probably right that 'to obey His commands' is the condition of being heard, simply because such obedience is the evidence that 'our will is in inward harmony with God's'. We must also pray in Christ's name (John 16:23-24+), and for God's glory (Jas 4:2-3+), while the petitioner must be cleansed from his sins (Ps. 66:18; Pr. 15:29; Isa. 59:1-2; Jas 5:16), forgiven and himself forgiving others (Mark 11:25+), and believing God's promises (Mt. 21:22+; Mk 11:24+; cf. Jas 1:5-7+) as well as obeying his commands. (Borrow [The Letters of John page 152](#))

*The basis for answered prayer is not blind obedience
but a desire to please God with dedicated love.*

Simon Kistemaker makes a good point asking "Is John stating two prerequisites to answered prayer? Really not. Obeying God's commands must never be done under compulsion or for the purpose of [selfishly] receiving [earthly] rewards (**ED: THAT IS A WORK'S BASED MENTALITY - THINKING WE CAN EARN OR DESERVE GOD'S FAVOR**). The Christian fulfills God's command with a cheerful heart that expresses gratitude. John is saying that when we obey His commands, we are doing what is pleasing to God. By adding the clause and do what pleases him, John rules out any notion of merit; pleasing God flows forth from love and loyalty. Implicitly John reminds his readers of Jesus. During his earthly ministry, Jesus always sought to please the Father by doing his will (John 8:29+). The basis for answered prayer is not blind obedience but a desire to please God with dedicated love. And God fulfills our requests because of the bond of love (**ED: AND I WOULD ADD HIS COVENANT WITH US**) and fellowship between Father and child. ([Epistles of John](#))

*Obedience is the evidence
that our will is in harmony with His*

Sam Storms - It is important to combine this verse with the rest of Scripture on prayer. Prayer is to be "according to His will" (1 John 5:14), "in Christ's name" (John 16:23-24), "for God's glory" (James 4:2-3), etc. The meaning of 1Jn 3:22-23 in regard to prayer and its answer is best explained by **Law**:

"The key to the interpretation of the present passage is given in John 15:17 **If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you.**' It is no external and arbitrary but an intrinsically necessary condition of successful prayer that is here expressed. Our prayers are answered, because our will is in inward harmony with God's, the evidence of this being that we '**keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.**' In our actions we prove that God's will is our will and when we pray, our will does not change...The prayers of those who 'keep God's commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight,' are nothing else than echoes of God's own voice, impulses of the Divine Will itself, throbbing in the strivings of the human will and, in the mystical circulation of the Eternal Life, returning to their source" ([Tests of Life - A Study of First Epistle of St John](#)).

Simply put, obedience is the evidence that our will is in harmony with His. ([Sam Storms- First John 3:10b-24](#))

Below are some passages on pleasing the Lord that also emphasize the role of praying for this pleasing walk.

Jn 8:29 "And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are **pleasing to Him**." (Believers are called walk as He walked - 1Jn 2:6)

2 Corinthians 5:9-10+ Therefore also we have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to **bepleasing to Him**. (**Why?**) 10 (+) For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Ephesians 5:10+ trying to learn what is **pleasing to the Lord**.

Colossians 1:10+ (A PRAYER PETITION) so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, **to please [Him] in all respects**, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

Colossians 3:20+ Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is **well-pleasing to the Lord**.

1 Thessalonians 4:1+ Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that, as you received from us [instruction] as to how you ought to walk and **please God** (just as you actually do walk), that you may excel still more.

Hebrews 13:20-21+ (A PRAYER PETITION) Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, [even] Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing (GOD'S PROVISION) to do (MY RESPONSIBILITY) His will, working (GOD'S PROVISION) in us that which is **pleasing in His sight**, through Jesus Christ, to Whom [be] the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Hiebert - Some view the further statement "and do those things that are pleasing in his sight" as simply an equivalent restatement. But in this epistle such restatements characteristically mark an advance in the thought. We accept that the two are not the same; the first calls for obedience to His commands, which may be carried out in a slavish spirit (cf. the older brother in Luke 15:28–30); the second implies a spontaneous activity motivated by love, freely undertaken because Christian love recognizes them as "those things that are pleasing in his sight." To **illustrate**: A farmer's wife and her ten-year-old daughter were just finishing their breakfast when a phone call urgently requested the mother to come to a neighbor's home a short distance away because of an emergency. Before leaving, the mother kindly asked her daughter to wash the dishes and tidy the kitchen while she was gone. Prompted by her love, the daughter gladly consented. She washed and carefully replaced the dishes, cleared off the kitchen stove, and swept the floor. Since her mother was still not back, she went into her brother's room and made the bed and cleaned the room. Then she took a broom and carefully swept the living room floor and the front porch because she knew it would please her mother. Her love prompted her to go beyond that which had been commanded. So the believer often faces situations in his own life which may not be covered by a specific commandment, but his love prompts him to act in ways he knows would be pleasing to the Lord.

THOUGHT - This study begs several questions - How's your prayer life? Are you experiencing answers to your prayers? If not why not? Could it be that you need to meditate a while on John's explanation of how believers can be assured of having God answer their prayers? And be sure to add [the passages in Related Passages](#) to your meditation asking what each teaches about prayer?

Ask (154) aiteo means to ask for something or make petition. It can mean to ask with a sense of urgency and even to the point of demanding. For example, **Thayer** notes that the use of **aiteo** in 1Cor 1:22 conveys a stronger sense of *demand*. One gets that same sense of **aiteo** in Mt 27:20 (in fact NJB translates it "demand.") **Aiteo** is sometimes combined with other prayer words like **proseuchomai** (Mt 21:22, Col 1:9), so the idea of aiteo is to be asking for something while praying (proseuchomai). Of children of God asking their Father (Mt 6:8). In Mt 7:8-11 three of the uses (Mt 7:8-9, 11) of **aiteo** are in the present tense picturing continued asking. Of the sons of Zebedee making request (**present tense**) of Jesus (Mt 20:20) In Mt 5:42 commands His readers to be generous with those **asking** (may allude to begging; giving alms was viewed highly in the ancient world). The derivative noun **aitema (155)** is used in Php 4:6 and 1Jn 5:15 of requests, in the sense of a petition of men to God, both NT uses in the plural. In Lk 23:24 **aitema** is used more in the sense of a demand by the Jews to Pilate.

AITEO IN JOHN'S WRITINGS - Jn. 4:9; Jn. 4:10; Jn. 11:22; Jn. 14:13; Jn. 14:14; Jn. 15:7; Jn. 15:16; Jn. 16:23; Jn. 16:24; Jn. 16:26; 1 Jn. 3:22; 1 Jn. 5:14; 1 Jn. 5:15; 1 Jn. 5:16

Keep (reserve, guard, heed, kept in custody, observe, preserve) **(5083) tereo** from teros = a guard or warden - this should help give you an idea of the sense of the verb tero) means to keep an eye on, to keep something in view, to hold firmly, to attend carefully or to watch over (Jesus' ask His Father for His watchful care for His disciples in Jn 17:11). Tereo speaks of guarding something which is in one's possession. It means to watch as one would some precious thing. The idea is to observe attentively, to heed, to keep

watch over and to retain in custody.

Tereo with the meaning of obey - Mt 19:17, Mt 23:3 (tereo = observe), Mt 28:20, Jn 8:51, 52 (one who keeps Jesus' Word = a believer = one who will never see the second death in hell), Jn 9:16 (keep = observe the Sabbath), Jn 14:15 (description of a genuine disciple - love is not just with one's lips but is validated by one's life lived in loving obedience to God), Jn 14:21, 23, 24 (no love = no obedience = not a believer - Note Jesus is not talking about legalistic obedience but Spirit enabled obedience which is the only obedience that pleases the Father!), Jn 15:10 (used twice), Jn 15:20 (used twice), Jn 17:6 (the 11 disciples), Acts 15:5, 1Ti 6:14, James 2:10, 1Jn 2:3, 4, 5, 3:22, 1Jn 3:24, 1Jn 5:2, 3, Rev 1:3 (heed), Rev 2:26, 3:3, 3:8, 3:10, 12:17, 14:12, Rev 22:7 (heeds), Rev 22:9.

Tereo with meaning of keep watch or guard - Mt 27:36, 27:54, Mt 28:4 (guards = tereo), Jn 17:11, 12, Jn 17:15 (with nuance of protection from Satan), Acts 12:5, Acts 12:6 (watching), Acts 16:23, Acts 24:23, 25:4, 25:21 (held in custody), 1Jn 5:18, Jude 1:1, 6,

TEREO IN JOHN'S WRITINGS - Jn. 2:10; Jn. 8:51; Jn. 8:52; Jn. 8:55; Jn. 9:16; Jn. 12:7; Jn. 14:15; Jn. 14:21; Jn. 14:23; Jn. 14:24; Jn. 15:10; Jn. 15:20; Jn. 17:6; Jn. 17:11; Jn. 17:12; Jn. 17:15 1 Jn. 2:3; 1 Jn. 2:4; 1 Jn. 2:5; 1 Jn. 3:22; 1 Jn. 3:24; 1 Jn. 5:3; 1 Jn. 5:18; Rev. 1:3; Rev. 2:26; Rev. 3:3; Rev. 3:8; Rev. 3:10; Rev. 12:17; Rev. 14:12; Rev. 16:15; Rev. 22:7; Rev. 22:9

Commandments (instruction, order, requirement) (1785) (entole from **en** = in, upon + **téllō** = accomplish, charge, command) refers to some type of demand or requirement. Entole refers to some type of demand or requirement. A general injunction, charge, precept of moral and religious nature. Commandments are those given by our Lord either personally while on earth or through His apostles in the New Testament Books. Of the 67 uses, all but three (Lk 15:29; Col 4:10; Titus 1:14) refer specifically to divine commandments. Keeping God's commandments is the way we show that we love Him (we can say it, but our actions need to authenticate our words. (Jn 14:15, 21, 1Jn 2:3).

ENTOLE IN JOHN'S EPISTLES - 13x 1 Jn. 2:3; 1 Jn. 2:4; 1 Jn. 2:7; 1 Jn. 2:8; 1 Jn. 3:22; 1 Jn. 3:23; 1 Jn. 3:24; 1 Jn. 4:21; 1 Jn. 5:2; 1 Jn. 5:3; 2 Jn. 1:4; 2 Jn. 1:5; 2 Jn. 1:6

Do (4160) (**poieo**) means to perform and here in the **present tense** means to make it our habitual practice to do those things that please Him. The only way we can accomplish this is by jettisoning self-reliance and instead relying on the Holy Spirit in us to give us the desire and the power to be pleasing to God (Php 2:13NLT+). Then we can work out our salvation in fear and trembling (Php 2:12+). Good works that please God are works with an "o" knocked out of the work "**good**." ("**God works**") The Spirit must initiate and enable the works, and yet in the mysterious ways of God, the saint still must choose to walk in those good works "*which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*" (Eph 2:10). I fear many saints are doing **their** works, not **His** works. And as Jesus said "apart from Me you can **DO** nothing." (Jn 15:5).

POIEO IN JOHN'S EPISTLES - 1 Jn. 1:6; 1 Jn. 1:10; 1 Jn. 2:17; 1 Jn. 2:29; 1 Jn. 3:4; 1 Jn. 3:7; 1 Jn. 3:8; 1 Jn. 3:9; 1 Jn. 3:10; 1 Jn. 3:22; 1 Jn. 5:2; 1 Jn. 5:10; 3 Jn. 1:5; 3 Jn. 1:6; 3 Jn. 1:10

Pleasing (701) (**arestos** from **aresko**) is an adjective which describes that which is acceptable, pleasing, satisfying, agreeable, that which elicits an agreeable response, gratifying. The root verb **aresko** is related to another verb **euaresteo** which means well pleasing and is used to describe a worthy walk, a walk that pleases God in the Septuagint = Enoch (Ge 5:22, 24), Noah (Ge 6:9), Abraham (Ge 17:1). The first use in the Septuagint is Ge 3:6 where Eve says the tree was good for food and that it was a **delight** (Hebrew = taavah from avah - to incline or desire = a desire; Lxx = arestos) to the eyes." In Dt 6:18 (cp Dt 12:28, 13:18, 21:9) Moses writes "You shall do what is **right** (Hebrew = yashar - straight, upright; Lxx = arestos) and good in the sight of the LORD," whereas Dt 12:8 speaks of doing what is "**right** (Hebrew = yashar; Lxx = arestos) in your own eyes." It is interesting that many of the uses in Deuteronomy refer to doing what is pleasing "in the sight of the LORD."

It is notable that the root verb **aresko** "originally meant "to set up a positive relation," hence "to make peace," then aesthetically "to please," with such nuances as a. "to be well disposed," b. "to take a pleasant attitude," and c. "to please."" (TDNT)

Arestos - 4x - Usage: desirable(1), pleased(1), pleasing(1), things that are pleasing(1).

John 8:29 "And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are **pleasing** to Him."

Acts 6:2 So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, "It is not **desirable** for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables.

Acts 12:3 When he saw that it **pleased** the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. Now it was during the days of Unleavened Bread.

1 John 3:22 and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are **pleasing** in His sight.

Arestos - 35 verses in the Septuagint -

Genesis 3:6 When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

Genesis 16:6 But Abram said to Sarai, "Behold, your maid is in your power; do to her what is good in your sight." So Sarai treated her harshly, and she fled from her presence.

Exodus 15:26 And He said, "If you will give earnest heed to the voice of the LORD your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians; for I, the LORD, am your healer."

Leviticus 10:19 But Aaron spoke to Moses, "Behold, this very day they presented their sin offering and their burnt offering before the LORD. When things like these happened to me, if I had eaten a sin offering today, would it have been good in the sight of the LORD?"

Deuteronomy 6:18 "You shall do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD, that it may be well with you and that you may go in and possess the good land which the LORD swore to give your fathers,

Deuteronomy 12:8 "You shall not do at all what we are doing here today, every man doing whatever is right in his own eyes;

25 "You shall not eat it, so that it may be well with you and your sons after you, for you will be doing what is right in the sight of the LORD.

28 "Be careful to listen to all these words which I command you, so that it may be well with you and your sons after you forever, for you will be doing what is good and right in the sight of the LORD your God.

Deuteronomy 13:18 if you will listen to the voice of the LORD your God, keeping all His commandments which I am commanding you today, and doing what is right in the sight of the LORD your God.

Deuteronomy 21:9 "So you shall remove the guilt of innocent blood from your midst, when you do what is right in the eyes of the LORD.

Ezra 7:18 "Whatever seems good to you and to your brothers to do with the rest of the silver and gold, you may do according to the will of your God.

Ezra 10:11 "Now therefore, make confession to the LORD God of your fathers and do His will; and separate yourselves from the peoples of the land and from the foreign wives."

Nehemiah 9:24 "So their sons entered and possessed the land. And You subdued before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, And You gave them into their hand, with their kings and the peoples of the land, To do with them as they desired.

37 "Its abundant produce is for the kings Whom You have set over us because of our sins; They also rule over our bodies And over our cattle as they please, So we are in great distress.

Proverbs 21:3 To do righteousness and justice Is desired by the LORD more than sacrifice.

Isaiah 38:3 and said, "Remember now, O LORD, I beseech You, how I have walked before You in truth and with a whole heart, and have done what is good in Your sight." And Hezekiah wept bitterly.

Jeremiah 9:14 but have walked after the stubbornness of their heart and after the Baals, as their fathers taught them,"

Jeremiah 16:12 'You too have done evil, even more than your forefathers; for behold, you are each one walking according to the stubbornness of his own evil heart, without listening to Me.

Jeremiah 18:12 "But they will say, 'It's hopeless! For we are going to follow our own plans, and each of us will act according to the stubbornness of his evil heart.'

Daniel 4:1 Nebuchadnezzar the king to all the peoples, nations, and men of every language that live in all the earth: "May your peace abound!

R. A. Torrey in **The Power Of Prayer** wrote this comment on 1Jn 3:22 - "There are two parts to John's description of those whose prayers God always answers. The first part of the description is, We keep His commandments. God hears the prayers of those who keep His commandments, that is, those who study His Word each day to find out what His will is, and who, when they discover what His will is, do it every time they find it. God demands reciprocity: He demands that we shall listen to His Word before He listens to our prayers. If we have a sharp ear for God's commandments, then God will have a sharp ear for our petitions; but if we turn a deaf ear to one of God's commandments, God will turn a deaf ear to every one of our petitions. If we do the things that God bids us to do, then God will do the things that we ask Him to do; but if we do not pay close attention to God's Word, God will pay no attention

whatever to our prayers. To put it all in a single sentence: If we wish God to answer our prayers, we must study God's Word diligently each day, to find out what the will of God is, and do that will every time we find it."

C H Spurgeon - The warrant of faith (Full sermon [The Warrant of Faith](#))

'And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.' 1 John 3:23

If we heartily trust our soul with Christ, our sins, through his blood, are forgiven, and his righteousness is imputed to us. The mere knowledge of these facts will not, however, save us, unless we really and truly trust our souls in the Redeemer's hands. Faith must act in this wise: 'I believe that Jesus came to save sinners, and therefore, sinner though I be, I rest myself on him; I know that his righteousness justifies the ungodly; I, therefore, though ungodly, trust in him to be my righteousness; I know that his precious blood in heaven prevails with God on the behalf of them that come unto him; and since I come unto him, I know by faith that I have an interest in his perpetual intercession.' Now, I have enlarged the one thought of believing on God's Son Jesus Christ. 'Believing' is most clearly explained by that simple word 'trust.' Believing is partly the intellectual operation of receiving divine truths, but the essence of it lies in relying upon those truths. I believe that, although I cannot swim, yonder friendly plank will support me in the flood; I grasp it, and am saved: the grasp is faith. I am promised by a generous friend that if I draw upon his banker, he will supply all my needs; I joyously confide in him, and as often as I am in want I go to the bank, and am enriched: my going to the bank is faith. Thus faith is accepting God's great promise, contained in the person of his Son. It is taking God at his word, and trusting in Jesus Christ as being my salvation, although I am utterly unworthy of his regard. Sinner, if you take Christ to be your Saviour this day, you are justified.

SPURGEON'S INSIGHTFUL DESCRIPTION OF THE "DYNAMICS" OF PRAYER -

We believe that the prayers of Christians are a part of the machinery of providence, cogs in the great wheel of destiny, and when God leads his children to pray, he has already set in motion a wheel that is to produce the result prayed for, and the prayers offered are moving as a part of the wheel.

WAYS TO PLEASE GOD - Russell Spray

Text: "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight" (1 John 3:22).

I. Be Dedicated to Him.

"... present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God ..." (Rom. 12:1).

- A. Surrender yourself to God. Yield all your hopes, plans, desires—past, present, and future—to Him (Ps. 37:5).
- B. Jesus prayed, "Not my will but thine be done" (Luke 22:42). We, too, must surrender our will to His will.

II. Be Dependent on Him.

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding" (Prov. 3:5).

- A. To depend means to trust and rely on the Lord. People may fail and disappoint us, but Jesus never fails.
- B. As we depend on the Lord, we are enabled to accomplish things for Him. Faith enables us to believe He is working.

III. Be Delighted in Him.

"Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart" (Ps. 37:4).

- A. Rejoice in the Lord. God adds blessings when we do. He is displeased with drab, negative Christians.
- B. Delighting ourselves in the Lord enables us to win others to Him. Everyone seeks happiness. The joy of the Lord is attractive to these searchers (Phil. 4:4–5).

IV. Be Directed by Him.

"In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Prov. 3:6).

- A. Being directed by God means He is leading us to the right places, the right people, and accomplishing His purposes in our lives.
- B. God directs us according to our faith. Faith pleases Him. Miracles happen when we follow His guidance.

V. Be Dynamic for Him.

"... Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in ..." (Luke 14:23).

- A. We are His witnesses. We are to go, to speak, and to bring the lost to a saving knowledge of Him.
 - B. When we work for God, He works for us. We receive what we ask of Him because we do the things that please Him (1 John 3:22).
-

A Surprise Answer - Read: 1 John 3:16-23 | Whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. —1 John 3:22

When Josh McDowell's mother died, he was not sure of her salvation. He became depressed. Was she a Christian or not? "Lord," he prayed, "somehow give me the answer so I can get back to normal. I've just got to know." It seemed like an impossible request.

Two days later, Josh drove out to the ocean and walked to the end of a pier to be alone. There sat an elderly woman in a lawnchair, fishing. "Where's your home originally?" she asked. "Michigan—Union City," Josh replied. "Nobody's heard of it. I tell people it's a suburb of—" "Battle Creek," interrupted the woman. "I had a cousin from there. Did you know the McDowell family?"

Stunned, Josh responded, "Yes, I'm Josh McDowell." "I can't believe it," said the woman. "I'm a cousin to your mother." "Do you remember anything at all about my mother's spiritual life?" asked Josh. "Why sure—your mom and I were just girls—teenagers—when a tent revival came to town. We both went forward to accept Christ." "Praise God!" shouted Josh, startling the surrounding fishermen.

God delights to give us what we ask when it is in His will. Never underestimate His desire to respond to our prayers. A surprise may be just around the corner.

By Dennis J. De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

That long-sought wish, oh, how I prayed,
I thought it not divinely willed,
And then the joyous, tear-stained smile
Of faith triumphant, hope fulfilled!
—Brandt

If you get definite with God, He'll get definite with you.

OBEDY GOD AND RECEIVE WHAT YOU ASK. [77 Irrefutable Truths of Prayer - Page 65](#)

And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.

—1 John 3:22

Jesus declares that when we love Him we obey Him (John 15). We live to please Him and what pleases Him is obedience, i.e. doing those things that are pleasing in His sight.

Disobeying? Then don't ask. When you live to please Him, you will never want to ask for anything that He doesn't want to give you.

Disobedience ...

- shuts the windows of heaven.
- produces brazen heavens.
- paralyzes prayer.
- produces powerlessness

At times you may cry out, "Why isn't God answering my prayers and granting what I ask?" Now you know the possible answer—disobedience.

Before you pray ...

- obey.
- please God.
- do what He commands.

Lord,

Before my every prayer, break my pride, convict my heart, show me any area of disobedience in my life. Amen.

And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight (1 John 3:22).

We live on a little mud ball called Earth. It's just a little speck in the universe, and ours is just one universe among countless

universes. The eternal, omnipresent, omnipotent God has a throne. Have you meditated on the fact that you can touch that throne? You can actually move the One who sits upon that exalted throne. To do so is not a matter of your earnestness. It is a matter of your obedience, the surrender of your will to the will of God as revealed in His Word.

Whom does God hear? The man who keeps the Lord's commandments is heard. This man comes with confidence before the throne of God because he not only has access but also is welcomed.

You have access, but are you welcomed by the Father? If you listen to God's commandments, He listens to your prayers. If you keep His commandments, doing those things that are pleasing in His sight, your prayers will be answered. This is the testimony of the Word of God. - Joseph Carroll

George Mueller

The promise of today's text (1 John 3:13–24) carries two important conditions—"if our heart condemn us not" (v. 21), and if "we keep His commandments" (v. 22). In other words, when we are in the center of God's will and have a clear conscience, the resources of heaven are at our disposal. The following incident vividly illustrates this truth:

The captain of an ocean steamer tells that on one occasion his ship was engulfed in a dense fog off the coast of Newfoundland. It was Wednesday evening and the captain had been on the bridge for 24 hours when he was startled by someone tapping on his shoulder. He turned and saw one of his passengers—George Mueller.

"Captain," said Mueller, "I must be in Quebec on Saturday afternoon."

"That's impossible!" replied the captain. "I'm helpless!"

Mueller suggested, "Let's go down to the chart room and pray."

The captain thought he had a lunatic on board. "Do you know how dense the fog is?" he asked.

"No," came the reply, "my eye is not on the density of the fog, but on the living God who controls every circumstance of my life." Once in the chart room, Mueller got down on his knees and prayed, "O Lord, if it is consistent with Thy will, please remove this fog in 5 minutes. Thou knowest the engagement Thou didst make for me in Quebec for Saturday. I believe it is Thy will." Within a matter of minutes the fog lifted.

Prevailing Prayer

Adapted from an Outline by Rosalind Goforth

SCRIPTURE: Various

INTRODUCTION: In her 1921 book, *How I Know God Answers Prayer*, missionary/prayer warrior Rosalind Goforth suggested nine secrets to prevailing prayer.

1. Contrite Humility before God and Forsaking of Sin (2 Chr. 7:14).
2. Seeking God with the Whole Heart (Jer. 29:12–13).
3. Faith in God (Mark 11:23–24).
4. Obedience (1 John 3:22).
5. Dependence on the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:26).
6. Importunity (Mark 7:24–30 and Luke 11:5–10).
7. Asking in Accordance with God's Will (1 John 5:14).
8. In Christ's Name (John 14:13–14).
9. Willing to Make Amends for Wrongs to Others (Matt. 5:23–24).

CONCLUSION: "As the discerning soul can plainly see, all the conditions mentioned in this list may be included in the one word Abide." —Rosalind Goforth

ANSWERED PRAYER - John MacArthur [Strength for Today: Daily Readings for a Deeper Faith - Page 17](#)

And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight."¹
JOHN 3:22

◇◇◇

The answers to believers' prayers bring assurance of salvation.

Another reliable way to know if you are a Christian is if God answers your prayers. The apostle John gives us the infallible reasoning for this statement. First, you can know your prayers will be answered if you keep His commandments (1 John 3:22). And second, John says the only way you can obey God's commandments is if you belong to Him (v. 24). Therefore, an obedient believer proves

He is abiding in Christ and receives further assurance when his prayers are answered.

However, the only prayers God answers are the ones prayed according to His will. If you are an obedient believer, you will fashion your prayers in line with what Scripture says about His will. The answered prayer that follows will bring you confidence and assurance (see 1 John 5:13–15).

Some believers miss out on that assurance because of their skimpy prayer life, which obviously results in few answered prayers. How sad for them, and how disappointing for God, because He would do so much more for those Christians if they would only ask Him.

What about you? Has it been a pattern of your life to experience answered prayer? Ask yourself questions like the following: Have you prayed for someone's difficult situation and seen God turn it around to one of joy and blessing? Have you seen an unsaved person for whom you prayed come to Christ? Has God filled a void in your life after you prayed that He would? Have you ever prayed that God would help you in teaching His Word and then experienced much grace in presenting it with clarity? Have you prayed for boldness and power to proclaim the gospel and seen God work through you? Have you asked for contentment during a trial and received God's peace? Have you known forgiveness and a clear conscience after you prayed to that end?

If you can answer yes to those questions or ones like them, you have good reason to believe that you belong to the Lord and He belongs to you.

◇◇◇

Suggestions for Prayer: Thank the Lord for His power through prayer and for the answers He's granted you.

For Further Study: Read 1 Kings 17:1; 18:41–46. What does the second passage reveal about Elijah's prayer life? ◇ How does that support James 5:16b–18?

Prayer Malfunction - Read: 1 John 3:21-24 | This is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another. —1 John 3:23

In a box of my father's old tools I found a hand drill that was at least 60 years old. I could barely get the wheel to turn. The gears were clogged with dirt, and the pieces that hold the drill bit in place were missing. But I wanted to see if I could get it to work.

I began by wiping the accumulated dirt and sawdust off the gears. Then I oiled them. At first they turned hard and slow, but I kept working them. Soon the gears were turning smoothly. Then I saw a cap at the top of the handle. Unscrewing it, I discovered the missing parts that would hold the bit in place. I placed them in the drill, inserted a bit, and easily bored a neat hole in a piece of wood.

Working with that old drill taught me something about prayer. Jesus said we will receive from God what we ask of Him (Matthew 7:7-8). But there are conditions. For example, John said we must obey God and do what pleases Him (1 John 3:22). This includes believing in His Son and loving one another (1Jn 3:23). If we don't meet God's conditions, our prayers will be ineffective—just like that old drill.

If your prayer-life is malfunctioning, make sure you're meeting the conditions. When you do, you can be confident that your prayers will be effective. By David C. Egener ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Forgive us, Lord, our selfish asking,
All that's petty in Your sight;
Oh, help us pray with godly motives
And to seek what's good and right!
—D. De Haan

Faith and love are vital to effective prayer.

The Conditions of Power in Prayer
C. H. Spurgeon.

1 John 3:22-24 And whatever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are

pleasing in his sight....

I. THE ESSENTIALS OF POWER IS PRAYER. We must make a few distinctions at the outset. I take it there is a great difference between the prayer of a soul that is seeking mercy and the prayer of a man who is saved. I would say to every person present, whatever his character, if you sincerely seek mercy of God through Jesus Christ you shall have it. Qualifications for the sinner's first prayer I know of none except sincerity; but we must speak in a different way to those of you who are saved. You have now become the people of God, and while you shall be heard just as the sinner would be heard, and shall daily find the needful grace which every seeker receives in answer to prayer, yet you are under a special discipline peculiar to the regenerated family. There is something for a believer to enjoy over and above bare salvation; there are mercies, and blessings, and comforts, which render his present life useful, happy, and honourable, and these he shall not have irrespective of character. To give a common illustration: If a hungry person were at your door, and asked for bread, you would give it him, whatever might be his character; you will also give your child food, whatever may be his behaviour; you will never proceed in any course of discipline against him, so as to deny him his needful food, or a garment to shield him from the cold; but there are many other things which your child may desire, which you will give him if he be obedient, but which you will not give if he be rebellious to you. I take it that this illustrates how far the paternal government of God will push this matter, and where it will not go. Understand also, that the text refers not so much to God's hearing a prayer of His servants now and then, for that He will do, even when His servants are out of course with Him; but the power in prayer here intended is continuous and absolute power with God; so that, to quote the words of the text, "whatsoever we ask of Him we receive." For this prayer there are certain prerequisites.

1. The first is child-like obedience: "Whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments."

Any father will tell you that for him to grant the request of a disobedient child would be to encourage rebellion in the family, and render it impossible for him to rule in his own house. It is often incumbent upon the parent to say, "My child, you did not listen to my word just now, and, therefore, I cannot listen to yours." Not that the father does not love, but that he does love the child, and because of his love, he feels bound to show his displeasure by refusing the request of his erring offspring.

2. Next to this is another essential to victorious prayer, viz., child-like reverence.

We receive what we ask, "because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." We do not allow children when they have a command from their father to question its propriety or wisdom; obedience ends where questioning begins. Suppose any of us should be self-willed, and say, "I shall not do what pleases God, I shall do what pleases myself." Then observe what would be the nature of our prayers? Our prayers might then be summed up in the request, "Let me have my own way." And can we expect God to consent to that?

3. In the third place, the text suggests the necessity of child-like trust: "And this is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ."

Let us come back to our family similitudes again. Suppose a child in the house does not believe his father's word; suppose, indeed, that he tells his brothers and sisters that his faith in his father is very weak. He mentions that wretched fact, but is not at all shocked that he should say such a thing, but he rather feels that he ought to be pitied, as if it were an infirmity which he could not avoid. I think a father so basely distrusted would not be in a very great hurry to grant such a son's requests; indeed, it is very probable that the petitions of the mistrustful son would be such as could not be complied with, even if his father were willing to do so, since they would amount to a gratification of his own unbelief and a dishonour to his parent. Expect not, therefore, to be heard when your prayer is suggested by an unbelieving heart: "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass."

4. The next essential to continued success in prayer is child-like love: "That we should believe on the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another as He gave us commandment."

Everywhere in Scripture faith in God is spoken of as necessary to successful prayer. We must believe that God is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him, or else we have not prayed at all; but in proportion to our faith will be the success of our prayer. It is a standing rule of the kingdom, "According to thy faith, so be it unto thee." Remember how the Holy Spirit speaks by the mouth of the apostle James: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord." The text speaks of faith in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, which I understand to mean faith in his declared character, faith in his

gospel, faith in the truth concerning his substitution and salvation. Or it may mean faith in the authority of Christ, so that when I plead with God and say, "Do it in the name of Jesus," I mean, "Do for me as thou wouldst have done for Jesus, for I am authorised by him to use his name; do it for me as thou wouldst have done it for him." He that can pray with faith in the name cannot fail, for the Lord Jesus has said, "If ye ask anything in my name, I will do it." But there must be faith, and if there be no faith we cannot expect to be heard. Do you not see that? Let us come back to our family similitudes again. Suppose a child in the house does not believe his father's word, and is constantly saying that he finds his mind full of doubts as to his father's truthfulness; suppose, indeed, that he tells his brothers and sisters that his faith in his father is very weak. He mentions that wretched fact, but is not at all shocked that he should say such a thing, but he rather feels that he ought to be pitied, as if it were an infirmity which he could not avoid. Somehow or other he does not believe that his father speaks the truth, and he declares that, though he tries to believe his father's promise, yet he cannot. I think a father so basely distrusted would not be in a very great hurry to grant such a son's requests; indeed, it is very probable that the petitions of the mistrustful son would be such as could not be complied with, even if his father were willing to do so, since they would amount to a gratification of his own unbelief, and a dishonour to his parent. For instance, suppose this child should take it into his head to doubt whether his father would provide him with his daily food; he might then come to his father and say, "Father, give me enough money to last for the next ten years, for I shall then be a man, and shall be able to provide for myself. Give me money down to quiet my fears, for I am in great anxiety." The father replies, "My son, what should I do that for?" And he gets for a reply, "I am very sorry to say it, dear father, but I cannot trust you; I have such a weak faith in you and your love that I am afraid one of these days you will leave me to starve, and therefore I should like to have something sure in the bank." Which of you fathers would listen to a child's request, if he sought such a thing? You would feel grieved that thoughts so dishonouring to yourself should pass through the mind of one of your own beloved ones; but you would not, and could not, give way to them. Let me, then, ask you to apply the parable to yourselves. Did you never offer requests which were of much the same character? You have been unable to trust God to give you day by day your daily bread, and therefore you have been craving for what you call "some provision for the future." You want a more trusty provider than providence, a better security than God's promise. You are unable to trust your heavenly Father's word, a few bonds of some half-bankrupt foreign government you consider to be far more reliable; you can trust the Sultan of Turkey, or the Viceroy of Egypt, but not the God of the whole earth! In a thousand ways we insult the Lord by imagining "the things which are seen" to be more substantial than his unseen omnipotence. We ask God to give us at once what we do not require at present, and may never need at all; at bottom the reason for such desires may be found in a disgraceful distrust of him which makes us imagine that great stores are needful to ensure our being provided for. Brethren, are you not to blame here, and do you expect the Lord to aid and abet your folly? Shall God pander to your distrust? Shall he give you a heap of cankering gold and silver for thieves to steal, and chests of garments to feed moths? Would you have the Lord act as if he admitted the correctness of your suspicions and confessed to unfaithfulness? God forbid! Expect not, therefore, to be heard when your prayer is suggested by an unbelieving heart: "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him and he shall bring it to pass."

5. Next to this, we must have child-like ways as well. "He that keepeth His commandments, dwelleth in Him, and He in him." It is one of a child's ways to love its home. Suppose one of you had a boy, who said, "Father, I do not like my home, I do not care for you; and I will not endure the restraints of family rule; I am going to live with strangers. But mark, father, I shall come to you every week, and I shall require many things of you; and I shall expect that you will give me whatever I ask from you." Why, if you are at all fit to be at the head of the house, you will say, "My son, how can you speak to me in such a manner? If you are so self-willed as to leave my house, can you expect that I will do your bidding? If you utterly disregard me, can you expect me to support you in your cruel unkindness and wicked insubordination. No, my son; if you will not remain with me and own me as a father, I cannot promise you anything." And so it is with God.

6. One thing more: it appears from the text that we must have a child-like spirit, for "hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us." What is this but the Spirit of adoption — the Spirit which rules in all the children of God? The Holy Spirit if He rules in us, will subordinate our nature to His own sway, and then the prayers which spring out of our renewed hearts will be in keeping with the will of God, and such prayers will naturally be heard.

II. THE PREVALENCE OF THESE ESSENTIAL THINGS. If they be in us and abound, our prayers cannot be barren or unprofitable.

1. First, if we have faith in God, there is no question about God's hearing our prayer.

If we can plead in faith the name and blood of Jesus, we must obtain answers of peace. But a thousand cavils are suggested. Suppose these prayers concern the laws of nature, then the scientific men are against us,

What of that? The Lord has ways of answering our prayers irrespective of the working of miracles or suspending laws. Perhaps there are other forces and laws which He has arranged to bring into action just at times when prayer also acts, laws just as fixed and forces just as natural as those which our learned theorists have been able to discover. The wisest men know not all the laws which govern the universe, nay, nor a tithe of them. If there be but faith in God, God must either cease to be, or cease to be true, or else He must hear prayer. The verse before the text says, "If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God; and whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him." He who has a clear conscience comes to God with confidence, and that confidence of faith ensures to him the answer of his prayer.

2. But next, love must succeed too, since we have already seen that the man who loves in the Christian sense is in accord with God. God always hears the prayers of a loving man, because those prayers are the shadows of His own decrees.

3. Again, the man of obedience is the man whom God will hear, because his obedient heart leads him to pray humbly and with submission, for he feels it to be his highest desire that the Lord's will should be done.

Hence it is that the man of obedient heart prays like an oracle; his prayers are prophecies. Is he not one with God? Doth he not desire and ask for exactly what God intends? How can a prayer shot from such a bow ever fail to reach its target? If thy soul get into accord with God's soul, thou wilt wish God's own wishes. The difficulty is that we do not keep, as the word is, en rapport with God; but if we did, then we should strike the same note as God strikes; and though his would sound like thunder, and ours as a whisper, yet there would be a perfect unison—the note struck by prayer on earth would coincide with that which sounds forth from the decrees in heaven.

4. Again, the man who lives in fellowship with God will assuredly speed in prayer, because if he dwells in God and God dwells in him, he will desire what God desires.

5. Lastly, does the Spirit of God actuate us, or is it another spirit? Do we wait upon God and say, "Lord, let thy Spirit tell me what to say in this case, and what to do; rule my judgment, subdue my passions, keep down my baser impulses, and let thy Spirit guide me. Lord, be thou to me better than myself; be soul and life to me, and in the triple kingdom of my spirit, soul, and body, good Lord, be thou supreme Master, that in every province of my nature thy law may be set up, and thy will may be regarded. We should have a mighty church if we were all of this mind; but the mixed multitude are with us, the mixed multitude that came out of Egypt, and these fall a-lusting; the mischief always begins with them. God save us as a church from losing his presence! The mixed multitude must be with us to try us, for the Lord hath said, "Let both grow together till the harvest," and if we try to root up the tares we should root up the wheat also,—yet, at any rate, let us pray God to make the wheat be the stronger. One of two things always happens in a church. Either the wheat chokes the weeds or the weeds choke the wheat. God grant that the wheat may overtop the weeds in our case. God grant grace to his servants to be strong enough to overcome the evil which surrounds them, and, having done all, to stand to the praise of the glory of his grace, who also hath made us accepted in the Beloved. The Lord bless you, and be with you evermore. Amen and Amen.

And here, again let us say, our text speaks of the Christian man as being filled with God's Spirit: "We know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us." Who knows the mind of a man but the spirit of a man? So, who knows the things of God but the Spirit of God? And if the Spirit of God dwells in us, then He tells us what God's mind is; He makes intercession in the saints according to the will of God. Practical improvement:

1. The first is, we want to pray for a great blessing as a church. Very well. Have we the essentials for success? Are we believing in the name of Jesus Christ? Are we full of love to God and one another?

2. Next, are we doing that which is pleasing in God's sight?

3. The next question is, do we dwell in God?

4. Lastly, does the Spirit of God actuate us, or is it another spirit?

(C. H. Spurgeon.)

Accompaniments - Obedience - Joseph Carroll [Reflections on Faith and Prayer: A 61-Day Devotional - Page 22](#)

And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight (1 John 3:22).

Prayer must be accompanied by obedience, which proves your love for the Lord. We often have a superficial attitude toward sin, not fearing or hating it; yet, our Lord loved righteousness and hated iniquity. Do those things that please God, keeping the keel of your ship of life far away from the sandbar of sin. Why do we tempt the Lord by sailing as close to the rocks as possible?

We need to have a horror of sin. With a coiled rattlesnake, you would not reason, "How far can this rattlesnake strike? I judge his striking range to be four feet; so, I will stand four feet and one inch away so he will just miss me." If you would never approach a rattlesnake in this manner, why do you approach sin in this way? Sin is far more deadly than the snake because it can take a man to hell or grieve the Holy Spirit. Stay clear of sin. Flee from that which you know is displeasing to the Lord.

If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me (Psalm 66:18). This is a very solemn warning. If you continue in (or coddle) iniquity, the Lord will not hear. The area where you consistently fall is the area you have not fully surrendered to the Lord. The enemy will attack the weakest portion of your line of defense. Living to please God demands that you stop what you should not be doing and stop now. You can quit any sin at any time when you are desperate enough to accept the Lord's deliverance.

You must surrender your will to God resolutely and definitely in any area that displeases Him. As soon as sin raises its ugly head, hit it hard and it will go. Then you will walk in obedience and find God wonderfully answering your prayers.

Daily Light on the Daily Path -You always hear me."

And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me."—"Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."—"Behold, I have come to do your will, O God."—"Not my will, but yours, be done."

As he is so also are we in this world.—And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.

Whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.

And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

He always lives to make intercession for them.—We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

John 11:42; John 11:41; John 12:28; Heb. 10:7; Luke 22:42; 1 John 4:17; 1 John 5:14; 1 John 3:22; Heb. 11:6; Heb. 7:25; 1 John 2:1

Daily Light on the Daily Path - His commandments are not burdensome.

"This is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life."—Whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.

"My yoke is easy, and my burden is light."—"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. . . . Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him."

Blessed is the one who finds wisdom, and the one who gets understanding. . . . Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.—Great peace have those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble.—I delight in the law of God, in my inner being.

This is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another.—Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

1 John 5:3; John 6:40; 1 John 3:22; Matt. 11:30; John 14:15, 21; Prov. 3:13, 17; Ps. 119:165; Rom. 7:22; 1 John 3:23; Rom. 13:10

Private Praise - Joni Eareckson Tada [Pearls of Great Price: 366 Daily Devotional Readings - Page 5](#)

Do those things that are pleasing in his sight.— 1 JOHN 3:22 KJV

My friend Careen has been blessed with a beautiful voice. When we travel together, whether riding in the van or walking down the hotel hallways, we always harmonize on a hymn. On long trips together, when she has a "night off," she'll usually go back to her hotel room, put on a worship CD, sit on the edge of her bed with hands lifted high, and sing private praises to God for an hour or two. It's just her and her Lord. She absolutely loves delighting Jesus with her personal songs of worship offered behind closed doors. Although her musical gift is extraordinary, she'll probably never land a recording contract or be spotlighted on a big stage. But that's okay. Careen has the honor of singing command performances before the most prominent audience in the universe: Jesus Christ.

Careen reminds me of an alpine flower that blooms high in the mountains, far from the eyes of most people. No one but God ever sees those stunning flowers in mountain meadows; he has created them for his sole delight and enjoyment.

God delights in those who meet with him in personal worship. Before you turn the lights out tonight, find a quiet corner in your home and meet with God alone. Recite to him any Scriptures or inspirational poems you have memorized, or sing to him several of your favorite hymns or praise choruses. Enjoy the privilege that you have a private audience with the most important Person in heaven and on earth. Make it your ambition to be pleasing to him ... far from the ears and eyes of others.

Lord, I thank you for blessing me with the talents I have. I'm not looking for a spotlight or a stage; I simply want to come before you by myself and bless you with my song. What a privilege and honor it is to consecrate my worship and focus on you and you alone.

James Scudder - Why We Have Rules 1 John 3:22

If you've heard me speak before, you've heard me talk about the driving in India. It's quite different from the way we operate here, even in crazy metropolitan cities like New York, Miami, and Chicago. Over in India, they really have no rules of the road. You can swerve into the other lane to pass a slow car. Pedestrians are free to cross the street whenever they wish. There are no posted speed limits. You can even drive in the wrong lane, if you'd like.

The problem with no rules is that there is also no safety. In India, there are far more accidents than in the United States. Thankfully, God has spared my mission team every time we've been over there. But, I'll never forget the sight of a dead man, lying in the middle of the roadway. He was bicycling across the street when an impatient taxi cab struck him.

The contrast between driving in America and driving in India illustrates the need for rules. Every believer needs guidelines by which to live his life. Just like the rules of the road, we may not enjoy the rules of life. We may think they infringe on our fun. Yet, God gave us rules, not to be cruel, but for our own safety.

Consider those who live carelessly. Their lives are characterized by accidents. A person who lives within God's borders, however, is safer and more secure.

Don't resist the rules. God gave them for a reason: our well being.

What our Lord said about cross-bearing and obedience is not in the fine type.

It is in bold print on the face of the contract.

Vance Havner

Vance Havner - Pleasing God

I do always those things that please him. John 8:29.

1 John 3:22 and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.

We live to please someone, ourselves, other people or God. Jesus "pleased not himself" (Rom. 15:3). We are not to live to please men. "Do I seek to please men?" (Gal. 1:10). "Not as pleasing men but God" (I Thess. 2:4). We are to please our neighbor for his good to edification (Rom. 15:2). Paul said he pleased all men, seeking, not his profit, but theirs, that they might be saved (I Cor. 10:33).

We are to please God, as our Lord said in our text. God was pleased in His Son (Mt. 3:17). He was not pleased with the Israelites in the wilderness (I Cor. 10:5). We had better take warning from them, for "these things happened unto us for ensamples." Enoch pleased God (Heb. 11:5). We cannot please God in the flesh (Rom. 8:8). It is impossible without faith (Heb. 11:6). But as we submit to God He works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13). Then we are to live so as to please Him who hath chosen us to be soldiers (II Tim. 2:3, 4). And if we please Him we get answers to our prayers (I Jn. 3:22).

Whom are you living to please?

James Smith - PLEASING GOD. "Ye ought to please God" (1 Thess. 4:1).

I. Those who are not pleasing God.

1. They that live ONLY FOR THEMSELVES are not pleasing God. "We ought not to please ourselves, for even Christ pleased not Himself" (Rom. 15:1-3). Self is all the god that many worship.
2. They that only seek to PLEASE MEN are not pleasing God. "Do I seek to please men? If I yet pleased men,

I should not be the servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:10).

3. They that are IN THE FLESH cannot please God. "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit" (Rom. 8:8, 9).

4. They that have NO FAITH cannot please God. "Without faith it is impossible to please Him" (Heb. 11:6). A man might have faith in the minister, in the Church, and Bible, and yet have no faith in God.

II. Those who are pleasing God.

1. Those who ASK RIGHT THINGS from God. "David asked for an understanding heart to discern between good and bad, and the speech pleased the Lord" (1 Kings 3:9, 10).

2. Those who are SEPARATED FOR GOD. "No man that warreth entangleth himself, that he may please Him who hath chosen him" (2 Tim. 2:4). How numerous are the entanglements!

3. Those who are WHOLLY YIELDED TO GOD. Now God "working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight" (Heb. 13:20, 21).

4. Those who WALK WITH GOD. "Enoch walked with God" (Gen. 5:24), "and he pleased God" (Heb. 11:5).

5. Those who PRAISE GOD. "I will praise the Name of God. This also shall please the Lord" (Psa. 69:30, 31). All singing is not praising. God judgeth the heart.

III. Promises to those who please God.

1. "Their ENEMIES shall be at peace with them" (Prov. 16:7). This is a different thing from being at peace with our enemies. They surrender.

2. Their PRAYERS shall be answered (1 John 3:22). If we are always doing what pleases Him we may always expect what we ask.

3. Their NAME shall be everlasting (Isa. 56:4, 5). "Choose the things that please Me, and I will give an everlasting name." "They shall be called by His Name, and His Name endureth for ever."

A Deep Lesson

A lady who had been a Christian worker told Dr. Torrey that she could no longer believe in God, because when her husband was ill she had prayed for his recovery, and God had failed her. Dr. Torrey pointed her to 1 John 3:22, and asked if she were obeying the conditions laid down.

"I am afraid I was not," she admitted.

"Then God has not failed you, but you have failed God," said Dr. Torrey.

So completely did the cloud over her life roll away that when the evangelist said, "Let us pray," she was ready to kneel with him and take the whole matter to the Lord.

The great lesson of life is to be subdued before God.

—Rev. John Macbeath

Prepare for the Unexpected

We all tend to prescribe the answers to our prayers. We think that God can come in only one way. But Scripture teaches us that God sometimes answers our prayers by allowing things to become much worse before they become better. He may sometimes do the opposite of what we anticipate... Yet it is a fundamental principle in the life and walk of faith that we must always be prepared for the unexpected when we are dealing with God.

—D. Martyn Lloyd Jones in Faith: Tried and Triumphant. Christianity Today, Vol. 38, no. 8.

See: 1 John 3:22; James 4:3; Zechariah 7:13

The Cosmic Bellhop (1 John 3:22)

Many of us have traveled and stayed at a hotel or inn. In many instances, the service is quite reputable as the customer is provided with exceptional amenities such as room service or bell-man service. The purpose is to make the individual as comfortable as possible without a care for anything. Just call and they will be at your service. In many ways, this is how some perceive God and their relationship to Him. They expect that when they call to God in their time of need, but forsake Him when there is no "need." Just like the bellhop, to answer when we call. But truly, God desires a relationship beyond meeting our needs alone. The sign of a believer is found in the desire to please the Lord and fellowship with Him (1 John 3:22).

Basis of Assurance

Rests on the Word of God (John 1:12), the witness of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:16), keeping God's Word (1 John 2:5), walking like Christ (1 John 2:6), not loving the world (1 John 2:15), purification (1 John 3:3), love for the brethren (1 John 3:14), true love (1 John

3:18–19), answered prayer (1 John 3:22), overcoming the world (1 John 5:4).

Source unknown

The Called Man

(The called man) sees himself as a steward...He's obedient rather than ambitious, committed rather than competitive. For him, nothing is more important than pleasing the one who called him.

We obey his commands and do what pleases him. 1 John 3:22 NIV

God's Little Instruction Book for Men, (Honor Books, Tulsa, OK; 1996), p. 43

A W Tozer - Does God Always Answer Prayer? [The Best of A. W. Tozer Book Two](#)

Contrary to popular opinion, the cultivation of a psychology of uncritical belief is not an unqualified good, and if carried too far it may be a positive evil. The whole world has been booby-trapped by the devil, and the deadliest trap of all is the religious one. Error never looks so innocent as when it is found in the sanctuary.

One field where harmless-looking but deadly traps appear in great profusion is the field of prayer. There are more sweet notions about prayer than could be contained in a large book, all of them wrong and all highly injurious to the souls of men.

I think of one such false notion that is found often in pleasant places consorting smilingly with other notions of unquestionable orthodoxy. It is that God always answers prayer.

This error appears among the saints as a kind of all-purpose philosophic therapy to prevent any disappointed Christian from suffering too great a shock when it becomes evident to him that his prayer expectations are not being fulfilled. It is explained that God always answers prayer, either by saying Yes or by saying No, or by substituting something else for the desired favor.

Now, it would be hard to invent a neater trick than this to save face for the petitioner whose requests have been rejected for nonobedience. Thus when a prayer is not answered he has but to smile brightly and explain, "God said No." It is all so very comfortable. His wobbly faith is saved from confusion and his conscience is permitted to lie undisturbed. But I wonder if it is honest.

To receive an answer to prayer as the Bible uses the term and as Christians have understood it historically, two elements must be present: (1) A clear-cut request made to God for a specific favor. (2) A clear-cut granting of that favor by God in answer to the request. There must be no semantic twisting, no changing of labels, no altering of the map during the journey to help the embarrassed tourist to find himself.

When we go to God with a request that He modify the existing situation for us, that is, that He answer prayer, there are two conditions that we must meet: (1) We must pray in the will of God and (2) we must be on what old-fashioned Christians often call "praying ground"; that is, we must be living lives pleasing to God.

It is futile to beg God to act contrary to His revealed purposes. To pray with confidence the petitioner must be certain that his request falls within the broad will of God for His people.

The second condition is also vitally important. God has not placed Himself under obligation to honor the requests of worldly, carnal or disobedient Christians. He hears and answers the prayers only of those who walk in His way. "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.... If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (1 John 3:21, 22; John 15:7).

God wants us to pray and He wants to answer our prayers, but He makes our use of prayer as a privilege to commingle with His use of prayer as a discipline. To receive answers to prayer we must meet God's terms. If we neglect His commandments our petitions will not be honored. He will alter situations only at the request of obedient and humble souls.

The God-always-answers-prayer sophistry leaves the praying man without discipline. By the exercise of this bit of smooth casuistry he ignores the necessity to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world, and actually takes God's flat refusal to answer his prayer as the very answer itself. Of course such a man will not grow in holiness; he will never learn how to wrestle and wait; he will never know correction; he will not hear the voice of God calling him forward; he will never arrive at the place where he is morally and spiritually fit to have his prayers answered. His wrong philosophy has ruined him.

That is why I turn aside to expose the bit of bad theology upon which his bad philosophy is founded. The man who accepts it never knows where he stands; he never knows whether or not he has true faith, for if his request is not granted he avoids the implication by the simple dodge of declaring that God switched the whole thing around and gave him something else. He will not allow himself to shoot at a target, so he cannot tell how good or how bad a marksman he is.

Of certain persons James says plainly: "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts," From that brief sentence we may learn that God refuses some requests because they who make them are not morally worthy to receive the answer. But this means nothing to the one who has been seduced into the belief that God always answers prayer. When such a man asks and receives not he passes his hand over the hat and comes up with the answer in some other form. One thing he clings to with great tenacity: God never turns anyone away, but invariably grants every request.

The truth is that God always answers the prayer that accords with His will as revealed in the Scriptures, provided the one who prays is obedient and trustful. Further than this we dare not go.

Praying the Ten Commandments

In "A Simple Way to Pray" (1535), Martin Luther writes:

If I have had time and opportunity to go through the Lord's Prayer, I do the same with the Ten Commandments.

I divide each commandment into four parts, thereby fashioning a garland of four strands. That is, I think of each commandment as, first, instruction, which is really what it is intended to be, and consider what the Lord God demands of me so earnestly. Second, I turn it into a thanksgiving; third, a confession; and fourth, a prayer.

[Luther demonstrates his approach for the first commandment, "I am the Lord your God... You shall have no other gods before me."] Here I earnestly consider that God expects and teaches me to trust him sincerely in all things and that it is his most earnest purpose to be my God. I must think of him in this way at the risk of losing eternal salvation. My heart must not build upon anything else or trust in any other thing, be it wealth, prestige, wisdom, might, piety, or anything else.

Second, I give thanks for his infinite compassion by which he has come to me in such a fatherly way and, unasked, unbidden, and unmerited, has offered to be my God, to care for me, and to be my comfort, guardian, help, and strength in every time of need. We poor mortals have sought so many gods and would have to seek them still if he did not enable us to hear him openly tell us in our own language that he intends to be our God. How could we ever-in all eternity-thank him enough!

Third, I confess and acknowledge my great sin and ingratitude for having so shamefully despised such sublime teachings and such a precious gift throughout my whole life, and for having fearfully provoked his wrath by countless acts of idolatry. I repent of these and ask for his grace. Fourth, I pray and say, "O my God and Lord, help me by thy grace to learn and understand thy commandments more fully every day and to live by them in sincere confidence. Preserve my heart so that I shall never again become forgetful and ungrateful, that I may never seek after other gods or other consolation on earth or in any creature, but cling truly and solely to thee, my only God. Amen, dear Lord and Father. Amen."

These are the Ten Commandments in their fourfold aspect, namely, as a school text, song book, penitential book, and prayer book. They are intended to help the heart come to itself and grow zealous in prayer.

—"Martin Luther—Later Years and Legacy," Christian History, no. 39.

See: 2 Chronicles 7:14; 1 John 3:22; Joshua 8:32-35

Answering Our Own Prayers

It is remarkable to think that God has given us a partnership with him in directing the course of human events. It is extraordinary to realize that our prayer can change events and circumstances in the world around us. But what is just as remarkable is that when we pray, we change. More often than not we become the answer to our own prayers as we open up ourselves to God in prayer.

—John Guest in Only a Prayer Away. Christianity Today, Vol. 33, no. 15.

See: 1 John 3:22; Hebrews 6:1; Psalms 84:7

NOTHING BETWEEN - [play this hymn](#) (borrow [Amazing Grace by Kenneth Osbeck - page 232](#))

Words and music by Charles A. Tindley, 1851–1933

If our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from Him anything we ask, because we obey His commands and do what pleases Him. ([1 John 3:21, 22](#))

Born to slave parents and separated from them when only five years of age, Charles Tindley was a most remarkable individual. He learned to read and write on his own at the age of 17, attended night school, completed seminary training through correspondence, and was ordained to the Methodist ministry. While attending evening school, young Tindley supported himself as the janitor of the

Calvary Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia. In 1902, Charles Tindley was called to pastor this prestigious church where he had once been the janitor. The Calvary Methodist Church prospered greatly under his leadership. Eventually several larger sanctuaries had to be built to accommodate the crowds of all races that came to hear this humble preacher. In 1924, in spite of Tindley's protests, the new church building was renamed the Tindley Temple Methodist Church.

Charles Tindley expresses a concern in this hymn for many of the practices and attitudes that must be rejected if Christians are to be pleasing to their Lord. The hymn reminds us that we must watch out for those allurements and temptations that can easily disrupt our spiritual courses: "Delusive dreams, sinful-worldly pleasures, habits, pride, self or friends." The Bible teaches that we are not to be conformed to this world but should know the transforming power of a spiritually renewed mind ([Romans 12:1, 2](#)).

Nothing between my soul and the Savior, naught of this world's delusive dream:
I have renounced all sinful pleasure—Jesus is mine! There's nothing between.
Nothing between, like worldly pleasure! Habits of life, tho harmless they seem,
must not my heart from Him ever sever—He is my all! There's nothing between.
Nothing between, like pride or station: Self or friends shall not intervene;
tho it may cost me much tribulation, I am resolved! There's nothing between.
Nothing between, e'en many hard trials, tho the whole world against me convene;
watching with prayer and much self denial—Triumph at last, with nothing between!

Chorus:

Nothing between my soul and the Savior, so that His blessed face may be seen.
Nothing preventing the least of His favor: Keep the way clear! Let nothing between.

For Today: [Psalm 51:10](#); [2 Timothy 2:15](#); [Hebrews 13:6](#); [1 John 3:18-24](#)

Reflect on this truth: "The price of spiritual power is a purity of heart." Ask God to reveal anything that might hinder His flow of power in your life.

OBEYING AND PRAYING

R A Torrey

1. One of the most significant verses in the Bible on prayer is 1 John 3:22.

John says, "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight."

What an astounding statement! John says, in so many words, that everything he asked for he got. How many of us can say this: "Whatsoever I ask I receive"? But John explains why this was so, "Because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight," In other words, the one who expects God to do as he asks Him, must on his part do whatever God bids him. If we give a listening ear to all God's commands to us, He will give a listening ear to all our petitions to Him. If, on the other hand, we turn a deaf ear to His precepts, He will be likely to turn a deaf ear to our prayers. Here we find the secret of much unanswered prayer.

We are not listening to God's Word, and therefore He is not listening to our petitions.

I was once speaking to a woman who had been a professed Christian, but had given it all up. I asked her why she was not a Christian still. She replied, because she did not believe the Bible. I asked her why she did not believe the Bible.

"Because I have tried its promises and found them untrue."

"Which promises?"

"The promises about prayer."

"Which promises about prayer?"

"Does it not say in the Bible, 'Whatsoever ye ask believing ye shall receive'?"

"It says something nearly like that."

"Well, I asked fully expecting to get and did not receive, so the promise failed."

"Was the promise made to you?"

"Why, certainly, it is made to all Christians, is it not?"

"No, God carefully defines who the 'ye's are, whose believing prayers He agrees to answer."

I then turned her to 1 John 3:22, and read the description of those whose prayers had power with God.

"Now," I said, "were you keeping His commandments and doing those things which are pleasing in His sight?"

She frankly confessed that she was not, and soon came to see that the real difficulty was not with God's promises, but with herself. That is the difficulty with many an unanswered prayer to-day: the one who offers it is not obedient.

If we would have power in prayer, we must be earnest students of His Word to find out what His will regarding us is, and then having found it, do it. One unconfessed act of disobedience on our part will shut the ear of God against many petitions.

2. But this verse goes beyond the mere keeping of God's commandments. John tells us that we must do those things that are pleasing in His sight.

There are many things which it would be pleasing to God for us to do which He has not specifically commanded us. A true child is not content with merely doing those things which his father specifically commands him to do. He studies to know his father's will, and if he thinks that there is any thing that he can do that would please his father, he does it gladly, though his father has never given him any specific order to do it. So it is with the true child of God. He does not ask merely whether certain things are commanded or certain things forbidden. He studies to know his Father's will in all things.

There are many Christians to-day who are doing things that are not pleasing to God, and leaving undone things which would be pleasing to God. When you speak to them about these things they will confront you at once with the question, "Is there any command in the Bible not to do this thing?" And if you cannot show them some verse in which the matter in question is plainly forbidden, they think they are under no obligation whatever to give it up; but a true child of God does not demand a specific command. If we make it our study to find out and to do the things which are pleasing to God, He will make it His study to do the things which are pleasing to us. Here again we find the explanation of much unanswered prayer: We are not making it the study of our lives to know what would please our Father, and so our prayers are not answered.

Take as an illustration of questions that are constantly coming up, the matter of theater-going, dancing and the use of tobacco. Many who are indulging in these things will ask you triumphantly if you speak against them, "Does the Bible say, 'Thou shalt not go to the theater'?" "Does the Bible say, 'Thou shalt not dance'?" "Does the Bible say, 'Thou shalt not smoke'?" That is not the question. The question is, Is our heavenly Father well pleased when He sees one of His children in the theater, at the dance, or smoking? That is a question for each to decide for himself, prayerfully, seeking light from the Holy Spirit. "Where is the harm in these things?" many ask. It is aside from our purpose to go into the general question, but beyond a doubt there is this great harm in many a case; they rob our prayers of power.

3. Psalm 145:18 throws a great deal of light on the question of how to pray: "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth."

That little expression "in truth" is worthy of study. If you will take your concordance and go through the Bible, you will find that this expression means "in reality," "in sincerity." The prayer that God answers is the prayer that is real, the prayer that asks for something that is sincerely desired.

Much prayer is insincere. People ask for things which they do not wish. Many a woman is praying for the conversion of her husband, who does not really wish her husband to be converted. She thinks that she does, but if she knew what would be involved in the conversion of her husband, how it would necessitate an entire revolution in his manner of doing business, and how consequently it would reduce their income and make necessary an entire change in their method of living, the real prayer of her heart would be, if she were to be sincere with God:

"O God, do not convert my husband."

She does not wish his conversion at so great cost.

Many a church is praying for a revival that does not really desire a revival. They think they do, for to their minds a revival means an increase of membership, an increase of income, an increase of reputation among the churches; but if they knew what a real revival meant, what a searching of hearts on the part of professed Christians would be involved, what a radical transformation of individual, domestic and social life would be brought about, and many other things that would come to pass if the Spirit of God was poured out in reality and power; if all this were known, the real cry of the church would be:

"O God, keep us from having a revival."

Many a minister is praying for the baptism with the Holy Spirit who does not really desire it. He thinks he does, for the baptism with the Spirit means to him new joy, new power in preaching the Word, a wider reputation among men, a larger prominence in the church of Christ. But if he understood what a baptism with the Holy Spirit really involved, how for example it would necessarily bring him into antagonism with the world, and with unspiritual Christians, how it would cause his name to be "cast out as evil," how it might necessitate his leaving a good comfortable living and going down to work in the slums, or even in some foreign land; if he

understood all this, his prayer quite likely would be—if he were to express the real wish of his heart,—
“O God, save me from being baptized with the Holy Ghost.”

But when we do come to the place where we really desire the conversion of friends at any cost, really desire the outpouring of the Holy Spirit whatever it may involve, really desire the baptism with the Holy Ghost come what come may, where we desire anything “in truth” and then call upon God for it “in truth,” God is going to hear.

This is Chapter 3 from his online book entitled simply HOW TO PRAY. Here is the link to read the entire 127 page book.

Here is the Table of Contents to give you an idea of what you will be reading. But don't just read! Read and pray!

- Chapter 1. THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER
- Chapter 2. PRAYING UNTO GOD
- Chapter 3. OBEYING AND PRAYING
- Chapter 4. PRAYING IN THE NAME OF CHRIST AND ACCORDING TO THE WILL OF GOD
- Chapter 5. PRAYING IN THE SPIRIT
- Chapter 6. ALWAYS PRAYING AND NOT FAINTING
- Chapter 7. ABIDING IN CHRIST
- Chapter 8. PRAYING WITH THANKSGIVING
- Chapter 9. HINDRANCES TO PRAYER
- Chapter 10. WHEN TO PRAY
- Chapter 11. THE NEED OF A GENERAL REVIVAL
- Chapter 12. THE PLACE OF PRAYER BEFORE AND DURING REVIVALS