

Requirements for Prayer

4 February 2018 AM – Mark 11:20-26; 12-14 – Mr17 – Scott Childs

Introduction: Read [Mark 11:12-14](#) then [Mark 11:20-26](#). On the day following His Triumphal Entry, Jesus returned to Jerusalem. On the way He saw a fig tree with leaves. Being hungry, He went to get a fig. Fig trees produce a few figs when the leaves appear but the main crop is several weeks later. The first figs were either gone or fell off before ripening. Thus, Jesus cursed the tree. The next day it was withered and dying. This shocked the disciples.

Some Bible teachers claim that this pictured God's judgment on Israel's unbelief. If that was true, Jesus never made the application. The application He did make was a literal lesson on prayer.

Transition: The Bible records many requirements for prayer, but in our text, Jesus mentions two of them.

The first requirement for prayer that Jesus mentioned is...

1. Faith

a. Jesus said that faith in God is required (v.20-22)

- 1) Peter questioned the amazing response of the fig tree to Jesus' curse the day before. The tree did not just stop bearing figs, it withered and died.
- 2) Had Peter been thinking biblically and remembering that Jesus is God, this should not have shocked him.
 - a) God, who created all things in nature, also controls their preservation. (Nehemiah 9:6) "*Thou, even thou, art LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee.*"
 - b) If God removes His preserving hand on something, it will immediately die.
 - c) That is true with our lives as well. We remember that even Satan could not harm Job or take his life without God's permission. (Job 2:6) "*And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life.*"

b) However, Jesus did not make exceptions; He simply said we must forgive. In Ephesians 4:32 we read, "*And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*" God forgave us graciously and completely. We must follow His example.

c) Forgiving a person is not justifying their wrong. It is letting go of the bitterness and revenge you have been holding toward the person.

d) If they confess their wrong, **let them know** they are forgiven. If they do not confess their wrong, let God deal with them in His way. If it is impossible to contact them, it may help to write a forgiveness letter to them to clear your heart and then store it away.

3) If we forgive as God forgives, He will forgive us. This will enable us to pray. If you feel like God is not listening when you pray, take a close look in your heart and see if unforgiveness is blocking your access to God.

b. If we refuse to forgive, God won't forgive us (v.26)

- 1) If we refuse to forgive someone who has hurt us (no matter what the hurt may be) God says that He will not forgive us.
- 2) We cannot possibly be right with God if we refuse to forgive someone.
- 3) Refusing to forgive will hurt you FAR more than it will hurt the person who offended you. Bitterness can even be at the root of very serious health issues.

Conclusion: Today we have examined two requirements that Jesus identified for effective prayer. Have faith in God. Base your faith on a promise He has given and be sure your request is God's will. Forgive others before you pray. Don't let bitter unforgiveness rob you of answers to prayer. Also, make sure that you address any of the hindrances that may be hindering your prayers.

God delights in hearing our prayers. So, let's talk to Him regularly this week.

Song: Teach Me to Pray – 346

- d) I like these quotes. "The safest place on earth is in the centre of God's will." "I will live until God no longer has a use for me on this earth." "I will die when God calls me home, not before."
- 3) Jesus said to Peter, "*Have faith in God.*"
 - a) **Faith is acting upon trusted information.** Thus, faith in God is acting upon a promise of God.
 - b) Being God, Jesus' faith was acting upon His own purpose. He wanted to teach the disciples another lesson on prayer. He used the sudden death of the fig tree to get their attention and to teach a lesson.

b. Jesus illustrated faith in God (v.23)

- 1) He also used the mountain to illustrate faith in God. Jerusalem was built on a mountain. He said that faith could cause that mountain to rise up and be dropped into the sea.
- 2) Faith is not praying *hard* enough and *really* believing. Faith is not a strong *wish*. This faith is not faith in faith or *faith in feelings*. This faith must be faith **in God**. This faith must be acting upon **trusted information** such as a promise of God.
 - a) If God in His Word promised to move Jerusalem's mountain and drop it into the sea, then we could pray that in faith. Jesus said that **faith in God's promises** has that power.
 - b) When claiming Bible promises, we must be *sure* that the promise is give to us and not to someone else. This takes careful study of the Bible.
- 3) Jesus said we must not doubt in our heart but rather we must believe that the result will follow. That is sincere faith that God will do what He promised to do in His Word.
- 4) In his commentary, Warren Wiersbe wisely wrote, "**Of course, this is not the only lesson Jesus ever gave on prayer; and we must be careful not to isolate it from the rest of Scripture.**" So true! Hindrances to prayer include:
 - a) Disobeying God's commands, 1Jn 3:22

- b) Not praying according to God's will, 1Jn 5:14-15
- c) Not abiding in Christ, Jn 15:7
- d) Discord in the home, 1Pe 3:7
- e) Unconfessed sin in my heart, Ps 66:18
- f) Wavering or unbelief, Jas 1:6-7
- g) Praying amiss, Jas 4:3
- h) Unforgiving Spirit, Mt 6:12,14,15; Mr 11:25-26
- i) Living in sin, Isa 59:1-3; Joh 9:31
- j) Refusing to obey the Word, Pr 28:9
- k) Refusing to hear the cry of the poor, Pr 21:13
- l) Hypocrisy, Job 27:8-9; Mt 6:5
- m) Wickedness or unrighteousness, Pr 15:8, 29
- 5) We cannot claim the promise Jesus gave (v. 24) if we are ignoring the other Bible requirements for prayer.
 - a) Our desire must be God's will. (1 John 5:14-15) "*And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.*"
 - b) To truly believe we must have a Bible promise. Faith is acting on trusted information.
 - c) Thus, to have a right desire and right believing we must spend much time seeking God's mind in prayer and scripture before we ask.

The second requirement for prayer that Jesus mentioned is...

2. Forgiveness

a. We must forgive before we can pray (v.25)

- 1) Jesus mentions *standing* while praying. Other prayer positions mentioned in the Bible include, sitting (Judg 20:26), kneeling (Dan 6:10), lifting up hands (1Ti 2:8), looking upward (Jn 17:1), bowing (Ex 34:8), standing with bowed head (Lu 18:13), and fall prostrate (Mt 26:39).
- 2) The preparation for prayer is far more important than the posture. Jesus said that we must examine our hearts to see if we need to forgive someone before we pray.
 - a) Forgiving can be difficult if you have been hurt, abused, slandered, or mistreated.