

RULE #1
Ask, don't demand.

If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 1 John 5:14 (NAS)

Underline two words in this passage that are key to our understanding.

Questions for thought:

1. Why is it important to remember this rule as we prepare to pray?
2. Can you think of an example prayer where you told God what to do?
3. What are we to think when we are submissive in asking, yet it appears God is not answering?

Bottom line: As servants of God, we have no right to demand that God act according to our will.

RULE #2
Don't put God to a test.

You shall not put the Lord your God to the test. Deuteronomy 6:16 (NAS)

Underline one word in this passage that is key to our understanding.

Questions for thought:

1. How does "testing" God differ from "asking" for a sign?
2. What was Satan trying to get Jesus to do in his wilderness temptation?
3. Can you give an example of a prayer that puts God to the test?

Bottom line: Our prayers should not be used as a means to test God.

RULE #3
Believe in the Power of Prayer.

All things you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive. Mark 11:24 (NAS)

Underline the key word in this passage.

Questions for thought:

1. Should I bother to pray if I have no confidence that God can or will answer?
2. What does Jesus mean when he says you can "remove mountains" and "cast them into the sea?"
3. Why is it good to pause and think before bringing your petition to God?

Bottom line: For answered prayer I must trust God relying on His power alone.

RULE #4
Be humble when you pray.

Because you humbled yourself before me and tore your robes and wept in my presence, I have heard you, declares the Lord. II Chronicles 34:27

Underline two words in this verse that are key to our understanding.

Questions for thought:

1. What is the opposite of humility?
2. Why is humility a central theme in the Bible?
3. What do you think it means in James 4:6 for God to oppose the proud but give grace to the humble?

Bottom line: Finding humbleness before you pray sets the stage for God to do amazing things, and not finding humbleness sets the stage for God to create it.

RULE #5
Be Persistent

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. Luke 18:1

What are the two imperatives in this passage?

Questions for thought:

1. Why would God want his children to persist in prayer?
2. How does persistence in prayer affect our relationship with God?
3. Name a practical benefit of repeating a petition to God.

Bottom line: We are to persistently knock until God answers.

RULE #6
Be Specific

For they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need, before you ask Him. Matthew 6:7-8 (NAS)

Underline two words that characterize pagan prayers.

Questions for thought:

1. What are some benefits to limiting our words when we pray?
2. How does being specific in our prayers increase our expectation that God will answer?
3. Why would it be beneficial to keep a prayer list?

Bottom line: Being specific adds power to our prayers. _____

RULE #7
Husbands and Wife rule.

"Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect....and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers." 1 Peter 3:7

Underline two key words for husbands to remember as they live with their wives.

Questions for thought:

1. How can a broken relationship with your spouse hinder your prayers?
2. Why must we be deliberate in showing kindness and respect in the home?
3. How do you think God feels about the prayers of a man who is rude, unkind, or cruel toward his wife?

Bottom line: A husband/wife relationship that does not meet the standards set forth in the Bible, can result in hindered prayer.

RULE #8

Don't use meaningless repetition.

"And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition." Matthew 6:7 (NAS)

Underline two words in this passage that characterize powerless prayers.

Questions for thought:

1. Why is it so easy to fall into the trap of vain repetition in our prayers?
2. Can we pray repetitive prayers without engaging our hearts?
3. How can we safeguard against repetitive prayers?

Bottom line: When believers avoid meaningless repetitious prayers and appeal to God from
our hearts we increase the power of our prayers.

RULE #9

Don't let selfishness create wrong motives.

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

Underline the two words in this verse that cause our prayers to fail.

Questions for thought:

1. Which is more important, the content of our prayer or the motives of our heart?
2. Is it possible to pray with a wrong motive and not realize you are doing it?
3. Name three things you can do to safeguard against wrong motives.
 - A.
 - B.
 - C.

Bottom line: Having the right motive is a must for powerful prayer.

RULE #10
Pray for your enemies.

Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. Matthew 5:44

Underline the two most difficult words in this verse.

Questions for thought:

1. Why would a believer want to love their enemy and pray for someone who persecutes them?
2. Is it possible to love an enemy and pray for a persecutor without forgiving them?
3. How does the forgiveness that attends loving and praying for enemies and persecutors free us from the pangs of injustice?

Bottom line: Praying for enemies is an important element of powerful prayer.

RULE #11
Pray continuously.

Pray without ceasing. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 (NAS)

Underline the great challenge in this verse.

Questions for thought:

1. How does constant communion with God effect intimacy of relationship with God?
2. Why is it wrong to call on God only when we want something from Him or are at a low point in life?
3. What habits can you develop that will lead you to commune with God throughout the day?

Bottom line: Believers are to pray----during the good times, bad times, and in between times.

RULE #12
Be righteous.

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

Underline the word that presents the greatest challenge.

Questions for thought:

1. Is there a difference between being declared righteous by God and living the righteous life?
2. Would God be right in honoring the prayers of disobedient children and obedient children equally?
3. List three habits you can develop that lead to a righteous life.
 - A.
 - B.
 - C.

Bottom line: The effectiveness of our prayers is directly connected to the righteousness of our lives.

RULE #13
Don't worry - Trust God

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air, they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life. Matthew 6:25-27

What is the challenge found in the first sentence of this passage of scripture?

Questions for thought:

1. Does worry or anxiety affect prayer? How?
2. Is there a difference between being truly concerned and being worried?
3. How do we safeguard against the fruitless activity of fretful praying?

Bottom line: When we pray, we are turning our concerns and problems over to God - and that is where we should leave them.

RULE #14

Give thanks (for the good and the bad).

Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:18

Underline the challenging part of this verse.

Questions for thought:

1. Is there a difference between being grateful for a tragedy and being grateful in the midst of a tragedy?
2. What Biblical truths make it possible for you to give thanks in all circumstances, including the bad?
 - A.
 - B.
 - C.
 - D.
 - E.
 - F.
3. Should friends and family rush to provide divine answers to those experiencing tragic loss?

Bottom line: Believers should be thankful for all the things God has provided for us in preparation for eternity.

RULE #15
Include Praise

Praise the Lord. Psalm 106:1

What is the one-word Jewish translation of this phrase?

Questions for thought:

1. Is it appropriate for children to constantly bombard their godly parents with requests while seldom, if ever, expressing gratitude and praise to them? What about our God and Master, Creator and Sustainer, Lord and Savior?
2. Why should we praise God for specific attributes and for the specific things He has done in our lives?
3. A. Should we praise God every time we come to Him in prayer?
B. What good would it do to keep a journal of the things we have to praise God for?
4. (True or False) For our prayers to be complete they must include praise.

Bottom line: It is important that we not overlook praising God each time we pray, in spite of the desire to convey our own needs.

RULE #16

Be careful what you promise to do in your prayers.

When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow. It is better not to vow than to make a vow and not fulfill it. Ecclesiastes 5:4-5

Identify the sin in these two verses.

Questions for thought:

1. Why should I be careful about making promises to God in my prayers?
2. Is it possible that the "credibility crisis" of our culture has crept into the prayer life of our churches? (List 3 cultural failures.)
3. How can I avoid breaking my vows to God?
 - A.
 - B.
 - C.

Bottom line: God expects us to do what we say.

RULE #17
Don't Pray to Anyone but God.

You shall have no other gods before me. Exodus 20:3

Underline the problems in this verse.

Questions for thought:

1. Is the living God to be at the head of our list?
2. Do any other "forgotten rules" matter if we get this one wrong?
3. What does God think of prayers prayed to little gods? Deuteronomy 6:14-15

Bottom line: god is the necessary ingredient to all answered prayers--without Him prayers go unanswered.

RULE #18
Think before you pray.

Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God.
Ecclesiastes 5:2

Underline the challenge in this verse.

Questions for thought:

1. Does this rule apply universally?
2. Should a believers prayer life be characterized to include thought and preparation for prayer?
3. Where do we turn when thoughts and words fail us in prayer? (Romans 8:26)

Bottom line: Preparing our hearts and minds before we pray produces focus and compliance with God's biblical instruction on prayer.

RULE #19

For additional prayer power, add a person.

Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. For where two or three have gathered in My name, I am there in their midst. Matthew 18:19-20 (NAS)

Underline the key word in these verses.

Questions for thought:

1. What does the word "agree" mean in this passage?
2. Does this promise mean when two believers pray in agreement that they will get what they want?
3. How does this promise relate to 1 John 5:14?

Bottom line: For additional prayer power, add a person.

RULE #20

Listen to the needs of others and pray for them.

Pray for each other. James 5:16

What is at the heart of this command to pray?

Questions for thought:

1. What is the human dilemma in James 5:16?
2. What kind of prayer produces results?
3. What is the ultimate desired outcome of praying for each other?

Bottom line: When believers listen to and pray for each other unselfishly, God brings healing results.

RULE #21
Some prayers require fasting.

"And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was cured at once. Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, 'Why could we not drive it out?' And He said to them, 'Because of the littleness of your faith....But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.'" Matthew 17:18-21 (NAS)

Identify the problem and the prescription in this passage.

Questions for thought:

1. Are believers instructed to "fast"?
2. What is the primary objective in "fasting and prayer?"
3. How does fasting and prayer draw us closer to God?
 - A.
 - B.
 - C.

Bottom line: Unpretentious prayer-and-fasting draws us nearer to God and more effective in accomplishing His will.

RULE #22

Forgive others; there should be no anger in our prayers.

"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift." Matthew 5:23-24

Which word in this passage means "To make things right?"

Questions for thought:

1. Define forgiveness and reconciliation and explain how the two relate to each other.
2. Why would God desire for you a human reconciliation before He receives your worship offering?
3. Is it possible that we live substandard Christian lives and do not see some prayers answered because of broken relationships.

Bottom line: Prioritize forgiveness and reconciliation in order that there will be no anger in your prayers.

RULE #23

Repent; sin can annul the authority of our prayers.

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

Underline the cause of unanswered prayer in this verse.

Questions for thought:

1. Should I ask for forgiveness before I ask for anything else? Isaiah 59:2, John 9:31
2. Will it do any good to sweep my sin under the rug where God can't see it or compartmentalize it so it doesn't affect my spiritual life? Proverbs 28:13, Psalm 32:5
3. Why do we so often hide our sin and fail when we could confess them to Him and find mercy?

Bottom line: Our prayers are not as effective if we do not repent.

RULE #24
Pray for those in authority.

"I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority." 1 Timothy 2:1-2

Why specify "kings and those in authority"?

Questions for thought:

1. Does this passage urge us to endorse the activities of "those in authority"?
2. How, then, do we pray for them?
 - A.
 - B.
 - C.
3. Is it incumbent upon us to be informed concerning state, local and world events and conditions in order to know how to pray?

Bottom line: We are to pray for "all those in authority."

RULE #25

Pray that God will help you resist temptation.

"Pray that you will not fall into temptation." Luke 22:40

What temptation is Jesus referring to as he addresses the eleven apostles in the garden of Gethsemane?

Questions for thought:

1. Does God ever have a purpose in allowing our temptation?
2. What good does it do to be specific in our prayer for God's help when we face temptation?
 - A.
 - B.
 - C.
 - D.
3. How has God helped you? Give examples:
 - A.
 - B.
 - C.

Bottom line: God expects us to acknowledge our temptations to Him and to pray for His help.

RULE #26

Don't pray so that others may see your praying.

"And when you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners, so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full." Matthew 6:5 (NAS)

Identify the spiritual malady described in this text.

Questions for thought:

1. What is the key to avoid praying "so that others may see you praying?"
2. According to Matthew 6:6, when we pray to God sincerely in secret (without ostentation) what does He do?
3. Does this rule prohibit group prayers? (Matthew 26:36)

Bottom line: Believers should place the focus of their prayers on God, and not others.

RULE #27

Pray in the name of Jesus.

"I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it." John 14:13-14

Underline the key to accomplished prayer in this verse.

Questions for thought:

1. What does it mean to pray "in His (Jesus) name?"
2. What happens to our prayers when carelessly fail to acknowledge Christ or deliberately detour around his name?
3. What do your prayers have to do with bringing glory to the Father?

Bottom line: Prayers that don't go through the Son do not get to the Father.

RULE #28
Be patient

"Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him." Psalm 37:7

How does "rest" relate to "waiting patiently" in this verse?

Questions for thought:

1. What does the Bible mean when it says to "wait upon the Lord" or "wait patiently for Him?"
2. Describe some of the challenges inherent in "time bound humans" relating to a "timeless God."
3. List some of the benefits believers enjoy when we wait patiently for Him?
 - A.
 - B.
 - C.
 - D.
 - E.

Bottom line: Believers always benefits when they trust God enough to wait patiently for Him.