

Instructions for Successful Prayer

1. Realize that successful prayer does not always result in a “yes” answer. Jesus’ prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane is proof of that. He asked that the cup of suffering be removed and God said “no.” It was God’s will that Jesus suffer and die for the benefit of mankind. The Apostle Paul had a physical affliction which God did not heal, despite Paul’s repeated requests. God did not heal the affliction because He wanted Paul to remain humble.
2. Realize that lasting happiness and joy are not dependent on good health or the acquisition of material possessions. Some forms of joy and happiness are only made possible by first enduring a measure of suffering and pain. You can’t build strong muscles without enduring the pain of strenuous workouts. The more difficult the task, the greater the joy and happiness that result from its successful completion. The greater the sorrow one experiences in life, the sweeter the relief that comes when the sorrow finally ends. The abundant life that Jesus makes available to us contains an abundance of both negative and positive experiences. You can’t have one without the other.
3. Realize that the purpose of prayer is not to “game the system” by avoiding obstacles and finding shortcuts. If you cheat on an exam, you might get a high score, but it won’t accurately reflect what you have actually learned from the course.
4. Realize that the most effective prayers are the ones you pray on behalf of others. It is definitely possible to achieve a measure of success and happiness in life through prayer, meditation and positive thinking. However, if your prayers are mostly centered on selfish goals and aspirations, the resulting happiness will only be temporary.
5. Realize that immediate gratification is fun for a while, but usually doesn’t last. Deferred gratification, resulting from a process of steady accumulation, is more likely to be permanent. Prayers of thanksgiving for what you already have are more likely to produce immediate joy and happiness.
6. Realize that deeds are more powerful than prayers. It is pointless to pray for a better job without taking the time to actually look for one. It is pointless to pray for the poor without the willingness to actually use your time and money to help them. It is pointless to pray for the forgiveness of your sins without the willingness to give them up.
7. Finally, be careful what you pray for, because you just might get it.

Richard Goyette