

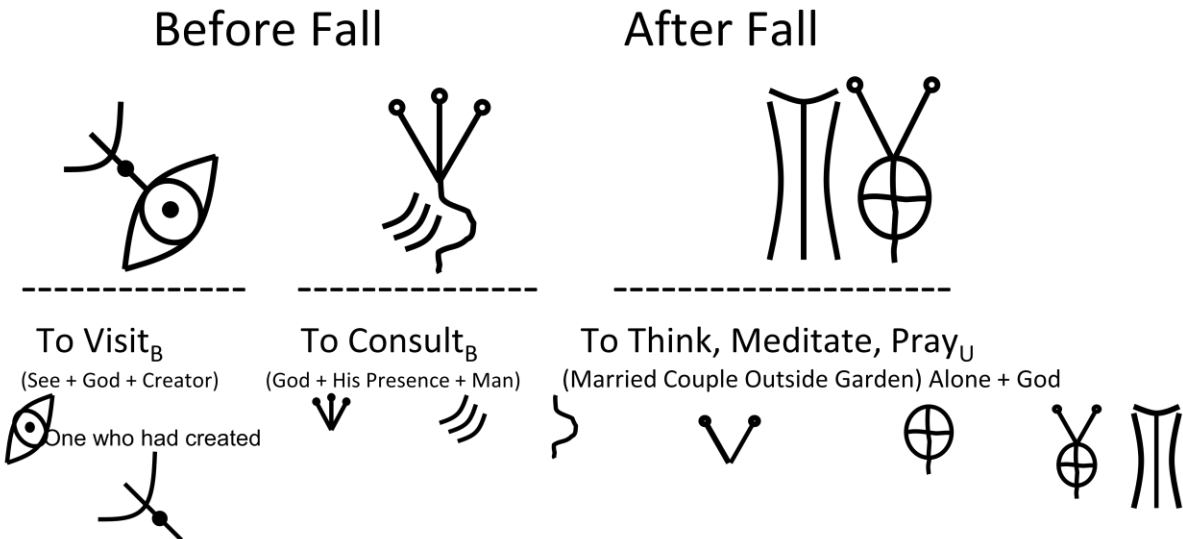
Prayer in Practice (#27)

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What is Prayer?

Prayer is not simply conversation with God. Conversation with God occurs when we are face to face with him. An example of this in Scripture occurs in Genesis: *Then the Lord called to the man, and said to him: Where are you? And he answered: I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself* (Ge 3:9-10). Some exegetes, but not many, call this the first prayer in the Bible. It is not. Even if Adam and Eve had made a request of God, it would not have been prayer because they were face to face with God as he chose to appear to them. A point that can be made here is that just because we can find ourselves face to face with God does not guarantee that he will acknowledge or answer our request. Since the Fall, man does not normally talk to God face to face.

An example of man's estrangement from God is shown in the difference between the ideographs and pictographs representing both talking with God and praying to God by the descendants of Noah after the great dispersion following the collapse of the city state at the Tower of Babel on the plain of Shinar when God confounded their language into 72 tongues.



Ref: Kang 1994 p 57, 85.

Confirms Biblical Account.

Prayer is a heart to heart conversation with God while we are remote from him.

Why do Christians pray?

It is not an option. God commands it.

"Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you; (1 Samuel 12:23 NASU). Here Samuel, the last judge, prays for the people after they had asked for a king.

16 Rejoice always; 17 pray without ceasing; 18 in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 19 Do not quench the Spirit; 20 do not despise prophetic utterances. 21 But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; 22 abstain from every form of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:16-22).

2 Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; 3 praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; (Colossians 4:2-3). [Eph, Phili, Col, and Philemon are the prison epistles.]

Are you a Christian? It is unfortunate, but few people are Christians.

Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. 14 For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it. Matthew 7:13-14 NASU

One hundred percent of the people will pass through one gate or the other. Did not Daniel while in captivity in 537 BC say: *Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt (Daniel 12:2).* But what is the percentage of people passing through the narrow gate? In Chapter 7 of John, Jesus revealed what I think is the percentage of those saved at the Feast of Tabernacles (Booths). Jesus attended the feast only on the eighth day when water was not taken from the Pool of Siloam. He cried out saying: *If any man is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me as the Scripture said: From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.* And that happened only on the last day of the octave.

Take the test for being a Christian. (Questions from 1 John.)

- 1) Do you enjoy fellowship with God and with his saints?
- 2) Are you sensitive to sin? Do you know it when you see it? Does your sin bother you?
- 3) Do you obey God's commands?
- 4) What is your favorite time of the day? Do you love your activities more than God?
- 5) Do you love Jesus Christ and look forward to his return?
- 6) Do you have a habitual sin? Do you practice a particular sin?
- 7) In a group, do you promote divisiveness or harmony?
- 8) Has God ever answered your prayer? Does he almost always answer your prayer?
- 9) Do you try to abide in Jesus Christ? (1 John 3:24)
- 10) Is your discernment of right and wrong the same as other Christians?
- 11) Do you have inner peace?

12) Do you believe fundamental doctrine?

- a) The Bible is true, normative, and self-interpretive to the Christian.
- b) There is one eternal God in three persons, who cares about every person.
- c) Jesus Christ as the Son of God is both fully God and fully man. By his death on the cross, the price was paid for our sin.
- d) We are saved by faith in Jesus Christ and not by our works.
- e) We are required to live by the precepts of the Bible, which we must read or listen to.

So then, the first thing to pray for would be any one of the above twelve points where you miss the mark.

Three Things the Christian Must Do

1. Secure the Assurance of Salvation

If you do not have the Assurance of Salvation, you should spend every waking moment until you have found it! Did not John write the following to believers: *These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may **know** that you have eternal life* (1 John 5:13). And how will you “know”? By knowing what “these things” are. Here, John, the premier theologian of the NT, has previously revealed to us in 1 John 2:5 which says: Whoever keeps His commandments will come to the **realization** that God loves him, and by this he will **know** that he knows Him (i.e. he is in Him and is saved). In Verses 11 and 12 we read: 11) *After Peter came to his full senses, he said to himself: “Now I realize that the Lord has sent His angel to rescue me from Herod and from all that the Jews were expecting”* 12) *And after Peter realized what happened, he went into the house of Mary, the mother of Mark (Mark the evangelist who was also called John Mark), where many believers were gathered together and were praying.*

God’s love for a person means nothing unless that person realizes it. In Acts 12:3-10, Peter in 43 AD is arrested and thrown in jail. An angel stuns the three guards and releases Peter who goes immediately to Mark’s house in Jerusalem. In Acts 12:11-12 Peter realizes what just happened. Accordingly, when you realize that God loves you, at that moment, you have the assurance of salvation.

When I say “every waking moment” I mean this. If a relative calls you saying that your brother has taken ill, is critical, and asks for your prayers, should you pray? Not if you do not have the assurance of salvation. Pray first that you receive this, then intercede for your brother! Why would God hear the prayer of someone who does not know that he is saved? Attend to this urgent issue first.

2. Follow the Law of Christ

The Christian today is living under the Law of Christ (1 Cor 9:20-21, Gal 6:2), also called the Law of the Spirit of Life (Rom 8:2) and the Perfect Law and the Law of Liberty (James 2:12). In a nutshell, this means to *bear one another’s burdens* [not load], *and thus fulfill the law of Christ* (Gal 6:2). What are the rules, and how should we act?

Subjection to Government:

Proper: Ro 13:1-7; Peter 2:13-17; Titus 3:1

Improper: Acts 4:19-20; 5-29

Courts of Law: 1 Cor 6:1-11

Masters and Servants: Eph 6:5-9; Col 3:22--4:1

Work: 1 Thes 4:11-12; 2 Thes 3:6-15

Marriage: Eph 5:22-33; Col 3:18-19; 1 Peter 3:1-7

Parenting: Eph 6:1-4; Col 3:20-21

Church:

Submission to Elders: 1 Thes 5:12-13; Heb 13:7, 17

Evangelism: Acts 1:8; Ro 1:14, 16; 2 Cor 5:18-20; Ro 1:16 (Jew first).

Love Brethren: John 13:34-35; Ro 12:9-10; Eph 4:1-3; 5:2; 1 Thes 4:9

Obligations: 1 Cor 12:26; Eph 4:31-32; 5:21; 6:18; Phil 2:3-4; Col 3:12

Weak Believers: Ro 14:1-23

Erring Believers: Ro 16:17-18; Gal 6:1; 1 Thes 5:14; 2 Thes 3:6; 11-15

Ten Commandments: 603 + 10 = 613 were abolished at Christ's death (Gal 3:16 ff).

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|-------------------|--------------|------------|
| 1) Other Gods: | Acts 14:15 | Mat 4:10 |
| 2) Images: | 1 John 5:21 | Acts 15:20 |
| 3) Name in vain: | James 5:12 | Rom 12:14 |
| 4) Sabbath: | | |
| 5) Honor Parents: | Eph 6:1 | Mark 10:19 |
| 6) Murder: | 1 John 3:15 | Mark 10:19 |
| 7) Adultery: | 1 Cor 6:9-10 | Mark 10:19 |
| 8) Stealing: | Eph 4:28 | Mark 10:19 |
| 9) Lying: | Col 3:9 | Mark 10:19 |
| 10) Coveting: | Eph 5:3 | Rom 7:7 |

New Commandment: Jn 13:34 and 1 Jn 2:7-8 *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.*

If you need help in any of the above areas, pray for that daily so that your other prayers may be answered. It is not the form of the prayer that becomes the silver bullet, but the petitioner's union with God.

While Christians will sin breaking on occasion the Law of Christ, it is important that they do not practice sin. Did not Jesus quoting Psalms 6:8 say: *Depart from me, you who practice lawlessness* (Mt 7:23b)? If you are a believer who is beginning to practice a particular sin, the words of Paul apply here: *For this reason, many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep* (1 Cor 11:30). There is a difference between sinning and the practice of sin. One could have had a homosexual affair and confessed that sin or one could continue defiantly in that walk of life and even demand that others accept his lifestyle. Many times, one does not have the Assurance of Salvation because of a sin he cannot put down—a sin that defines his character. The following verse burns a hole in his conscience: *He who **believes** in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not **obey** the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him* (John 3:36)ⁱ.

While the Assurance of Salvation must be prayed into your life, the practice of any sin must be prayed out of your life.

3. Make Jesus the Lord of Your Life

One can be saved by accepting Jesus Christ as savior, but without having an established concept of what it means to make him the Lord of his life. This may come with time and grow like faith which may begin with the size of a mustard seed. I do not believe in Lordship Salvation as do Arthur Pink, John Stott, and J.I. Packer. Making Jesus Christ the Lord of your life involves Dedication (Ro 12:1-2) and living a Spirit-Filled Life so that we can ultimately be referred to as was Stephen, the first martyr: *full of faith and the Holy Spirit* (Acts 6:5). It is instructive to point out here that the eleven apostles immediately after Jesus Crucifixion were not yet full of faith and the Holy Spirit because they refused to believe that he had risen from the dead, to obey his command to go to Galilee, and were huddled in fear in a house in Jerusalem. Jesus was not yet the Lord of their lives. We also must grow in faith. A good measurand of the amount of faith in your cup at any time is the amount of fear in your life. Fear is a sin. It means you do not believe that Jesus can or wants to deliver you from this particular fear. The more fear (concerns, worry, anxiety, depression) you have, the less you have of the complement which is faith. Is your cup full to the brim with faith or is it swirling with doubt and fear? Remember, *perfect love casts out fear* (1 Jn 4:18). Picture a child standing in fear before a growling dog. Suddenly a parent emerges beside the dog and the child bolts right by the dog to the parent.

In summary, your prayers will be answered if you are a Christian, you have the Assurance of Salvation, you follow the Law of Christ, and have made him the Lord of your life.

How do we pray?

To the Samaritan woman at the well, Jesus said: *But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers* (John 4:23 NASU). What does that mean? The following verse explains what it means to be in the spirit: *9 However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. 10 If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. 11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you* (Romans 8:9-11). In other words, being in the Spirit just means to be a Christian. It may also have the secondary meaning of praying with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, but does not mean to be in a trance.

Pray in truth and humility letting not your prayer be your sin by avoiding hypocrisy: *5 "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. 6 "But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you* (Mt 6:5 and 6:16). Paul, our first theologian, would have chided us

to pray in good conscience (*suneidesis*) or with a clear conscience. This means not to pray under duress or out of hypocrisy. That is, do not pray just because someone tells you to pray or that you should be praying; and do not pray so as to look good kneeling before the altar or to pray for a friend seven days in a row just so you can say when you meet that you prayed for him all week long.

At the time of Christ, the Japa Mala were prayers that were repetitively recited on beads. Today the Rosary is just as popular. When the repetition is meaningless, the following verse applies: 7 *"And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. 8 "So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him (Mt 6:7).*

The Apostles Prayer, sometimes called the Lord's Prayer or Our Father, outlines the major points of the components of any prayer: 9 *" Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name. 10' Your kingdom come. your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. 11' Give us this day our daily bread. 12'And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13'And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.'](Mt 6:9-13 and Lk 11:2-4)*

Prayer Secret: You will not have your prayer answered if there is just one person you are unjustly angry with or have not forgiven. Did not Jesus say: 14 *" For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 "But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions (Matthew 6:14-15).* Since forgiveness is so important to prayer, let's see whom we are to forgive.

Who are we to forgive?

The following is found in Chapter 18 of Matthew: 21 *Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" 22 Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven (Mt 18:21-22).* Matthew leaves out a very important word here, a word he understands, but one which Luke states explicitly. Luke's account in Chapter 17 is as follows: *And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, "I repent," forgive him (Lk 17:4).* So the person must ask for forgiveness. If the olive branch is presented, we as Christians must forgive. But think of all the ways we can avoid seeing or pretend not seeing the olive branch.

Did Jesus forgive everybody? He forgave the thief on his right that asked for forgiveness, but not the thief on the left. Only one was with him in Heaven that day. He forgave the Romans with his first of seven statements from the Cross because they did not know what they were doing (Lk 23:34), but he did not forgive the "Jews" in the sense that John uses meaning the Pharisees, and he did not forgive Pontius Pilate even though he tried six times to avoid sentencing him.

The *Didache* or *Teaching of the Twelve* says: *Bless those that curse you, and pray for your enemies; besides, fast for those that persecute you* (Didache 1:3). Do not confuse forgiving with blessing and praying. Do not confuse forgiving with fasting.

Prayer Promises

God will hear our prayers: *You will pray to Him, and He will hear you* (Job 22:27). *O You who hear prayer, to You all men come* (Psalm 65:2).

Call upon his name in the day of trouble, and he will deliver: *Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me.* Ps 50:15

He is a God for the lonely: *5 A father of the fatherless and a judge for the widows, Is God in His holy habitation. 6 God makes a home for the lonely; he leads out the prisoners into prosperity. Only the rebellious dwell in a parched land* (Ps 68:5-6).

God regards the prayers of those in need: *He has regarded the prayer of the destitute And has not despised their prayer.* Ps 102:17

God regards the prayer of the righteous: *The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to*



the LORD, but the prayer of the upright is His delight (Proverbs 15:8). Righteous is a legal term meaning not guilty or saved. The ideograph shown above predates Christianity and means Righteous. It is made up of the words Me + Lamb. The Righteous are the Christians who are in the Spirit.

The Father will answer our prayer: *In that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. 24 " Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.* John 16:23 NASU

Do not pray to Jesus. Do not pray for Jesus sake. Pray in the name of Jesus. Jesus gave you the right to use his name. (Adam had dominion over the earth. He sinned and transferred dominion to Satan. Jesus defeated Satan, and now you can work miracles in his name.) Do not pray to Mary or the saints. There is one mediator, *the man Christ Jesus* (1 Timothy 2:5). The exclamation by Stephen when he was at the point of death from a stoning may be an exception: *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit* (Acts 7:59b)! A similar circumstance befell me in Maryland... It can be argued, however, that Stephen had a vision and was talking, not praying, to Jesus.

Demons, Snakes, Poison: *Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. 16 He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. 17 These signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; 18 they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover (Mark 16:15-18).* All these things are true, but not so that you may test the Lord. In other words, one does not drink a glass of gasoline just to show his power over poison. I remember the story of a preacher fishing down south on a Saturday afternoon when a water moccasin swam by his boat and bit him on the arm... The preacher prayed, and knowing that the Lord wanted him to deliver a sermon on the following day, continued fishing. The poison never took effect. Healings do happen in the lives of Christians, but one cannot rightly be called a healer because it is sporadic and ultimately God is the Healer. Arthur Blessitt is an example...

Ask God for a sign. I do not do this frequently, but the few times I have in the past, he has answered.

- 1) Sky Diving at Elsinore
- 2) Personal Request in Waco

Do not be afraid to pray in public: meals, wedding, and the Brad Simmons story.

Find a prayer partner or pray in a group. *19 "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. 20 "For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst (Matthew 18:19-20)".*

How to pray for money. Do not ask God to give you money. He is not a counterfeiter. The money is in circulation. Pray to God the Father, that the money be circulated to you. Ask your Father to cause the money to come to you in the name of Jesus Christ. Maybe he will make use of your guardian angel to find the cash. Every Christian has a guardian angel. (Their angels in Heaven continually see the face of my Father who is in Heaven (Matthew 18:10).

Pray for people by name if possible.

Create a mental or paper log of your prayers and their fulfillment. In reviewing your list, you will find hope the next time you find yourself praying in an "impossible situation". And another thing, do not wait until the situation becomes "impossible". Be "prayed up" as the expression goes so you don't have to pray after the horse has been stolen. Don't wait until the emergency strikes. Pray to ward off the emergency.

The Mechanics of Prayer

- Places of Prayer:**
- 1) In seclusion in your inner room with the door shut. Mt 6:6
 - 2) Private home. Daniel 6:10; Acts 12:5, 12
 - 3) Jesus alone in the mountains. Mt 14:23

- 4) Jesus in the desert in the early morning. Mk 1:35
- 5) A place of prayer beside a river on the Sabbath. Acts 16:13, 16
- 6) Kneeling on a beach in Tyre prior to boarding. Acts 21:5
- 7) Everywhere. 1 Timothy 2:8

Positions for Prayer: 1) Standing as the normal position. Mk 11:25, Lk 18:13, John 17:1

- 2) Kneeling. 1 Ki 8:54; Lk 22:41; Acts 20:36; Eph 3:14
- 3) On face. Mt 26:39; Job 1:20; Nehemiah 8:6; Mt 8:2+Lk 5:12
- 4) Hezekiah lying in bed. 2 Ki 20:2; Ps 63:6
- 5) Elijah with his face between his knees. 1 Ki 18:42
- 6) Head bowed. Ge 24:26 (Abraham's eldest servant); Ex 4:31, 12:27
- 7) Jesus lifting up his eyes in Bethany. John 11:41, 17:1
- 8) Lifting up hands. Ps 141:2; 1 Ti 2:8
- 9) Jesus laying hands on children. Mt 19:13
- 10) Eyes lowered and beating his breast. Lk 18:13

Times of Prayer: 1) Evening, morning, and noon. Psalm 55:17

- 2) Three times a day. Daniel 6:10
- 3) Seven times a day I praise you; Ps 119:164
- 4) Continuing day and night. 1 Timothy 5:5
- 5) Pray always. Luke 18:1; Eph 6:18; 1 Thes 5:17
- 6) Morning. Ps 5:3, 88:13; Mk 1:35
- 7) Evening. Ps 141:2, 5; Mt 14:23; 26:36-44
- 8) Jesus prayed all night. Lk 6:12
- 9) Scheduled times. Acts 3:1; 10:9, 30
- 10) In times of crisis. 1 Chron 5:20; 2 Chron 13:13-16; Ps 50:15
- 11) Before meals. Mt 14:19; Acts 27:35; 1 Ti 4:4-5
- 12) Jesus despite being very busy. Luke 5:15-16

Types of Prayer: 1) Private. Mt 6:5-6

- 2) Public. Acts 1:14; 4:23-31; 12:5, 12-17, 16:26, 20:36
- 3) Whether private or public, prayer can be

- Intercessory
- Petitionary
- Adoration
- Praise
- Thanksgiving
- Doxology.

Various: 1) Be organized in time or place (Luke 11:1-4). {Prayer stone}

2) Be regular. *In the morning, Lord, you will hear my voice* (Ps 5:3).

3) Do not be repetitious (Mt 6:7).

4) In church, men uncover (1 Cor 11:4) and women cover (1 Cor 11:5) their heads.

5) Tongues requires interpretation (1 Cor 14:13-15).

6) Marital relationship must be sound (1 Pt 3:7) *so that your prayer will not be hindered*

7) *Be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer* (1 Pt 4:7).

When Peter said this, he was looking forward to the destruction of the Temple—we the Rapture.

8) Fasting (Mt 17:21; Ac 14:23) and sexual abstinence (1 Cor 7:5) are an aid.

9) Pray in spirit and truth (Rom 8:9).

10) Prohibitive prayer: (sin leading to death [1 John 5:16; 1 Cor 5:1-5])

Do not pray that a sinner's suffering be relieved, but that he repents.

11) Time to stop praying and get to work [1 Sam 23:4] (David & the Philistines)

Frontier Women: Story of Mrs. Hendee & 15 children in Royalton Vt 1776...

12) Unanswered prayer: not abiding or in his will [1 John 3:21-22]. *Whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight* (1 Jn 3:22).

Four Big Secrets to Prayer:

- Be humble and keep all of God's Commandments.
- Avoid repetitive sin also called the practice of sin.
- Forgive for all who ask for forgiveness (and some who don't).
- Be in awe (*The fear [yirah] of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom* (Ps 9:10; 111:10)).

So the secret to prayer lies in who you are and what your relationship is with God, your faith hope, and love, and not the mechanics of your prayer or the eloquence of your words.

ⁱ If this verse were rewritten to say: He who believes and obeys in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, so that it appears structurally like Mark 16:16, then the meaning would be changed and obedience would become the key to salvation. As it is actually written, belief is the key to salvation and belief not leading to obedience results in condemnation.