

Small Group Guide: Conditions for Answered Prayer

Opening Question: Share a time when you felt God answered one of your prayers. What made that experience meaningful to you?

Key Takeaways:

1. There are four main conditions for answered prayer:
 - a. Having a forgiving attitude toward others
 - b. Being willing to share the results of answered prayers
 - c. Believing that God will answer
 - d. Living in the presence of Christ
2. Forgiveness is commanded, but it's different from reconciliation.
3. Our motives in prayer matter - we should pray with a willingness to use God's blessings for His kingdom.
4. Faith is crucial in prayer, but even small faith (like a mustard seed) counts.
5. Abiding in Christ is essential for fruitful Christian living and effective prayer.

Discussion Questions:

1. The pastor mentioned that forgiveness is not the same as reconciliation. How do you understand the difference, and why is this distinction important?
2. Reflect on your recent prayers. Have they been mostly self-focused, or have you considered how answered prayers could benefit others and God's kingdom?
3. What does it mean to you to "abide in Christ"? What practical steps can you take to remain connected to Jesus throughout your day?
4. The sermon emphasized the importance of having the right view of God when approaching Him in prayer. How do you typically view God? As a stern authority figure or as a loving friend? How might your view affect your prayer life?
5. Discuss the analogy of the grapevine in John 15:1-8. How does this help you understand the concept of remaining connected to Christ?

Bible Study Questions:

1. Forgiveness and Prayer:

- Read Mark 11:24-25. How does having a forgiving attitude impact your prayer life? Can you share a time when harboring unforgiveness affected your spiritual well-being?

2. Selflessness in Prayer:

- Reflect on Proverbs 21:13. What does this verse teach us about the importance of being attentive to the needs of others in our prayers? How can we apply this principle to ensure our prayer motives are selfless?

3. Faith and Belief:

- In Matthew 9:29, Jesus mentions the role of faith in prayer. How does the statement "according to your faith will it be done to you" shape your understanding of faith's impact on prayer outcomes? Can you identify areas in your life where you struggle with unbelief?

4. Living in Christ's Presence:

- Explore John 15:5-6. What does it mean to remain or abide in Christ, and how does this affect the fruit we produce in our lives? Discuss practical ways you can cultivate a deeper connection with Christ daily.

5. God's Will and Our Desires:

- Consider 1 John 3:22-23 and James 4:3. How do these passages challenge you to align your desires with God's will in prayer? What steps can you take to ensure your prayers reflect a genuine desire for God's guidance rather than personal gain?

Practical Applications (choose or recommend one or two):

1. **Forgiveness Exercise:** Take a moment to reflect on anyone you might be holding a grudge against. Write their name down and pray for God's help in forgiving them this week.
2. **Prayer Motives Check:** Before praying this week, pause and consider your motives. Are you praying selfishly or with God's kingdom in mind?
3. **Abiding Challenge:** Set aside 10-15 minutes each day this week to simply "abide" in God's presence through prayer, meditation, or Bible reading.
4. **Faith Declaration:** When praying this week, practice saying "God will" instead of "God can" or "God might." Notice how this impacts your faith and expectation.
5. **Honest Prayer Journal:** Start a prayer journal where you can be completely honest with God about your struggles, victories, and questions.

Closing Prayer: Lord, help us to meet the conditions for answered prayer in our lives. Give us forgiving hearts, unselfish motives, growing faith, and a deep desire to abide in Your presence. May our prayer lives be transformed as we seek to align ourselves more closely with Your will. Amen.