

How to End the Drought

If it seems as if God isn't listening, maybe you're trying too hard.

Listen to a child pray and you'll hear something like: "God, I really want that doll with the blue dress"; or "I will work really hard, but can You help me get picked for the baseball team?"; or "God, will You heal my mom [or dad]?"

Stated in plain, common language, that's all prayer is: God's people talking to their God. There is no need for special words or to say things in a certain order or way. When we talk with our friends or co-workers we don't talk differently than we normally do. Why do we do that when we talk to God?

This month's key reading is about Elijah, God's prophet, praying on Mount Carmel (see 1 Kings 18). God, through Elijah, had sent a great drought over Israel, and now it was time to end it.

Elijah prayed. In fact he prayed seven times, sending his servant after each prayer to look toward the sea for approaching rain. The seventh time his servant reported he saw "a cloud as small as a man's hand" (v. 44). Elijah knew God was going to end the drought, but he remained persistent in his prayers until he saw the

answer.

The article "Effective Praying" in the *Fire Bible: Global Study Edition* lists characteristics of prayers like those Elijah prayed:

1. Have faith in God. Believe that God does hear you and that He has the ability to answer your prayer.

2.
Pray in Jesus' name. It is because of Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross that we have the privilege to come to God at all. Without Jesus we would be totally cut off by sin from access to God.

3.
Pray according to God's will. Prayer is most effective when it follows God's perfect will and when the things we ask for are directed by His Word and His Spirit.

4.
Live according to God's will. For your prayers to be answered you should be living your life as God wants you to. If we only draw near to God to get the things we want, we can't expect God to answer us.

5.
Pray persistently. Yes, He hears us the first time, and the Bible tells us He knows our innermost thoughts; so He knows what we will pray before we pray it. However, He wants to know we are serious about our need. He wants us to persist. He instructs us to "Ask ... seek ...

knock" (Matt. 7:7).

This doesn't mean God can't or won't answer prayer if we don't meet all the conditions of these steps.

God often answers us before we even ask; however, it is important as you grow in your relationship with God that you also mature in your praying.

This month look at your prayer life. Have you fallen into a routine of ritual rather than relationship? Do you believe that God hears and is ready to answer you with your best interest in mind?

God wants us to come to Him as children (see Matt. 18:3). Talk with God in a new and intimate way, persist in asking, and rejoice in His goodness and grace.

Adapted from Principles 4Life (Life Publishers International), available free at .