

## Ask and Ask Again

By Susan Vogt

We may wonder whether God *really* hears our prayers. After all, not everyone is healed from a serious illness, gets a dream job, or wins the lottery—no matter how hard he or she has prayed. Should we just give up? Should we lower our expectations?

### For

Adult, Couple

### Season

Winter

### Needed

Printed copy of this activity, pencil, willingness to imagine the future and see beyond tangible results



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### Prepare in Advance

Decide whether to do this activity on your own or with your spouse or a trusted friend.

### Activity Plan

1. Over the centuries Christians have tried to organize and categorize prayer. One system that is simple and memorable works with the acronym ACTS:  
A: Adoration/Praise  
C: Contrition/Sorrow  
T: Thanksgiving/Gratitude  
S: Supplication/Petition

For this activity, we will focus on the “S” (Supplication), which basically means asking God for what we need. As Christians we believe that all of life and creation have their source in God. Asking for help acknowledges God as the Supreme Giver. Ultimately, prayer is the raising of our hearts and minds to God. (For Vibrant Faith @ Home activities for Adoration, see [All Creation Bless the Lord](#); for Contrition, see [Forgiveness Is Not For Sissies](#); for Thanksgiving, see [Little Thanks](#).)

2. As you begin, take a moment to remember you are in the presence of God, the Creator, and pray:

*Loving God, source of all life, we believe that you love us and desire good for us. By asking for what we need or want, we acknowledge your power and our connection to you. Jesus, we remember that you said: “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened” (Matthew 7:7-8). We believe, Lord, help our unbelief. Amen.*

3. Have you ever doubted Jesus’ words in Matthew 7:7-8? Have you ever really wanted something, prayed for it, and didn’t get it? (Perhaps it was to pass a test, for a loved one to be healed of an illness, to find a marriage partner, to get a job, to have a child, to escape a danger or crisis.) You may have thought that if God had been listening and really cared, God would have granted your request. Write down one time such a prayer was not answered:

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4. I, the writer of this activity, once prayed that I could change my boss's opinion about how I did a particular part of my job. I was sure I was right. It didn't happen, and I ended up resigning. It would seem that God didn't hear my prayer or at least was not on my side. I was afraid of the future. In time, I realized that being forced to consider a different job was a blessing. I would not have prayed for it, but perhaps God was answering my prayer in an unexpected way. Looking back on things that you've asked God for in the past, has anything like this ever happened to you?
5. It may be harder to see a silver lining in seemingly unanswered prayers for an end to horrendous tragedies or evils. We pray for a loved one to be healed of a terrible illness, and he or she suffers and dies. We pray for our marriage to be saved, and it isn't. We pray for peace, and another war begins. How are we to understand these seeming paradoxes? Perhaps the answer is in how the tragedy or crisis has changed the ones who have prayed. Has it softened our hearts to the troubles of others? Has it made us more compassionate? Has it moved us to deeper prayer?
6. The natural conclusion to this activity is to boldly and persistently keep asking God for what we need. Of course, when we believe God is all knowing and always wants our good, we may jump to the conclusion that we don't need to ask because God already knows. The asking, however, is not because God doesn't know or care, but rather it is for we who pray. The asking reminds us—and those who witness our prayer—that we put our faith and trust in God.

Listed below are five kinds of prayer requests. Write one or more requests for each category.

- a. **Prayers for things that would be nice, but not essential.** (For example: nice weather for a picnic, staying healthy on a trip, winning a card game.)

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

- b. **Prayers for things I need.** (For example: a job, more income, recovery from illness.)

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

- c. **Prayers for personal qualities I'd like to improve.** (For example: patience, tolerance, generosity.)

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

- d. **Prayers for family members and other people I know.** (For example: spouse to be relieved of stress, child to make good friends or get into college, neighbor to be healed of cancer.)

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

- e. **Prayers for people I don't know and for the world in general.** (For example: those who are homeless, nursing homes residents and staff, people living in places decimated by war or natural disaster.)

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

7. As you finish this activity, repeat each of these requests three times. Close your prayer by saying: "O God, I believe you hear me. Help me to recognize your answer. Amen."

Repeat this prayer every day for the next week.

8. Variation: If you are doing this activity with another person, have each person make his or her own list of prayer requests. Exchange lists and pray for each other's requests.

