

ANSWERED PRAYER

GOD'S POWER IN YOUR LIFE

WHAT IS PRAYER?

Prayer is a two-way conversation with God. It is the most intimate relationship with the Creator you can have. In prayer, the depths of your spirit are in communion with the depths of the Spirit of God. Out of this can come instruction, guidance, healing, deliverance and wisdom.

Often when we pray, we make use of our rational minds. But there are times when we can only pray in the Spirit, such as when we don't know how to pray about a specific situation. At times like these, the Apostle Paul says, "*The Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words*" (Romans 8:26).

HOW SHOULD I PRAY?

When Jesus' disciples asked Him how to pray, He gave them what we know as the Lord's Prayer (see Matthew 6:9-13 KJV). As you meditate on each phrase, you'll see how the Lord's Prayer touches on each facet of our lives and God's character. It is a wonderfully complete outline for our prayers and is a good model to build on.

As we pray the Lord's Prayer, we begin by acknowledging God's sovereign fatherhood when we say, "*Our Father which art in heaven.*"

Then we adore His name. Because His name represents His nature, we praise His very being when we say the next phrase, "*Hallowed be thy name.*"

Next, we must be concerned about the extension of His kingdom. We must desire that people should come to know Him and submit to Him, so we say: "*Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.*"

Then we turn to our personal concerns and ask God for our daily bread—not only literal bread, but whatever we need to carry out His work. This prayer is for His daily provision for our immediate needs, and so we pray, "*Give us this day our daily bread.*"

Next comes a prayer of release from sin and guilt, the prayer of confession, repentance and forgiveness: "*And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*" Here we are asking God for His grace in our relationships with other people, because His forgiveness of us and our forgiveness of others go hand in hand. If we are going to expect answered prayer, we must be willing to forgive other people, even as God is willing to forgive us.

Finally, we seek God's protection from temptation and evil: "*And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*" We ask Him to keep us walking in His ways, so that we might be covered by His power and anointing and not be susceptible to evil influences.

HOW CAN I KNOW THAT GOD WILL ANSWER MY PRAYERS?

The Bible overflows with God's repeated promises to hear and answer His children's appeals. This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. *And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him* (1 John 5:14-15). To pray according to God's will means to pray in a way that is consistent with His Word.

The Bible shows us that a righteous person's prayers will be answered: *The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much* (James 5:16). But righteousness means a lot more than "clean living." It means depending on Jesus Christ for answers to every problem you face. Philippians 3:9 says, *Not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith* (NKJV).

Jesus told us to pray according to His name (see John 14:13-14). He promises in His Word: *All things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them,*

and they will be granted you (Mark 11:24). No obstacle is too great to withstand His power: “Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him” (Mark 11:23). Begin on a regular basis to pray about the biggest obstacle you face, and command that particular personal mountain to move by the power of the name of Jesus.

ALL THINGS FOR WHICH YOU PRAY AND ASK, BELIEVE THAT YOU HAVE RECEIVED THEM, AND THEY WILL BE GRANTED TO YOU.

—MARK 11:24

HOW CAN I KNOW GOD’S WILL?

God’s will is best understood through a combination of different sources. Our chief source is the Bible. If you read the Bible daily and understand it clearly, you will know the will of God, because it contains His will for our lives.

Another major source for knowing the will of God is prayer, in which you communicate with God and learn what pleases Him. The inner peace (or the lack of it) that you experience when you are in communion with Him can show you whether or not you are praying according to God’s will.

God also reveals His will for us through godly counselors—people whose wisdom and walk with the Lord you can trust. But remember, however you sense God revealing His will to you, it must agree with His Word, the Bible. He will not oppose Himself, *for He cannot deny Himself* (2 Timothy 2:13).

Once we have learned God’s will, we must stay in it, abiding in the Lord Jesus. We cannot abide in Jesus and at the same time hold on to unbelief, unforgiveness, resentment, anger, pride, lust or bitterness. Such sins will keep us from the intimate relationship that He desires with us, and they will cloud our ability to know His will (see Psalm 66:18).

WHAT ABOUT UNANSWERED PRAYER?

Nowhere in His Word does God promise that all of His answers will be instantaneous. Unfortunately, far too many people try to measure God’s response by what they

are immediately able to see with their natural capacities. Psalm 27:14 tells us: *Wait on the LORD; Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart. Wait, I say, on the LORD!* (NKJV)

Many times we think that God has failed to answer a prayer and that He has not honored His Word, when actually He is working out something in our lives far greater than we had imagined possible. We must be patient and bear in mind that His ways are far beyond ours. “*For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways*” (Isaiah 55:9).

YOU CAN BREATHE EASIER

Now that you understand God’s desire for you to talk with Him constantly and His promise to answer your prayers, you can start praying with boldness and with the confidence that right now He is revealing answers to whatever dilemmas and uncertainties you may face. Now your spirit will begin growing strong and vigorous with the deep, life-giving breath of prayer. God is supplying what you lack and honoring your petitions according to His will. So, praise Him as the One who hears and answers your prayers. Remember to give thanks that He is not far away, but near you, providing for you, fighting your battles, and directing your choices day by day.

AS YOU PRAY

- Confess any sins that come to mind and ask God to reveal any others that you may have neglected.
- Forgive those who have wronged you, and pray for them.
- Spend time in quiet reflection, focusing on the promises of God and listening for His voice.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

- Humility in prayer (2 Chronicles 7:14)
- Praying for others (Ephesians 1:18)
- Protection from evil (John 17:15)
- Praying for enemies (Matthew 5:44)

Scripture is quoted from the NASB, unless otherwise noted.

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