

Do You Pray?

Have you ever tried to pray? Perhaps, as a child, you prayed the “Now I lay me down to sleep” prayer or the “God is great, God is good” prayer for dinners, or maybe you were taught to regularly pray “the Lord’s Prayer.” All of these are a good beginning particularly while you are young, but they do not make for a good prayer life when you are saved and growing in the Lord. What is prayer? Prayer is talking to God: it is not a memorized speech that makes you feel religious. But even beyond that, prayer is asking God for things. The word pray is an English word that means to ask for. A sentence from Shakespeare might say, “I pray thee, have me excused.” In this sentence the word pray means to ask, and do remember, the Kings James translation of the Bible was an English translation from many years ago at which time they used this word prayer as Shakespeare and others used it. As you read your Bible and see the word pray, remember to think, ask. God wants us to ask Him for things just as we did our parents when we were young. When my wife and I were about to get married, my father called me in to speak about our future. He told me that when we got married, we were not to ask him for food or other items: he said we were to be on our own. Two years later, we went into the ministry with no guaranteed income. Soon we needed food, but we didn’t feel like we should ask my father since he had rightly said that we were on our own. What did we do? We asked God for food and God gave the food. No. God did not drop the food from Heaven: someone came to us asking us if we needed something because God had laid us on their heart. We did not beg people for food, since begging people for things is not praying. God says to ask and He can meet the need: His Ears are just fine and His ability to meet any need is superior. When you talk to God remember to ask Him for whatever needs you have.

But does God hear every prayer? Yes, and no. Of course God hears everything, but when we speak of God hearing our prayers, we mean that He will do something about that prayer. In that sense God does not hear every prayer. The Bible says, “The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are opened unto their prayers, but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.” God has promised to hear the prayers of the righteous (saved sinners), but He has not promised to hear sinners’ prayers until first they come for salvation. In that regard He promises, “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” If someone will come to Christ, be saved, and then pray, God will listen and answer his prayer. And so my friend, you and I must first become children of God by receiving Christ as our Savior before we can know for sure that He will hear and answer our prayers.

Now that you are sure that you are God’s child because you have invited Christ into your heart, let us speak of how we should pray. One good example is that of that great saint of God Daniel: Daniel prayed to God three times every day in a certain way that became obvious to anyone who cared to know. When Daniel’s enemies desired to get him in trouble, they knew that the only way they could do that, would be through his prayer life, and they knew he would never change that. They persuaded the king to sign a law that would forbid all prayers except to the king. After the law was signed, they went back to Daniel’s house to wait. Soon they caught him: for indeed he prayed just as he always did, for Daniel prayed every day. Daniel was thrown into the lion’s den, but God protected His servant who prayed so faithfully. We too should pray every day:

begin every meal with prayer, and find a definite time every day when we will spend time with the Lord in prayer and in Bible reading (we call that time, devotions). Yes, if we want God to work in our behalf, we need to spend time in prayer with Him every day.

But we have another wonderful example of prayer in Moses, God's great servant. One day God spoke to Moses to say that He was going to destroy all the Israelites because of their sins. Moses asked God to change His mind, but God said, "No." When Moses saw that God was about to destroy his people he put himself in the way and asked God to kill him too if he wasn't going to spare them. To Moses great relief, God heard this prayer and spared them all. Moses prayed like he really meant it. So too, when we pray, we should pray from our hearts with all of our hearts. Is your father unsaved, is your grandmother sick, does a missionary need a new vehicle to get out the Gospel? Pray earnestly as the Scriptures tell us in Luke 10:9,10 Ask (and keep on asking) and it shall be given unto you, seek (and keep on seeking) and ye shall find, knock (and keep on knocking) and it shall be opened unto you. We are not to quit praying because God seems to ignore us. God is honored when we keep praying until we get an answer.

But what do we mean by God answering our prayer? Does He always give us what we ask for? Well, God loves to give you what you ask for because you will be so excited that you will share with everyone that God answered your prayer, and God will be glorified. But of course God will sometimes say, "No." If indeed we ask for something that is against His Will or something that will be harmful to us, He will say, "No." But how do we know He has said no, and not that He is just wanting us to keep praying? If the answer is, no, God often will put a heaviness in your heart when you pray indicating that it may not be His Will. Perhaps you will find in the Scriptures that your prayer is not according to His Will. Remember, though, we should pray until we get an answer, whether yes, or no.

Why doesn't God answer your prayers? Perhaps you have never really asked God for something specific. Why not begin today. Some of you are saved, but have allowed sin to keep you away from God. Right now, ask God to forgive you for that specific sin. But some of you are not saved: Jesus would save you right now. Remember the one prayer that God has promised to hear from anyone: Whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved. If you are willing to repent of your sin and put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ and in the Blood that He shed for your sins, He will save you right now. Won't you do that right now.

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