

801 Will God Hear My Prayer?

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God's Answers to Life's Questions

Most people pray everyday. Even people who do not believe in God will sometimes pray. We wonder, "Will God hear my prayer? Will my praying make a difference?" Prayer is such an amazing gift of God that we ought to rejoice over it and be thankful. But like any gift, it only works according to the will of God. Today we're asking the question, "Will God Hear My Prayer?" James 1:5-8 says: "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways." God answers prayer, but it is clear that God will not give an answer to some prayers, because they are not according to His will. So what kind of prayers does God hear?

Each of us faces times when we want and need to pray. We need God's help and want it. We want to know that God will hear us and grant us what we request. Certainly God hears the prayers of those who love and follow Him. Jesus said in Matthew 6:31-33, "do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." First of all, when you pray, you are praying to your Heavenly Father. Second, as your Father He knows what you need. Third, He promises to supply your needs if you put Him first in your life.

Jesus wanted us to understand the way the Father deals with us. He cares for us greatly as His children. Jesus said in Luke 11:5-8, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and goes to him at midnight and says to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; and from inside he answers and says, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been shut and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up and give you *anything*.' I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him *anything* because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs." God is better than that. He gives to us out of love, not because we are a bother.

Paul said in Philippians 4:19, "my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus." God the Father wants to bless His children and to supply their needs, just as any father might. You'll remember that He invites us to pray. We don't have to apologize to God for taking up His time. No, He wants us to pray. Jesus said in Matthew 7:7-11, "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. Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!"

Jesus wants us to feel confident in coming to God in prayer. Sometimes when we have sinned, we think God doesn't want to be around us. Some people withdraw from God and quit praying altogether. That's exactly what God does not want. He wants us to cease the sin, yes; but He also wants us to come boldly to Him for help when we need it. In Hebrews 4:14-16, the Bible says: "Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that

we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Rather than withdraw from God, let us draw near to find real help for the temptations we face.

It does matter whether we live right, whether we believe, and whether we seek first the kingdom, if we wish for the Father to hear our prayers. Peter said in 1 Peter 3:12, "For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." Paul reminds us in Ephesians 3:20 that God "is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us." But God must be able to work in our lives. Many people block God out of their lives and wonder why He doesn't hear their prayers. Others live evil lives and wonder why God does not bless them. Well, if that is the case, whose prayer will God not hear?

James said in James 4:1-3, "What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have; *so* you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; *so* you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend *it* on your pleasures." If I am praying to God, but what I'm praying is selfish and wasteful, I should not expect God to jump in line to help me do what is displeasing to Him. People need to think about what they are praying and how it sounds to the Father. Some people's prayers are so self-centered and hurtful to others that God wants no part of it.

When you pray, remember that God treats you in the same way you treat other people. Jesus taught us to pray in Matthew 6:12 "forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." We want forgiveness from God, but God also expects us to forgive others. Jesus also said in Matthew 6:14-15, "For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." How can you expect God to forgive you, if you hold grudges and treat other people with contempt? If we are children of God, we ought to have the same tenderness and compassion for others that God has shown to us.

Paul said in Ephesians 4:32, "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." Christians need to imitate the Lord in love and live as children of God who glorify God with their lives. Peter said in 1 Peter 3:7, "husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered." A man who mistreats his wife or children cannot expect to draw close to God and be heard. God will treat him in the same way that he has treated his family. Don't let your unkindness become a stumbling block between you and your God.

Faith is such an important thing. The Hebrew writer said in Hebrews 11:6, "without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him." If we seek God's help and blessing, we need to believe that He will keep His promises and will bless us. James said in James 1:6-8, "But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways."

The concept of repentance also comes into this discussion. Some folks think God is supposed to be at their beck and call, but they ignore their own sinful behaviors. They think God is supposed to

overlook all their sins. Some folks think they can negotiate with God. "I'll change Lord, if you just grant me this wish." God is not one to be fooled. You can't bargain with repentance. Some people repent just long enough to get what they're after, but their change is temporary and not real. You can fool yourself, but you can't fool God with a negotiation. If you wish for God to hear you, then first make a change in your ways.

Isaiah said in Isaiah 59:1-2, "Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear." You can't hang on to sin and expect to have the ear of God listening to you. The Psalmist wrote in Psalm 66:18, "If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened." Here the Psalmist is clarifying for us the point. You can't let sin be cherished in your heart and find room for God too. He won't hear your heart's request, if your heart's real desire is sin.

Now, God would love to hear your prayer, but continued sin without a change of life builds a wall. Tear down the wall you built. Isaiah said in Isaiah 1:15-20, "When you spread out your hands [pray], I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause. 'Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be eaten by the sword; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.'"

In every age, God has wanted people to pray and be close to Him, but this cannot happen as long as people live sinful lifestyles and ignore His teaching. You can't love the world and love God at the same time. John said in 1 John 2:15-17, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever." This is why we must put God back into our lives and live righteously if we wish to have God's blessing in our lives.

Solomon said in Proverbs 15:29, "The LORD is far from the wicked, But He hears the prayer of the righteous." I am thankful that God allows us to change our lives, so that we can have a loving relationship with Him. None of us will live a perfect life. I wish I could. I do know that God makes a distinction between the person who sets his heart to do right but sometimes fails and the person who lives his life to serve his own desires but sometimes does a good thing. We can't be perfect, but there is a difference between the person attempting to do right and the person who has no intention of following God. He hears the struggler, but God will not hear the person who has turned his heart away from God.

I'm thankful, however, that as a Christian, the Lord gives us the

opportunity and privilege of prayer. He not only allows us to pray, He wants to hear our hearts and to grant our requests. In John 14:13-14 Jesus said, "Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do *it*." One of the reasons we can approach God is because we have a relationship with Jesus His Son. God hears us when we speak in His name. The name of Jesus means something to the Father, and we are granted our requests because we are followers of Christ.

I don't know how close or how far away you are from God, but I know that prayer is a precious privilege. To be able to speak my heart to God and know that He will hear is a great blessing. I don't want to do anything that might build a barrier between God and me. I want to live a life that says to God, "I love you and I serve you." I don't want to strain my relationship with my Heavenly Father by living a life of moral compromise or error. I want to stay as close to Him as possible. I want to have a relationship with Him in this life, so that I can live with Him forever in the next life. My friend, are you close to God?

God speaks to us through His word, the Bible; and we speak to God through prayer. I believe in the power of prayer, because the One to whom we pray is powerful. To know that the Creator of the universe hears my prayers and wants to hear my prayers is not some small matter I can take or leave. I want to tell my God "I love you," "thank you," and "I adore you" everyday. When my heart is burdened, I want it to tell the Lord. When I am weak, I need His strength. When I am fearful, I need His reassurance. To lose the right to pray would be an awful loss. That's why I want to maintain a close, peaceful, loving relationship with God. Jesus told the apostles, "Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation" (Matthew 26:41). Prayer keeps me from sin and from evil and helps me stay close to God. I want to be able to pray everyday for the rest of my life, so I do my best to maintain a right relationship with him. I don't want to lose my friendship with God. Now to become God's child, you must believe in Jesus. Paul said in Galatians 3:26-27, "for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Being baptized is how we demonstrate our faith to God, and God unites us with Christ in baptism. God washes away our sins in baptism (Acts 22:16), so that there is nothing offensive between us and God. In baptism, He adds us to His church and causes us to be born again as His children. This is why if you have not been baptized, you need to be. This way you can begin your walk as a follower and lover of Christ and God. Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 5:17, "Pray without ceasing." Anyone who knows the value and power of prayer would even think about ceasing to pray. This passage is not speaking about praying 24/7. No one could do that. It is saying don't quit on prayer. Don't stop talking to God. Keep on praying to Him. Keep loving Him, thanking Him, praising Him, and asking Him in prayer. Keep your relationship strong. Live a life of love and obey the teaching of Christ. Keep going to church, where strong Christians are. Keep your faith alive by serving others. Don't start even a single day without prayer, and you will find life getting better and better.

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