

DOES GOD ANSWER OUR PRAYERS? : LESSON 1

(Jerry Fite)

INTRODUCTION:

Does God actually answer our prayers? This is a vital question. Has God told us to pray just for the verbal exercise? Are there conditions that God has demanded in order for our prayers to be answered? These related questions seek Bible answers in this lesson.

I. GOD ANSWERS OUR PRAYERS.

- A. The Bible teaches us to have confidence in our prayers being answered.
 - 1. I Jn. 5:14-15 - "This is the boldness (confidence) which we have toward Him that if we ask anything...He heareth us...we know that we have the petitions which we have asked of Him."
 - 2. I Pet. 3:12 - "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous...His ears unto their supplication."
 - 3. I Tim. 2:8 - "...pray...without wrath and doubting."
- B. The Bible teaches us that God sometimes answers our prayers, but with a "No."
 - 1. Like a father who truly loves, denying our desires is sometimes for our good (cf. Matt.7:9-11).
 - 2. Will replace it with a needed gift for our circumstance (2 Cor. 12: 8-9).

II. SEVEN CONDITIONS FOR ACCEPTABLE PRAYER.

A. The First Condition - Ask! (Matt. 7:7-11)

- 1. God knows our needs before asking, but asking shows our faith in His Sovereignty (Matt. 6:8, Jms.1:17).
- 2. "...ye have not, because you ask not" (Jms. 4:2).

B. The Second Condition - Ask According To His Will (I Jn. 5:14-15).

- 1. We must approach our requests in life with the same view as Jesus, "Thy will be done!" (Matt. 26:39, 44).
- 2. Selfish ends do not impress God! (Jms. 4:3).

C. The Third Condition - Ask As A Righteous Person (I Pet.3:12)

- 1. Not sinless perfection, but with a heart that always seeks to obey and be right before God (I Jn. 1:8-10, cf. Mk. 11:25-26 Acts 10:4, 31-33).
- 2. God does not hear the requests that come from ones who "regards iniquity in his heart" (Psm. 66:18, Prov.15:29, 28:9, Jn.9:31).
- 3. I Jn. 3:22 - "...we receive of Him, because we keep his commandments and do the things that are pleasing in his sight."

D. The Fourth Condition - Ask in Faith (Jms. 1:6-7).

- 1. Unwavering faith is based upon God's faithful character, not in circumstances.
- 2. Faith produced by God's word (Rom. 10:17) - Not our selfish desires.

E. The Fifth Condition - Ask for Specific Things (James 5:16,18).

- 1. Elijah prayed that it not rain, and for three and a half years it rained not. "And he prayed again", and the heaven gave rain..."

2. Son asking for a loaf, fish, egg (Lk. 11:11-12).

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F. The Sixth Condition - Ask in the name of Christ (Jn.14:13-14, Jn.15:16, 16:13).

1. Condition presented to the Apostles in connection with their work in establishing the authority of Christ through the preaching of the gospel - prayer answered in confirming the authoritative word of Christ (Acts 4:29, 31; 9:40-42).
2. In principle applies to Christians, not as a mere verbal formality, but understanding that we are asking things of God based upon our relationship with Him through Christ (Col.3:17, Heb.4:15-16).

G. The Seventh Condition - Ask With Thankfulness (I Thess. 5:17-18; Phil.4:6-7).

1. Even in dark hours there are reasons to be thankful - must keep our vision broader than our immediate circumstances.
2. Paul and Silas sang praises and prayed while in prison (Acts 16:25).

QUESTIONS:

1. What confidence do you have in your prayers being more than an verbal exercise but actually answered by God ?
2. If we do not receive our petitions, what should we do next?
3. If God knows what we need before we ask, why ask?
4. How do you distinguish between personal blessings asked for and selfish desires?
5. The "righteous" person whom God hears is:
 - (a) one who is striving to live according to God's revealed Will.
 - (b) one who is sinless at the times he asks.
 - (c) one who has been perfectly sinless.
6. If we are to ask with unwavering faith, upon what must or faith be based?
7. Discuss how we can be more specific in our public prayers?

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8. Praying in the name of Christ was addressed to
 - (a) Christians in general.
 - (b) Apostles in particular.

9. Why should we today pray in the "name of Christ"?

10. How can we be thankful if our hearts are filled with grief?

11. Classify the following passages as it relates to one of the seven conditions of acceptable prayer with God:
 - (a) Eph. 6:18 _____.
 - (b) Rom. 8:26-28 _____.
 - (c) I Pet. 3:7 _____.