

PRAYER: Questions & answers

by Blues Bibleden - Monday, October 14, 2019

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QUESTIONS ABOUT PRAYER for Christians

1. Why pray?
2. Why pray if God already knows what we need?
3. To whom do you pray? (The Father / Jesus / Spirit / the Godhead / Mary?)
4. What prompts you to pray... or prevents you from doing so?
5. What happens to our spiritual lives if we don't pray?
6. How many different kinds of prayers are there?
7. How do we decide what to pray about and not to pray about?
8. What is the relationship between prayer and praise?
9. How important is it to repent of sin before praying?
10. How true is it that that God only answers the prayers of the righteous?
11. How do we achieve a balance between praying *specific* prayers for something or someone (e.g. about an illness) and praying *general* prayers about an issue? (For example, about poverty or elections)
12. Why did Jesus need to pray?
13. What did Jesus mean when he told the disciples to "ask and you will receive"?
14. What did Paul mean when he encouraged the believers to "pray without ceasing"?
15. What do we understand by 'persevering in prayer'?
16. When should we stop praying about a certain matter?
17. How important is faith in seeing answers to prayer?
18. Why does God apparently answer some prayers of faith and not others?
19. When have you seen specific answers to your prayers?
20. How do we know that the outcome to our prayers wouldn't have happened anyway (i.e. if we hadn't prayed)?
21. How do we reconcile 'praying for our enemies' (as per Jesus command) with 'praying that our enemies will be overthrown' (e.g. prayers of King David)?
22. What is the value / disadvantage of praying with others?
23. Why are some organised prayer meetings so uninspiring?
24. What does your "amen" to another person's prayer signify?
25. To what extent do you agree that 'prayer changes everything'?

ANSWERS ABOUT PRAYER: Prompts for leaders

1. We pray because God invites us to do so. It develops an intimate relationship with the Father. It gives opportunity for praise & worship. Jesus regularly referred to the importance of prayer.
2. God knows all things, including our needs but looks for faith in us to believe that He will answer (see 17 below).
3. Prayer is directed to the Father in the name of the Son and through the Holy Spirit. Scripture forbids worship of humans or angels.
4. We tend to pray when a need is urgent and may forget to do so when life is easier, which denies God His rightful place as the focal point of our lives in every circumstance.
5. Lack of prayer results in a dulling of our spiritual antennae to receive God's word to us and thereby hinders walking in step with the Spirit.
6. Prayer may be spontaneous or planned or both. Prayer should always give God praise and glory. We may need to confess our sin, doubt or fear. Specific requests should be stated then confidently left with the Lord. Interceding is through the Son, who 'intercedes for us'.
7. We can't pray about everything but if we are walking in step with the Spirit (i.e. living a life of obedience) and genuinely listening for God's voice (through the Bible, faithful ministry, the advice of godly friends or directly, as in "your ears shall hear a word behind you saying: this is the way, walk in it") the focus for prayer will flow naturally.
8. Praise should both precede and follow prayer (see 13 below).
9. God will only receive prayer from the repentant heart.
10. No one is righteous of him- or herself. Righteousness is found in Christ alone. God, in His grace and mercy, will respond according to His divine nature but prayer must always be faith-driven.
11. God appears to honour *specific* prayers in a special way. *General* prayers about the state of the nation and so forth must be set within a framework of whole-church repentance or from courageous individuals who are prepared to "stand in the gap".
12. Jesus was in constant touch with the Father. He set us the supreme example. In human form, He desired only to do the Father's will of which prayer was a key element.
13. Jesus was emphasising the responsibility and privilege of the believer to approach God as Father. The 'asking' must always align itself with the Father's will, which means that seeking His will should *precede* the asking. The 'ingredient of preparation' is praise.
14. Paul is saying that prayer should essentially be a 'state of being' that may or may not be facilitated by formalised activity (see 22 & 23).
15. God sometimes waits for us to persevere as a sign that our motives are sincere and wholehearted. Perseverance in all things should be a characteristic of the believer but should never indicate a lack of faith in God's willingness or ability to act.

16. We should stop praying when the Holy Spirit tells us to stop!
17. Faith (trust) in God has to be the foundation for all prayer activities.
Doubting prayer is not prayer at all.
18. God is sovereign in all things. Our prayer must rest on the prayer that Jesus taught, which contains the essence of submission to the will and purpose of God, namely: "Thy will be done".
19. There are many testimonies as to God's direct intervention in situations. It is important, however, to ensure that we give God the glory and continue having thankful hearts, especially when an answer is different from what we expected or 'temporary'... E.g. a person may be miraculously cleared of cancer but subsequently afflicted.
20. We trust that God is 'above all things'.
It's not possible to know what 'might have happened'. We simply obey God and leave the outcome to Him.
21. It is perfectly scriptural to pray for our enemies but also to pray that their evil schemes are thwarted and God is thereby glorified.
22. Jesus referred to "two or three gathered in His name" but spent much of His time in solitary prayer. Praying together cements fellowship bonds and provides mutual encouragement.
23. Group prayer needs a clear focus and high expectation. Individual spiritual preparation beforehand avoids vagueness and passivity.
24. Amen is not merely a polite expression of support but 'entering in' to a spiritual pact with the one who has prayed and a faith-driven belief in the authenticity of the prayer and God's willingness to respond.
25. If we genuinely believe this to be true, why don't we pray more!