

PRAYER

Lesson 8: God's Promises Give Prayer Its Power

1. God Promises that Prayers Do Much Good

2. God Promises to Give Us What We Ask for in His Name

INTRODUCTION

Human reason has a terrible time understanding prayer. "If God already knows everything that's going to happen, how can my prayer accomplish anything? If God's will is always done, what's the point in praying for something to happen? When a farmer prays for rain and a vacationer prays for sunshine, how can God answer both of them?"

Faith listens to these objections, shrugs its shoulders, and goes right on praying. How God can answer prayer is unfathomable. Why God should answer our prayers is even more so. But God *does* answer them. That fact is revealed in the clear words of Scripture. To paraphrase an old children's song: "Jesus hears me; this I know, for the Bible tells me so."

I. God Promises that Prayers Do Much Good

James 5:13-18 Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. ¹⁴Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. ¹⁶Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. ¹⁷Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. ¹⁸Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

1. Whose prayer does James say is powerful and effective?

2. Why could Elijah pray confidently for rain? (Cf. 1 Kings 17:1 and 18:1)

1 Kings 17:1 Now Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word."

1 Kings 18:1 After a long time, in the third year, the word of the LORD came to Elijah: "Go and present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the land."

3. How can we be sure that we are among the righteous whose prayers the Lord answers?

4. Agree or disagree: There is a big difference between Elijah's righteousness and our righteousness.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. ⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. ⁹ But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. ¹⁰ That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

1. What good did God work through Paul’s thorn in the flesh?

His Word in My Life

1.) Agree or Disagree: God never really says “no” to the prayer of a Christian.

2.) Evaluate: The French philosopher Blaise Pascal said, “God instituted prayer to give his creatures the dignity of causality.”

II. God Promises to Give Us What We Ask for in His Name

John 14:13-14 “I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. ¹⁴ You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.”

1. What astounding promise does Jesus make regarding prayer?

2. Why would the Son do this for us?

1 John 5:14-15 This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.

3. What kind of prayer does John say God will answer?

4. Explain: Prayers in Jesus’ name will always be prayers according to God’s will.

His Word in My Life

1.) Agree or Disagree: We are sinning if we are disappointed when we ask for something and don’t get it.

COURSE SUMMARY

Agree or Disagree: You could define a Christian as a person who prays.

Life with God

How does God answer prayer? Note how each reading answers that question.

- Day 1: Read Exodus 9:22-35.
- Day 2: Read Ezra 8:21-23.
- Day 3: Read Nehemiah 4:1-9.
- Day 4: Read Isaiah 38.
- Day 5: Read Luke 22:31-34.
- Day 6: Read Luke 22:39-46.
- Day 7: Read John 11:38-44.