

# PRAYER

## Lesson 6: Pray Persistently & Expect Results

- 1. Pray expecting an answer*
- 2. Don't give up until you get an answer*

### **INTRODUCTION**

At a public hearing before the city's planning commission, a church was requesting authorization for its new building. The congregation's president was explaining the church's plans. As he told the commission how the church had acquired the land, suddenly eyes were rolling and muffled snickers could be heard all around the room. The congregation's president had just said that the land had become available "in answer to our prayers." That's the way it usually goes. These days, the world tolerates, in fact, is fascinated by prayer, just so long as you don't maintain there's a real, personal God who listens and answers. Yet Scripture encourages us to pray expectantly and persistently. Today's lesson will underline that fact.

### **I. Pray Expecting an Answer**

James 1:5-8 If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. <sup>6</sup> But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. <sup>7</sup> That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; <sup>8</sup> he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.

1. What does James encourage us to pray for at the beginning of this section? (verse 5)
2. What powerful promise about the prayer for wisdom does James give us? (verse 5)
3. What does it mean that God gives "without finding fault"?
4. What is wrong when a person doubts that he will get what he's praying for? (verses 6 and 7)
5. Compare James 1:6,7 with Mark 9:21-27: Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?" "From childhood," he answered. <sup>22</sup> "It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us." <sup>23</sup> "If you can't?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for him who believes." <sup>24</sup> Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" <sup>25</sup> When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the evil spirit. "You deaf and mute spirit," he said, "I command you, come out of him and never enter him again." <sup>26</sup> The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, "He's dead." <sup>27</sup> But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up. <sup>28</sup> After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, "Why couldn't we drive it out?" <sup>29</sup> He replied, "This kind can come out only by prayer."

Does James mean that one doubtful thought is enough to render our prayer ineffective? Explain your answer.

## His Word in My Life

1.) A certain church does no evangelism or mission work on the grounds that it prays for the salvation of the heathen every Sunday and knows this prayer will be answered. What is that church losing sight of?

2.) A woman once visited a church where the pastor prayed over her to be healed of her disease. The woman was not healed and was told it was because she did not have a strong enough faith.

3.) Evaluate: If we place too much emphasis on God's tangible answers to our prayers (e.g. for health, for financial help, etc.), we'll end up basing our faith on our own perceptions and experiences instead of the objective truth of the gospel.

## **II. Don't give up until you get an answer**

Genesis 32:22-30 That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two maidservants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. <sup>23</sup> After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions. <sup>24</sup> So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. <sup>25</sup> When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. <sup>26</sup> Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." <sup>27</sup> The man asked him, "What is your name?" "Jacob," he answered. <sup>28</sup> Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome." <sup>29</sup> Jacob said, "Please tell me your name." But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?" Then he blessed him there. <sup>30</sup> So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."

1. With whom was Jacob wrestling?

2. Why did God allow Jacob to wrestle with him all night? (v. 26)

3. Agree or Disagree: When we pray for something but don't get it, we should conclude that it isn't God's will that we have it and should stop praying for it.

Luke 18:1-8 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. <sup>2</sup> He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. <sup>3</sup> And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' <sup>4</sup> For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men, <sup>5</sup> yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!' " <sup>6</sup> And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. <sup>7</sup> And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? <sup>8</sup> I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"

1. What was this widow's predicament?
2. What was her only asset?
3. Why do we have more reason to follow her example and expect results from God in prayer?

#### His Word in My Life

1.) Evaluate: God is not someone we can win over simply by continuing to bother him with our requests.

2.) Relate a time in your life when God answered a request only after you had gone to him in prayer for a long time.

#### **SUMMARY**

God gives us many encouragements and evidences in his Word that he wants us to utilize and repeatedly exercise the blessing of going to him in prayer, expecting that he will answer for our good.