

The Privilege of Prayer

by: Adrian Rogers

"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

Philippians 4:6

Prayer is our greatest Christian privilege and our greatest Christian failure. Now there are some valid questions concerning prayer. In my study I've tried to think through some of these and I want to give you some brief insights.

1. Why should we pray when God already knows our needs?

We do not pray to impress or inform God, but to invite Him. We pray to fellowship with God, so He can develop and grow us, and because we depend on Him.

2. For what is it proper to pray?

There is nothing in life that is outside the reach of prayer. If it concerns you, it concerns God. We sometimes try to divide life into secular and sacred. We'll pray about the sacred parts but handle the secular parts ourselves. Pray for everything.

3. Does God hear the prayers of the unsaved?

Cornelius was an unsaved man, but God was aware of his prayer as told in Acts 10. God can hear the prayer of an unsaved person, but we, who are His children, have been given so much more – His promises found in His Word.

4. Why should we pray in the name of Jesus?

God promises that He will give us what we ask for when we pray in the name of Jesus (John 14:13-14). When asking in Jesus' name, first consider:

- o His Approval – Does Jesus approve this thing?
- o His Authorization – Is it something He has authorized?
- o His Acclaim – Is it for His glory?

5. Does God always give us what we ask?

No, and thank God! Sometimes we ask God for the wrong things (Numbers 11:11-15; Matthew 20:20-22). Other times our prayer perhaps is not answered because there's sin in our lives (Isaiah 59:2; Psalm 66:18).

6. Does prayer change the mind of God?

No, it does not. Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance. Prayer is laying hold of God's will. God is a changeless God (Malachi 3:6; James 1:17). But God will do things when we pray that He will not do if we don't pray (James 4:2). Prayer effects what God does, but does not change Him.

7. What do we do if our prayers are not answered?

Persist – There is a time to keep praying. Daniel prayed for three solid weeks about a matter before God sent an answer (Daniel 10; Luke 18:1). Desist - There's a time to quit praying. Paul prayed three times for God to remove a thorn in his flesh. God did not give Paul what he asked, but God gave Paul something better than he asked (2 Corinthians 12:8-9).

8. Should we expect miracles when we pray?

Never get in the habit of saying what God cannot do. You will find clusters of miracles in Bible times. They gave glory to God, validated His identity, and advanced His work. But these are not normative. God is still a God of might and miracles (Jeremiah 32:17). If God has a miracle for you, He'll give you miracle faith!

9. Can our prayers override the will of another person?

No, God has given man a free will (Revelation 22:17). If God were to force one person to be saved, He'd have to force all six billion people on earth. However, we can bind the powers of darkness and bring God's influence to people in prayer. God does not force salvation, but He frees people to be saved.

10. Does God have favorites whose prayer He hears?

God will hear your prayer just as quickly as He hears mine, Billy Graham's, or anybody else's (Psalm 65:2). However, there are certain people that if I have a prayer need, I'll go to. I know that they believe in prayer; therefore, I can ask them to pray. God has intimates, but He doesn't have favorites.

11. How can I know the will of God in prayer?

The prayer that gets to heaven is the prayer that starts in heaven. We just close the circuit. The will of God is what you would want if you knew everything from God's viewpoint. The key is to abide in Christ. If you abide in Him (John 15:7), you will find that God will guide and direct your prayers, and you will be praying in the will of God.

Don't wait until you have all of the answers before you pray. You don't have to understand electricity to turn on the lights. *"What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer.*

• *Love Worth Finding (Monday, April 26, 2004)*