

"Enriching my prayer"

One of the greatest privileges of life is the blessing of prayer to God our Father. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." How can I make the most of my prayer time? Stay tuned.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. God's word not only teaches us what we need to know to be saved; it also teaches us what is important in the Christian life. The more we grasp the teaching of Scripture, the more we'll understand the love and grace of God. Scripture helps us treasure the wisdom of our Father in Heaven, the One who hears our prayers. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

God speaks to us through His word, and we speak to Him through prayer. Prayer is a good habit, but only praying by habit is a very poor habit. We need to pray from our hearts. And such, that's habitual prayer really misses the point; it's a waste and a delusion. It shows a spiritually dwarfed life and a lack of faith. A faithless prayer gets no results; it doesn't reach God. And God doesn't hear, and we miss the benefits of our prayer.

When we bow our knees and humble our hearts before God in fervent and heartfelt prayer, we can have confidence God is listening and will answer our prayers.

What God told Daniel in Daniel 10 verse 12 should encourage us all, "Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words." God hears His people who are humble and seek to understand His teaching. Proverbs 15 verse 8 says "the prayer of the upright is His delight."

Before you say the first word, stop and think for a few moments about the One to whom you are praying. Remember, you're praying to the One who created you and knows all about you. You're praying to the One who loves you and wants you to abide in His grace.

Now we offer this study free on Enriching My Prayer! If you'd like a printed copy of our study and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website at www.searchtv.org.

We'll now worship in song, read from Matthew 7:7 to 11, and explore how we can enrich our prayer lives.

Our reading today comes from the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew chapter 7, verses 7 to 11. And here we learn about how good our God is to us. "Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!" Yes we have a good God in heaven who hears our prayers.

Let's pray together. "Father we're thankful that You love us so much, and that your grace and mercy has blessed us. And Father we're thankful that You hear our prayers and that You open doors for us. Give us strength to do Your will. In Jesus name, Amen."

It's a great blessing to come away from prayer having shared my heart, my burdens, my fears, and my concerns with my Father in heaven. Because He is my Father, I know He cares. I know He

listens, and I know He can do something about my concerns. 1 Peter 5:6 to 7 says, "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you."

The Scriptures teach, however, that there are some essential elements necessary for God to hear our prayers. We should keep in mind that God will not hear some prayers. God set the conditions for the prayers that He hears. First, God expects us to pray with faith. The Lord Jesus said in Mark 11:22 to 24, "Have faith in God. 'Truly I say to you, that whoever says to this mountain, "Be taken up and cast into the sea," and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him. "Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you.'" Faith is essential to our Christianity in every way. Hebrews 11 verse 6 says, "And without faith it's impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He's a rewarder of those who seek Him."

Second, if we wish for God to hear our prayers, we must think about our motivation for praying. James 4:1 to 3 says, "What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and you do not have; so you commit murder. You're envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures." There is certainly nothing wrong with asking God to meet your true needs; but when people pray for God, and they only seek blessing to spend it on their pleasures, they aren't really giving themselves to God. James 4 and verse 4 says, "You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."

Third, if we wish to be heard, then we need to keep God's commandments and ask Him to bless us and others according to His will. 1 John 3:21 to 22 says, "Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight." Again, 1 John 5:14 to 15 says, "This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him." We not only need to practice the will of God, we also need to pray according to His will.

Many people expect God to grant their requests and yet have no intention of listening to Him or following His commandments. God wants to grant our prayers, but He also wants us to live righteous lives. Psalm 66 and verse 18 says, that "If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear." Isaiah 59:1 to 2 says, "But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear." When you put wickedness before God and sin against Him, rebelliously, you separate yourself from Him and end your friendship with Him. He hides His face from you and He won't hear your prayers. Now that's a great loss. But when we reconcile with God, we also enjoy a loving relationship where God is concerned with our needs.

Next, let's explore the values of prayer. First, prayer is how we connect with our Father in heaven. We can connect with Him anytime, anyplace. We need God every day and every hour. In prayer we have an intimacy with our Father in Heaven; and in prayer we focus on God Himself. The value of prayer doesn't lie in the number of prayers we pray or their length, but it finds value in that we are privileged as children of God to talk to Him, make requests of Him, and to shower our love and

thanks toward our heavenly Father. We need the strength of just being with God, by retreating into prayer. This activity fine tunes our lives, it adjusts our attitudes, and helps us function properly. God is leaning forward not just to listen but to have fellowship with me and with you.

Jesus taught us to pray "Our Father." God is a loving and compassionate Father who is to be revered and loved. Our Father asks us to come to Him with our hurts and troubles because He cares. And prayer is a great reminder that we do have a "Father" not a stranger in heaven. The Lord Jesus assures us in Matthew 6 and verse 8, "for your Father knows what you need, before you ask Him." We don't have to beg to get our Father's attention. He invites us to pray! You remember, the Lord Jesus urges us in Matthew 7:7 to 11, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. 'Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!'" We have a gracious Father, a good Father, in heaven. Now God is ready and willing to hear our requests and to fill our needs. And prayer is man's response to God's willingness. Prayer honors God, since we show our dependence upon Him and we come to Him.

Second, nothing is more reassuring than seeing prayer answered. When we look back and see all that God has done for us in the past, we draw reassurance that God will continue to be with us and bless us. Prayer can do anything that God can do. The power is not in our praying but in God's willingness and His power to answer those prayers. The object of asking is to receive what we request. And the aim of seeking is to find. The goal of knocking is to have the door opened. God invites us to ask, seek and knock. And He promises we will receive, find, and have an open door. Believing in God means that my prayers matter!

That God will act if and when I ask Him is a great blessing. And I know that He will act in ways that He would not have acted if I had not asked Him to do so. Now divine solutions are always the best solutions, the wisest solutions, and the right solutions for everyone. God sees and knows everything. He sees what I can't see and He knows what I can't know. And when He acts, He does so with a bigger picture in mind than I'm capable of understanding.

Prayer releases the power of God. Paul said in Ephesians 3:20 to 21, "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen." God can do more than we can, more than we can imagine – more than we can think – more than we can - and He can do it abundantly more! God can do more than we can ask Him to do--exceedingly, abundantly more!

In 2 Kings 19, Hezekiah and Jerusalem were surrounded by the powerful king of Assyria Sennacherib and 185,000 troops. Hezekiah prayed to God for deliverance and God answered. 2 Kings 19:35 says, "Then it happened that night that the angel of the LORD went out, and struck 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians; and when men rose early in the morning, behold, all of them were dead."

Does prayer work? Of course it does! Israel sinned grievously against God in the wilderness; Moses prayed and saved a nation. Joshua prayed and the sun stood still. Hannah prayed and God gave her a son, Samuel the prophet and priest, was that son who was given to Hannah. When Samson was blind and in chains, he asked for strength and he pulled down the house of Dagon, killing 3,000 Philistines. Solomon prayed for wisdom; and God made Him the wisest of all mortals. Elijah prayed that it might not rain, and it didn't rain for three years and six months. He prayed for fire to come down

from heaven and consume a sacrifice, and it did. He prayed for rain, and it rained that very day! Hezekiah prayed, and God gave him 15 more years of life. Daniel prayed and God rescued him from the lion's den. Jesus prayed, and God raised Lazarus from the dead. Peter prayed, and God raised Dorcas. The disciples prayed for Peter to be released from prison, and Peter showed up at the door.

I tell you, when you pray, focus on God. Give Him your complete attention. When we pray, we need humility and a willingness to listen to God. We need to pray with Samuel's heart. He said in 1 Samuel 3 and verse 10, "Speak, for your servant is listening." God speaks today to us through Scripture. And if we want God to hear our prayers, we need to hear what He says in Scripture.

When we pray, we need to have the heart of Jesus. In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed saying, "Father, if You're willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done" (Luke 22, verse 42). Now commitment to God means a willingness to accept the will of God for our lives. God's will may not be what we want. Loving God with all our hearts and souls means wanting what God wants, even more than what we want.

Now if you're asking God to forgive you, let Him know that you have a godly sorrow for your sins and you're repenting of them. If you're asking God's forgiveness, then be willing to forgive those who've sinned against you. If you're asking for daily bread, then be willing to work, so that you may give to those in need. Jesus worked many miracles by giving the person to be blessed something to do. The blind man washed at the pool of Siloam and came back seeing. Yes, God answers prayer, but not just for you. He blesses us so that we can be a blessing for others.

Once you've prayed, thank God for answering your prayers, whatever they are. Thank Him for willingly bearing your burdens and anxieties. Thank God for caring about you, your requests large or small. And thank Him for meeting your physical needs and spiritual needs. Thank God for being near when you needed Him. Psalm 145:18 says, "The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, To all who call upon Him in truth." Let the time you've spent with God make a difference in your life.

God does indeed care for us, and we need to trust in Him. Proverbs 3 and verse 5 says, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight." God will answer our prayers. Let's humble our hearts, turn from wickedness, and seek His face.

Let's pray. "Father, we're thankful that You love us and You hear our prayers. Father, we humble ourselves and we look to You for our needs knowing that You're a great God who loves us. Help us heavenly Father to love You, and to serve You all of our days. In Jesus name, Amen."

1 Thessalonians 5:17 says, "Pray without ceasing." We live in tumultuous times with moral confusion, the uncertainty of war, political and cultural controversies, and broken homes and lives. If ever we needed God, we need Him now. We need His word to guide and teach us, and we need to humble our hearts in prayer. God promised Solomon if Israel ever strayed from following Him and suffered for their sins what they could do to be reconciled to God in 2 Chronicles 7 verse 14, it says "and (if) My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

God will hear us, if we will humble ourselves, seek His face, and turn from our wicked ways too. These are serious times! And if we want a better world, we must start with ourselves. Each of us must determine to humble ourselves, give up our wicked ways and follow the truth found in the Scriptures, and to seek God's face in prayer. Will you commit to praying fervently every day for as long as it takes! We must pray fervently without quitting. James 5:16 says, "Therefore, confess your sins to one

another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.”

If a righteous person’s prayer can accomplish much, and it does, let me ask you, are you righteous? If not, then you need to come to the Lord. God’s grace is available to those who believe Jesus Christ is God’s Son and are willing to confess it, it’s available to those who repent, and to those who are baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins (Acts 2 and verse 38).

Now we hope that today’s study about prayer has deepened your trust in God and in the power of prayer. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now there’s also a schedule of our programs, a map with the location of churches in your area at www.searchtv.org. And you can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! So just subscribe to our channel, “SearchTVMinistry.” Now be sure to like the programs. Now we offer free Bible Correspondence courses. And if you get a hold of us we’re not asking for money. We’re here to help you draw close to God.

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