

"Will God Hear?"

Will God hear my prayer? Does God really care about me? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders and this is a Bible study, "In Search of the Lord's Way." And today we're exploring how and when God hears our prayers. Stay tuned.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. The Bible opens a marvelous treasure chest of wisdom, that prospers our lives and our souls. God's word enriches us in a thousand ways and touches every aspect of our lives. Solomon told his son in Proverbs 3:13 to 18, "How blessed is the man who finds wisdom And the man who gains understanding. For her profit is better than the profit of silver And her gain better than fine gold. She is more precious than jewels; And nothing you desire compares with her. Long life is in her right hand; In her left hand are riches and honor. Her ways are pleasant ways And all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, And happy are all who hold her fast." Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

A recent report said that 84 percent of Americans prayed within the last week. Even six percent of atheists say they pray every single day. We sometimes wonder, "Does God hear my prayers? Will praying make a difference?" Well, prayer is an amazing gift of God; and we should rejoice over it and be thankful. But like any gift, it only works if we practice it; and it only works if we practice it according to His will. God answers prayer, yes, but God doesn't grant every request. Some prayers violate the will of God; and some prayers come from selfish or disobedient hearts. Prayer is not like rubbing a lamp and having a genie grant you wishes. We pray to a holy and righteous God, who wants us to be holy and righteous as well.

If you want to study more about God hearing our prayers, we offer this study free in this little booklet on prayer and taking time to pray. And 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. Now if you live outside the United States, we have materials free online, and you can stream this program on our website at www.searchtv.org or on YouTube.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from James 1:5 to 8, and see how prayer makes a difference.

Our reading today comes from the letter of James to those who are dispersed abroad. And he says to them about the need to look to God and to pray. He says,

But if any of you lacks wisdom, (this is James 1: 5 to 8) if any of you lacks wisdom let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Here James gives good advice and I hope you'll take it sincerely, to have faith. Let's pray together. Father we're thankful that You give us Your word and Your promises. Help us to believe them and that You'll help us with wisdom. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

We all face times when we need to pray. We need God's help. And we want to know that God hears us and grants our requests. Certainly, God hears the prayers of those who love and follow Him. Jesus said in Matthew 6:31 to 33, "do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father

knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” First, when you pray, you’re praying to your Heavenly Father. Second, your Father knows what you need. And third, He promises to supply your needs if you put Him first in your life.

The Father loves us and deals with us as His children. Jesus said in Luke 11:5 to 8, “Suppose one of you has a friend, and goes to him at midnight and says to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; and from inside he answers and says, ‘Do not bother me; the door has already been shut and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.’ I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs.” Well, God is better than that. He gives to us out of love, not because we are a bother.

Paul said in Philippians 4 and verse 19, “my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” God the Father wants to bless His children and supply their needs, just as any father might. God invites us to pray. We don’t have to apologize to God for taking up His time. Jesus said 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 the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!”

Jesus wants us to feel confident in prayer. Some think when they sin that God doesn’t want to be around them, so they withdraw from God and quit praying. Well, that’s exactly what God doesn’t want. He wants us to cease from sin, yes; but He also wants us to come boldly to Him for help. Hebrews 4:14 to 16 says: “Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Rather than avoiding God, when we’re tempted, let’s draw near to get help for the temptation.

Now it matters how we live, whether we believe, and whether we seek first the kingdom, if we wish the Father to hear our prayers. 1 Peter 3 and verse 12 says, “For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.” Ephesians 3 and verse 20 says that God “is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us.” Now many shut God out and then they wonder why He doesn’t hear their prayers. You can’t live a wicked life and then expect God to bless you. Now if that’s the case, whose prayer will God not hear?

Well, 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 do not have; so you commit murder. You are 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.” If I’m praying to God, and what I’m praying is selfish and wasteful, I shouldn’t expect God to help me do what’s wrong. Think about what you’re praying and how the Father thinks. Some people’s prayers are so self-centered and hurtful to others that God wants no part of it.

When you pray, remember that God treats you the way that you treat others. Jesus taught us to pray in Matthew 6 and verse 12 “forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” But He explains in Matthew 6:14 to 15, “For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” How can you expect God to forgive you, if you aren’t willing to forgive others? If we’re children of God, we ought to have the same tenderness and compassion for others that God has shown to us.

Solomon said in Proverbs 15:29, “The LORD is far from the wicked, But He hears the prayer of the righteous.” God allows us to change our ways, to repent, so that we can have a loving relationship with Him. Now nobody is perfect, though we strive to serve God. But God distinguishes between the person who sets his heart to do right but sometimes fails and the person then who lives his life to serve his own desires and he sometimes does good. But He makes a distinction between the two. We can’t be perfectly sinless, no, but there’s a difference between endeavoring to do right and having no intention of following God. The Father will not hear a person who has turned his heart away Him.

Peter said in 1 Peter 3:7, “husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.” A man who mistreats his wife or children cannot expect to draw close to God and be heard. God will treat him in the same way that he has treated his family. Don’t let a lack of kindness put a barrier between you and God.

Faith is necessary. The Hebrew writer, as we’ve mentioned before, in Hebrews 11:6 says that, “without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.” You know if we seek God’s help and blessing, we need to believe that He’ll keep His promises and will bless us. James said in James 1:6 to 8, “But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”

Repentance also comes into this discussion. Some folks think God is supposed to be at their beck and call, but they ignore their sinful behaviors. They think God will overlook all their sins. Some folks think they can negotiate with God. “Well, I’ll change Lord, if you just grant me this wish.” But God is not a fool. You can’t bargain with repentance. Some people repent just long enough to get what they’re after, but after their change which is temporary, and not real, they go back to the old ways. Now you can fool yourself, but you can’t fool God with a negotiation. If you want God to hear you, then first change your ways.

Isaiah 59:1 to 2 says, “Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; 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.” You can’t hang on to sin and expect to have the ear of God listening to you. The Psalmist wrote in Psalm 66:18, “If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.” Here the Psalmist is clarifying for us the point. You can’t let sin be cherished in your heart and find room for God too. He won’t hear your heart’s request, if your heart’s real desire is to sin.

Now continuing in sin and failing to repent builds a wall. Tear down that wall. God said in Isaiah 1:15 to 20 that, “When you spread out your hands [that is you pray], I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood. (he says to them) Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do

evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause. (then he says) 'Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be eaten by the sword; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.'"

God has always wanted His people to pray and to love Him, but people don't show love to Him if they live in sin and ignore His teaching. You can't love the world and love God at the same time. 1 John 2:15 to 17 says, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever." We must keep God close to us. We must live righteously if we wish to have God's blessing and God's ear.

Now I'm thankful for the opportunity and privilege of prayer. God not only allows us to pray, He actually asks us to pray. He wants to hear our hearts and to grant our requests. In John 14:13 to 14 the Lord Jesus said, "Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. (and He says) If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do *it*." Oh, we can approach God because we have a right relationship with Jesus His Son. God hears us when we speak in His name.

I don't know how close you are to God, but I do know prayer is a precious privilege. And it's one that you should seek and one that you should practice as often as you can. But do it with a heart filled with love and a life filled with righteousness. Careing about the will of God and what God wants from us. Now to speak our hearts to God and to know that He will listen is a great blessing. I don't want to build a barrier between God and me by neglecting my faith or by continual sin against God. I want my life to say to God, "I love You and I serve only You." I don't want to disappoint my Heavenly Father by participating in moral compromise or by believing something that's absolutely false. I want to stay close to Him in this life, so that I can live with Him forever in the life to come. My friend, are you close to God? Do you have a loving close relationship with Him.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're so thankful that we can speak with You and bear our hearts to You and tell You the things that are on our minds. And Father we're thankful that You care enough to listen to us. Help us Heavenly Father to have faith in what we pray. Help us to love You and help us to do Your will always. In Jesus name, Amen.

God speaks to us through His word, the Bible; and we speak to God, or with God, through prayer. Prayer is powerful, because God is powerful. Our Creator and Father wants to hear our prayers and bless us. And we should tell God "I love you," "thank you," and "forgive me" every day. When our hearts are burdened, we can find comfort in the Lord. When we're weak, we can pray for strength. When we're fearful, we can find reassurance and courage. The right to pray is an essential blessing. So, we must maintain that close, peaceful, loving relationship with God. Jesus told the apostles, "Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation" (Matthew 26:41). And prayer keeps us from sin and helps us stay close to God.

God said in 1 Thessalonians 5:17, "Pray without ceasing." Well, anyone who knows the value and power of prayer wouldn't think about ceasing to pray. This passage isn't speaking about praying every minute. It's saying don't stop talking with God. Keep on praying. Keep loving Him, thanking Him, praising Him, and asking for things of Him in prayer. Keep your relationship strong. Live a life of love and obey the teaching of Christ. Keep worshiping at church. Keep your faith alive by serving others. Don't start even a single day without prayer, and you'll find life getting better and better.

To become God's child, believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Galatians 3:26 and 7 says, "for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." When we're baptized, God unites us with Christ. God washes away our sins in baptism (Acts 22:16), so that there is nothing offensive between God and us. In baptism, He adds us to His church and causes us to be born again as His children. In baptism you begin your walk as a follower and a lover of Jesus Christ.

We hope today's study about prayer has stirred you to get right with God. 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. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map of churches in your area at www.searchtv.org. SEARCH is on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry", that's one word, and then like the programs. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. And don't worry, we're not asking for money. We're here to help you draw close to God.

Show God your love by worshiping at church. You need a church family. And if you can attend, don't neglect worshiping at church. There's probably a church of Christ near you. If you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll gladly help you find one. We'll be back next week, Lord willing. Keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about the program. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.