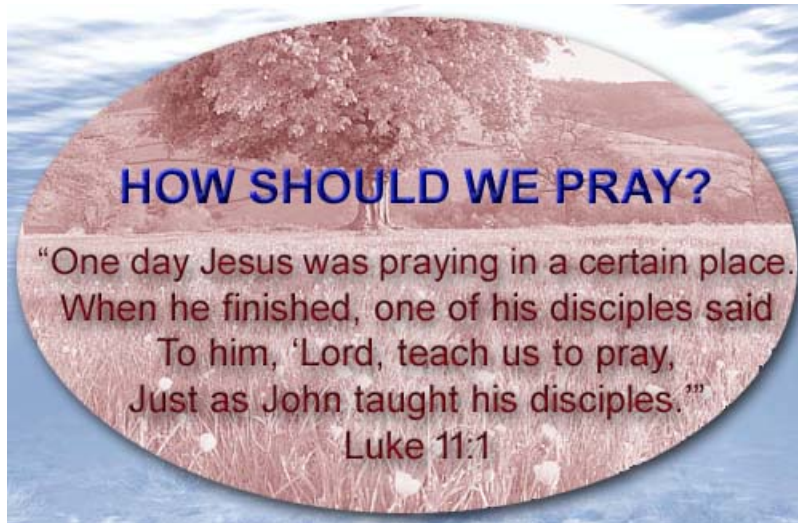


PRAYER



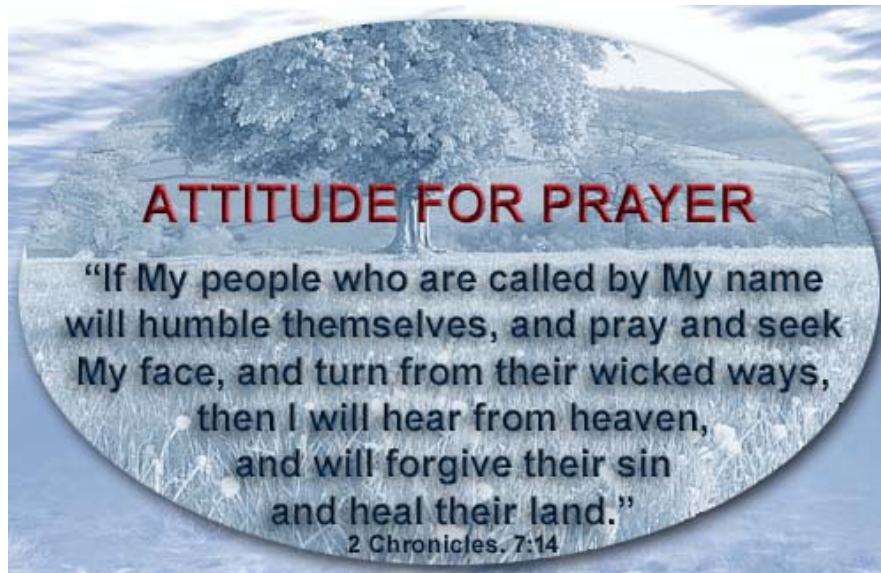
The bible tells us that Jesus was constantly in prayer to the Father, taught His disciples to so pray, and as well commanded us to make prayer a constant and relentless way of life. Jesus also said that whatever we ask in His Name that is consistent with God's will and purpose, He will fulfill our request so that the Father may be glorified in Him.

Prayer then can be compared to spiritual breathing, whether we offer prayer through our words, thoughts, emotions or even cries from the heart to God. We can therefore conclude that we should pray consistently, and for the desires of our hearts that fulfills God's purpose for our lives. Proverbs 15:8 says, "The prayers of the upright are God's delight." In other words, God loves that we approach His throne in prayer, and we must consider this a great privilege granted through Christ.

The resulting effect is that as we pray consistently, we depend on God for His will and purpose for our lives, discover His perfect plan for us and experience a perfect peace through discernment and wisdom granted to us by God.

Jesus' teaching shows us the "how to" as well as "how not to" of prayer. It clarifies when, where, for whom, what to pray for and what we should expect from prayer.

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The featured scripture lays out clearly the attitudes God requires so that He will hear our prayers. First is to be humble and realize that God is not our servant, but rather we are the ones to serve Him. Then, we must turn away from sin and repent. We can't expect God will listen to us if we maintain a sinful life and attitude. It is actually an insult to come to God hypocritically, with the intent to remain in our sins.

What else does God require for Him to hear our prayers? Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount put it this way: "And when you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they will be seen by people." In essence, prayer is not meant to put on a show to impress others. Then Jesus added, "And when you are praying, do not use thoughtless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him." Mat. 6:5-8.

Praying is entertaining a relationship with God through Christ, in essence, it is to have communion with the living God of the universe, a profound privilege and extraordinary blessing granted to us by God.

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Prayer, we established, is a way of life in acknowledging God and Christ as first and foremost in our lives. I remember as a kid when our family prayed at specific times, and those were simply repetitive prayers learned that came out of our mouths without hitting the heart. In essence, prayer is to place God at the helm of our lives, which encompasses submitting all our goals, hopes and dreams to the approval and to the Glory of God.

In the parable of the insisting widow in Luke 16:1, Jesus said, "That men always ought to pray and not lose heart." Paul to the Ephesians enjoining them to put on the whole armor of God added "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints." The Word of God encourages us to be steadfast in prayer with faith.

We easily rely on navigation systems in our cars to take us to destination, as well as warning us about detours or accidents along the way. It does however require we turn the system on as otherwise it is useless. In the same way, prayer is to turn on our spiritual navigation system to guide us and energize God's Word to our lives, the reason we are enjoined to pray always.

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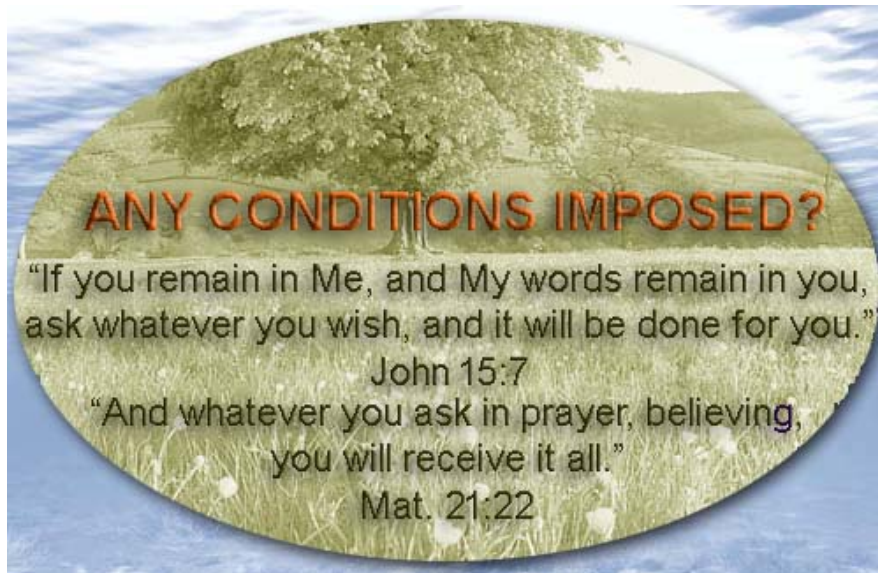


Isn't it a normal desire to pray for loved ones, friends, and neighbors, to ask God for blessings and help through their life's challenges? We certainly don't hesitate to pray for them as it is easy to desire the best for those we like or love. However, when's the last time we prayed for that annoying neighbor who loves to complicate our lives? Even more, when is the last time we prayed for politicians we do not support because of their ideologies and stand against God?

Jesus told us to love even our enemies and pray for them. Paul in his first letter to Timothy said this; "First of all, then, I urge that requests, prayers, intercession, *and* thanksgiving be made in behalf of all people, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."

So, in essence, we are enjoined to pray for those in authority, for those who annoy us, and even for our enemies, right? If we believe that God answers prayers, wouldn't it be honoring God, following His command, and acting in faith to pray for those who we feel don't deserve it???

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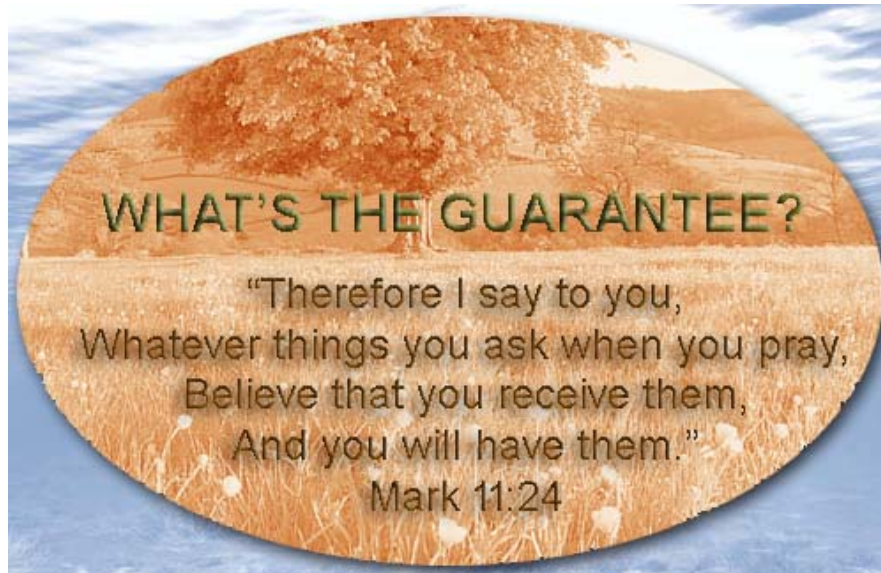


Obviously, not all prayers are answered, and as well not everyone God hears. Jesus clearly stated that we must be His, His words must abide in us, and finally have faith, to expect answers to our prayers. Psalm 34:18 gives us two elements God requires to answer our prayers; “The LORD *is* near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit.” In common vernacular it means to repent of sin and be humble.

David in Psalm 145:18 put it this way: “The LORD *is* near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth.” In essence, to ask anything from God, we can’t be double minded, we must reject sin, and clean up our act so our hearts are right with God. James 5:16 adds, “The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.” In essence, prayers from a righteous person God hears with anticipation to deliver a powerful answer with even miracle power at times.

Finally in 1John 3:22, the apostle John said: “And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.” So, to have our prayers answered, we must be in Christ, reject sin, be humble and have faith in God’s for His answer to our prayers.

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What guarantee do we have that God will answer our prayers? Have we ever asked God for anything that He did not grant us... yet? For example, have we asked God for the salvation of a loved one, yet after years of petitioning God, it hasn't happened? In 2 Cor. 1:20 Paul shed light on this; "For all the promises of God in Him *are* Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us." If we bring this to a common denominator, prayer must always bring God glory. While some of our requests may not be to His glory, and we must trust God on this, we know that salvation of a soul brings Him glory. We must remember as well that God, in His Sovereignty, always answers prayers that glorify Him, in His time, even if it means we might not see the answer in our lifetime. That's why Jesus tells us we must believe, and we can only truly believe if, through our petitions, God will be glorified, and we must stand and trust God by faith.

The apostle John clarified it this way: "Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him." 1John 5:14-15

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