

"Does God Hear My Prayer?"

"Prayer should not be regarded as a duty which must be performed, but rather as a privilege to be enjoyed, a rare delight that is always giving us some new love and inner peace."

Prayer

"Fruit of the Spirit and more. . ."

"The Lord is near to all who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth."
Psalm 145:18

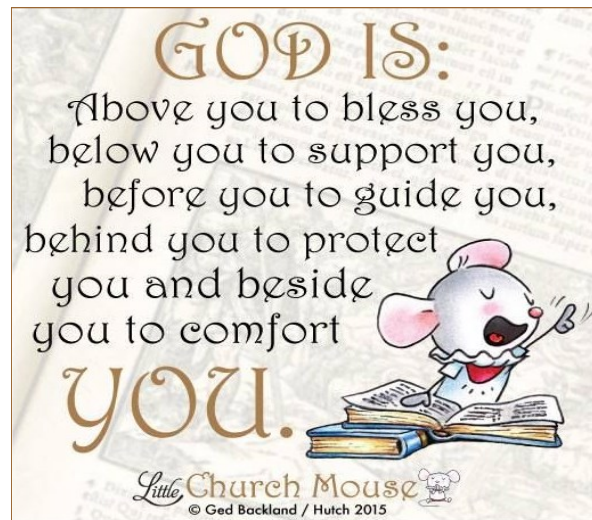
Prayer is a great gift that was given to us by God. We don't have to pay anything for it. It is just there for us always. It is not listed as one of the fruits of the spirit, but we cannot have fruit of the spirit without it.

Isaiah faced a lot of difficult situations while he was here on earth. He was given great knowledge by God as to how he could help the people of Judah get back to being a God-fearing people, and he was given great prophecies but the

people didn't want to hear what he had to say.

You may recall that the prophecy of the birth of Christ was given to Isaiah. *"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."* Isaiah 9:6 But the people kept rebelling. They didn't believe Isaiah. In fact, Isaiah told them at one time that their prayers weren't even going to get to God if they continued their way of life! Isaiah 58:5.

Eugene Peterson put Isaiah's message from Isaiah 58 about prayer in today's language. He tells them they make lots of outward appearances by fasting at being a God-fearing people, but their actions say something entirely different. God tells them through Isaiah *"The kind of fasting you do won't get your prayers off the ground."* Isaiah 58:5. They need to learn to live their lives to be worthy of God's love. That is a pretty harsh statement. We are led to believe that God



To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing.

Martin Luther

always hears our prayers. Sometimes He gives us what we need instead of what we ask for. We don't always understand why God answers prayers as He does, but we also have to accept that He knows best. This was difficult for the people of Judah who were living a good life then; it is difficult sometimes for us today. When Christ was on earth He told His disciples a parable about prayer.

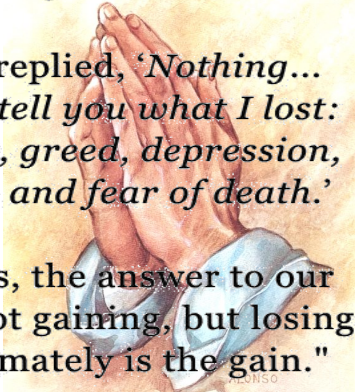
He told them they had to pray consistently and never quit. He compared their prayers to a widow that kept harassing a judge for justice and protection. The judge wouldn't listen until finally she wore him down and he said *"I care nothing what God thinks, even less what people think. But because this widow won't quit badgering me, I'd better do something and see that she gets justice—otherwise I'm going to end up beaten black-and-blue by her pounding."* Luke 18:5 Christ goes on to tell His disciples to be diligent in prayer as the widow was, and because God is love He will always be there for them when they pray. Matthew 6 gives us somewhat the same warning but in a much more gentle message than that

given to the people of Judah. We are told we will be forgiven as we forgive others. We should not go around being showy as the people were with their fasting, but our prayers should be sincere. We should not lay up treasures on this earth, but help others as we can. We don't have to worry about earthly things to the extent that it controls our lives. Yes we need to work but we need to be able to turn things that we can't control over to God. That is not easy. We always want to be in control. Later in that same chapter Christ tells the people *"Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?"* Matthew 6:26. These words are difficult for us today, and I'm sure they were difficult for the people to understand then. Are we not supposed to try to take care of ourselves? In other parts of the Scripture we are told to study and work. In Matthew 16:27 Christ said *"For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works."*

"Once a man was asked, 'what did you gain by regularly praying to God?'

The man replied, 'Nothing... but let me tell you what I lost: anger, ego, greed, depression, insecurity, and fear of death.'

Sometimes, the answer to our prayers is not gaining, but losing; which ultimately is the gain."



These works are where the prayer comes in. The works that God expects are the works of spreading His love. The work we do every day on the job to support our self and our family is a different work. God will judge us according to our execution of His work. That is a difficult concept to grasp. How should we pray? What answers should we expect? What is the difference between worrying and praying? Christ also asked in Matthew 6:27 *"Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?"* These questions can haunt us, or we can have peace through prayer knowing that God is in charge. In Matthew 6:9-13 we are given a prayer by Christ that we can pray. *"Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen."* (KJV)

Prayer is often called our conversation with God. That is a wonderful way to think of prayer. I know that many people pray while they are driving and working. Why not? We talk to people when we are driving or working. Many times we don't get the rewards when we are talking with other people that we get when we talk with God. We have promises and blessings that we cannot comprehend. All we need to do is talk with God and He will answer our prayers. It may not always be the answer we want, but it is the answer God sees as he sees down the road of our lives.

Prayer: Thank You Lord for the wonderful gift of Your love. Help me at all times to strive to be like Jesus, who went about doing good. He was among us as one who served and prayed for His enemies. Please help us to seek to do Your good and not be boastful. Thank You for the blessed assurance we receive every day. Amen

1. How should we pray? When?
2. How do you think God expects us to pray?
3. Why do you think Christ gave the prayer to the disciples that we call The Lord's Prayer?
4. As you study The Lord's Prayer, how can you see that Christ covered all of our needs?
5. How can we hug someone with our prayers?

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Charles Schulz, creator of Peanuts in one of his comic strips, has Linus ask "Do you ever pray, Lucy?"