

The Assumptions Of Prayer

This series of articles is designed to help the child of God learn to appreciate the great blessing of prayer and to teach him how to pray effectively. Today, we will consider the assumptions one must grant about prayer.

First, we must assume that God is real. One must see God as a thinking, powerful, and personal being. In Hebrews 11:6, the Hebrew writer makes this point by saying, "And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him." One must have no doubt as to God and His willingness and ability to hear and answer prayers. In James 1:6, the scripture says, "But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind." One must also be assured that the Father/child relationship with God is a reality. In Matthew 11:25, Jesus states, "... I praise Thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth ..." and also in Luke 11:2, He starts the model prayer like this, "Father, hallowed be Thy name ..."

Second, we must assume that God's love for men is real. God is interested in the welfare of His children. In Matthew 11:29-31, Christ says, "Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Therefore do not fear; you are of more value than many sparrows." He loves and cherishes us (1 John 3:1) and He desires to meet their needs (Matthew 6:25-33). Because of His love, every sincere prayer offered to Him by His faithful children is heard and answered (Matthew 7:7-11). His love allows the intercessory work of Jesus (1 Timothy 2:1-5) and the Holy Spirit as we see in Romans 8:26-27, which says, "And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God."

Third, we must assume that man's need for God is real. Born out of a sense of his own human weakness and the inability to direct his own life (Jeremiah 10:23), the Christian stands in need of God's providential care. In Philippians 4:18-19, Paul says, "But I have received everything in full, and have abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God. And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." Jesus, in the figure of the vine and the branches, emphasized man's inability to live fruitfully and victoriously without reliance on divine strength and care. In John 15:5, Christ says, "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing." We can boldly approach "the throne of grace" in prayer in order to "obtain mercy and find grace in time of need" (Hebrews 4:14-16).

Fourth, we must assume that God hears prayers. The ears of God are open to the prayers of the righteous. In 1 Peter 3:12, Peter says, "For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears attend to their prayer" and in John 9:31, the scripture says,

“We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing, and does His will, He hears him.” As one draws near to God, He draws near to him. In James 4:8, James states, “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.” Prayer involves two parties — God and His child. Neither is passive and every movement of one toward God in proper prayer is met by an eager movement on God’s part toward that one. Psalm 65:2 states, “O Thou who dost hear prayer, to Thee all men come.”

Finally, we must assume that God answers prayer. If God hears the prayers of His children and made no response at all, how futile their prayers would be. We see that God answers all proper prayers in 1 John 5:14-15, which says, “And 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.” God answers our prayers in different ways. He delays His answer (Luke 18:7). He can exceed what you ask (Acts 12:5, 15). He also says no. We have to always remember that God knows best. In 2 Corinthians 12:8-9, Paul is asking God to take away this thorn in his side. It says, “Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He has said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.’ Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me.” Let us examine our prayer life and make sure that we are praying in the Spirit and always follow what God has commanded us to do.

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