
"The Prayer God Answers"

Sermon Text: Ephesians 1:15-23 / John 16: 23-30
Mariner Sands Chapel

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This is a great time to think about prayer and read two passages where the Bible addresses it. Our prayer life is perhaps one of the most important aspects of our spiritual walk with God. You may have heard it called a "spiritual discipline." Some people have a vibrant prayer life, others more sporadic. What I would like us to reflect upon today is the way God responds to our conversations with Him.

The Bible has many references to moments when people prayed and God intervened. There are about 650 prayers spoken in the Bible, and in all these prayers we have about 450 recorded answers to prayer. Have you ever caught yourself praying, "Lord, bless Charlie..?" You could experiment using this passage from Ephesians as one way to pray for someone more specifically than by saying, "Lord, Bless so and so.

Yet, what really causes us some wonder is whether God answers prayer, or even if praying actually works. Let's review a few examples of prayer in the Bible.

Eph. 5:20—"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father *in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

Col. 3:17—"And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all *in the name of the Lord Jesus*, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."

Jas. 5:14—"Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil *in the name of the Lord.*"

It may not have been answered in the way the person expected, but it was answered either by a no, yes, or wait. Sometimes, the answer occurs much later, in a way that shows how God is looking out for our best interests, so that our joy in Him may be complete.

In the Gospel of John, our Lord instructs the disciples to pray in His name. To pray in the name of Christ is to pray relying upon what Christ is and has done, to pray on the ground of Jesus Christ's acceptability with the Father. When I go to a bank with my own name on the check I ask money in my own name, and if I have that much money there I get what I ask. When I go to a bank with another man's name on the check, I ask in his name, and it matters nothing whether I have money in the bank or not. If he has I get it. Jesus Christ has given to believers in Him the right to put His name upon their checks. We have nothing in the bank of Heaven, no claim upon it. He has unlimited credit there. If we ask God in our own name, on the ground of any claim we have upon Him, we will get nothing. But if we come renouncing any claim of our own and simply trusting in the claims of Christ, we will get "whatsoever we ask.

Jesus is telling His disciples, and us as well, pray so that your joy may be complete. As you pray about everything, you will develop a perspective on things like God's perspective. You will become more Christ like (Romans 8:29). God provides His children more joy as they become more like Christ. That is the prayer that always gets answered. He wants to have regular conversations with you. He desires to have you conform to the image of His Son. He has planned to make all things plain to you. It becomes a whole new relationship when you discover what you can achieve through praying. As you develop your prayer life, you will also become spiritually mature. Yesterday's joy will become even greater tomorrow.