

## **TWO HUGE TRUTHS ABOUT PRAYER**

**John 9:31**

**The Gospel of John – Week 39**

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. One of the most important verses to me in the Bible is **James 4:2** “You do not have because you do not ask.”
2. God works through prayer. He blesses through prayer. He provides through prayer. He protects through prayer. If you need something but don’t pray for it, then God won’t give it to you. God has many blessings in store for you; He is just waiting for you to ask. If you don’t ask, you will never receive.
3. **Thomas Watson** “The tree of promise will not drop its fruit unless shaken by the hand of prayer.”
4. But prayer is hard. Many people don’t pray very often, or very effectively. Many people feel like their prayers are just hitting the ceiling and then falling to the floor. So, today we’re going to learn how to pray more effectively.

### **II. TEXT**

1. **John 9:31** “We know that God doesn’t listen to sinners, but if anyone is God-fearing and does his will, he listens to him.”

### **III. TWO BIG TRUTHS ABOUT PRAYER**

#### **1. God doesn’t listen to sinners.**

##### i. What does this mean?

1. God hears everything.
2. God knows everything.
3. God cares about everyone.
4. But God does not answer the prayers of sinners.

a. **Proverbs 15:29** “The Lord is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous.”

##### ii. What is a “sinner”?

1. In this context, it is not anyone who has ever sinned. That would be everyone. Rather, it is a person who is living in rebellion against God. It is a person who is rejecting God; resisting God; running from God; ignoring God. A lifestyle of sin. Persisting in sin.

##### iii. Why doesn’t God answer the prayers of sinners?

1. Imagine if Japan asked the United States for aid immediately after bombing Pearl Harbor. Would the United States be inclined to help? Of course not.
2. Imagine that you and I are neighbors, and one day I take a baseball bat to your vehicle and destroy it. Then I ask you to get my mail and

watch my house for me the next week while I go on vacation. Would you be inclined to help me? No way!

3. God does not bless sin. He will not support your campaign of rebellion against Him.
  4. One reason is that God is a good Father. One of the most basic principles of training up a child is positive and negative reinforcement. Reward good behavior, and do not reward bad behavior. If you reward bad behavior, then you are encouraging your child to do it again. This is intuitive. God is the same way with us. He is not going to encourage you to keep sinning by rewarding your bad behavior. Rather He is going to motivate you to repentance by not listening to your prayers.
- iv. This truth is illustrated in the Bible.
1. When the Philistines united to attack Israel, King Saul was afraid and decided to ask God for guidance, but the Lord did not answer him, because Saul was a sinner (1 Sam 28:5-7).
  2. Before Joseph entered the presence of Pharaoh, he shaved and changed his clothes. Before we ask God for things, we must remove our filthy rags of sin and put on the righteous garments of Christ. Gen 41:14.
  3. In ancient Israel, the Jewish priests had to wash their hands and feet in the Bronze Basin before they entered the tent of meeting or offered a sacrifice. Ex 30:17-21

**2. If anyone is God-fearing and does His will, He listens to him.**

- i. **John 9:31** "We know that God doesn't listen to sinners, but if anyone is God-fearing and does his will, he listens to him."
- ii. This verse gives us a promise with two conditions. The promise is answered prayer. The conditions are "if anyone is God-fearing and does His will."
- iii. What does it mean to be God-fearing?
  1. The fear of the Lord means to be constantly conscious that God is watching, and He will hold you accountable for your actions.
  2. **2 Kings 19:27** "But I know your sitting down, your going out and your coming in, and your raging against me."
  3. **Hebrews 12:6** "For the Lord disciplines the one he loves and punishes every son he receives."
  4. The fear of God is a mixture of three things:
    - a. Deep respect for God because He is good and righteous.
    - b. Awe (amazement; wonder) because God is great – omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent.
    - c. Fear because God hates sin and will not hesitate to discipline His children when they need it.

5. It is not unlike the fear of a child for her father.
  - a. She has deep respect for him because he is a loving, providing, protecting, and affectional father.
  - b. She has awe for him because he is so big and strong and smart.
  - c. She fears him because she knows that if she is disobedient he will discipline her.
6. Another way to think about the fear of the Lord is that it is the fear of being away from Him. And that's what sin does; it separates us from God. When I was a missionary in Taiwan, it was like visiting another planet. Everyone spoke a different language; all the signs were in a different language; I didn't know anyone; I didn't understand the culture. The only way that I could survive in Taiwan was by staying with my supervisor. She lived in Taiwan. She spoke and read the language. She knew the culture. She had lots of friends. So, as we moved around the city, I was afraid of getting separated from my supervisor. She was my lifeline. To fear God is to fear being separated from God. It is the realization that He is Your lifeline and you can't make it in this world without Him.
7. The Bible emphasizes the fear of the Lord as one of the most important Christian virtues:
  - a. Many of the greatest promises in the Bible are given to those who fear God:
    - i. **Psalm 31:19** "How great is your goodness that you have stored up for those who fear you."
    - ii. **Psalm 33:18** "The Lord keeps His eye on those who fear Him."
    - iii. **Psalm 37:7** "The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and rescues them."
    - iv. **Psalm 34:9** "Those who fear Him lack nothing."
    - v. **Proverbs 9:10** "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."
    - vi. **Psalm 112:1** "Happy is the person who fears the Lord."
8. And here we see the promise that God listens to those who fear Him.
- iv. What does it mean to do God's will?
  1. God's will is what God wants. To do God's will is to do what God wants. So, we're talking about obedience.
  2. A commitment to God's will over one's own. This is what Jesus meant when He commanded us to "deny yourself (Lk 9:23).
  3. Jesus set the example. **John 5:30** "... I do not seek my own will, but the will of him who sent me."

4. Jesus taught us to pray like this: “Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven (Mt 6:9-10, KJV).”
5. A commitment to God’s will means that when you pray, you are praying for God’s will. Your ultimate desire is God’s will, because you know that God’s will is best. Romans 12:2 says that God’s will is “good, pleasing, and perfect.”
6. Adrian Rogers “God only wants for us what we would want for ourselves if we were smart enough to want it.”
7. We don’t always know what God wants, so we pray for what we want, and then we say, “But not my will, Yours be done.” This is what Jesus did the night before He was crucified. He was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. He knew the suffering that He had to endure. So, He prayed, “Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me – nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done (Lk 22:42).”
- v. So the two conditions in this verse are “God fearing and does His will.” The promise is that God will listen to your prayers.
- vi. What does it mean that God will listen?
  1. God will always answer your prayers. If you fulfill the conditions, then God will always answer your prayers. But He answers prayers in four different ways.
    - a. If you are wrong, the answer will be grow. This is what we just looked at. If you are living in sin, then God will not answer your prayers. You need to repent and turn back to Him.
    - b. If the request is wrong, the answer will be no. If my son Andrew asked me for an AK-47 at the age of five, I would say no. Why? Because that would not be good for him. A good parent doesn’t always say yes because sometimes it is more loving to say no. God is the same way. If you pray for something that is not good for you, or if God has a better plan for you, then He will say no. You just have trust that when He says No, it is not because He doesn’t exist or because He doesn’t love, but because He wants what is best for you.
      - i. **Robert Jeffress** “God’s will is a fence not to keep us in, but to keep evil out.”
      - ii. **Unknown** “Prayer is not giving God instructions; it is reporting for duty.”
    - c. If the timing is wrong, the answer will be slow. Wait awhile. If your third-grader asks you for a smart phone, you don’t have to say no, but slow. Wait until you are older. For our family,

that means wait until you are eighteen and you can afford to buy you for yourself.

d. If you are right, and the request is right, and the timing is right, the answer will be go.

2. Promises to claim:

a. **Matthew 7:7** "Ask, and it will be given to you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened to you."

b. **Psalm 145:18-20** "18 The LORD is near all who call out to Him, all who call out to Him with integrity. 19 He fulfills the desires of those who fear Him; He hears their cries for help and saves them. The LORD 20 guards all those who love Him, but He destroys all the wicked."

vii. Example of answered prayer:

1. King Hezekiah prayed for deliverance from Assyria's King Sennacherib. The Lord responded by sending an angel in the night who killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in the camp, causing the Assyrians to break camp and return home. Sometime later Sennacherib was assassinated by his two sons while worshiping in the temple of his god Nisroch. 2 Ki 19:35-37

viii. What if you want God to answer your prayers, but you have been living a life of sin?

1. **2 Chronicles 7:14** "if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land."

#### IV. THREE TIPS TO GET STARTED WITH PRAYER

##### 1. Pray daily.

- i. **Psalm 5:3 (TLB)** "Each morning I will look to you in heaven and lay my requests before you, praying earnestly."
- ii. Make an appointment with God every day to spend time in prayer.
- iii. If you decide to start exercising, but you don't make a plan for when and how often, you're not going to exercise often or consistently.
- iv. So, for many people, they have a morning quiet time with God. They have an appointment with God every morning, for 15 minutes, or 30 minutes, or whatever, to pray, and to read the Bible.

##### 2. Pray broadly.

- i. **1 Peter 5:7 (NIV)** "Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares for you."
- ii. When you pray, don't just pray for yourself. Pray for yourself, for your family, for your church family, for our country, for the salvation of your lost friends, etc.

- iii. And don't pray general prayers – "Lord, please bless everybody. Amen."  
Pray specifically.
- iv. Here's what I recommend. On your worship guide write down six days of the week in a list format – give yourself one day off. Then, next to each day, write down who you will pray for on that day. For me it looks like this:  
Sunday – Church service. Monday – Your prayer requests on your Connection Cards. Tuesday – My family. Wednesday – Church Acadiana. Thursday – My lost friends. Friday – Our country. Saturday – Off.
- v. I also pray for whatever is heavy on my heart or urgent every day as well. So, if I have an important meeting, I will pray for that. If I'm worried about something, I'll pray about it.

### 3. Pray completely.

- i. **Colossians 4:2** "Devote yourselves to prayer; stay alert in it with thanksgiving."
- ii. Notice that this verse mentions two kinds of prayers. There are requests – asking for things; that is what the word "prayer" means. And then there are prayers of thanksgiving – thanking God for what He has done.
- iii. When some people pray they only ask for things. But there is a lot more to prayer than that. Prayer is a conversation with God, your Heavenly Father. When you talk to your Father, you don't just want to ask for stuff. That is an incomplete conversation. You need to learn to pray completely. This is called balanced prayer.
- iv. Let me show you how I pray every morning. I use the acronym A.C.T.S.
  - 1. Adoration: First I begin by praising God for who He is.
  - 2. Confession: Then I confess my sins to God and ask for His forgiveness.
  - 3. Thanksgiving: Next I thank God for all He has done in my life.
  - 4. Supplication: Last I tell God what I need.

## V. CONCLUSION

- 1. **Charles Stanley** "We must remember that the shortest distance between our problems and their solutions is the distance between our knees and the floor."
- 2. We all face many challenges in life. But we have to remember that our first and most important response to the problems and challenges of life must be to pray. Don't neglect to pray. Become a prayer warrior.
- 3. I'm reminded of the story of George Mueller. George Mueller pastored a church in England for more than 60 years. He is best known for the several orphanages that he started. He intentionally never asked for money or other resources to provide for the orphans. Instead he simply prayed and trusted God to provide. He had a prayer journal in which he recorded over 50,000 answered prayers in his life. He said, "The primary object of my life and work is to show before the whole world that even in

these last, evil days, the living god is ready to prove himself as the living god by being ever willing to help and answer the prayers of those who trust in Him.”