

Before God Answers Prayer

One of the hallmarks of a disciple is his prayer life (1 Thess. 5:17). Jesus was a Man of prayer, and He expects that His followers will be prayerful individuals as well (Matt. 6:5-13). The Bible promises that the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much (James 5:16). Have you ever stopped to consider that a prayer carries many benefits and blessings even **before** it is answered by God?

Prayer helps us prioritize our lives – On one occasion Jesus was very busy in His ministry, and huge crowds were following Him. Jesus could have stayed in the city of Capernaum and waited for the multitudes to come to Him, but He awoke early and spent time in prayer, presumably about His mission on earth (Mark 1:35). Shortly after this time of prayer, Jesus said, “Let us go to the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth” (Mark 1:38). The Lord was reminded of His true priorities as He prayed.

Prayer helps us be at peace – The circumstances of life are often out of our control and we feel frustrated, overwhelmed and burdened. Philippians 4:6-7 promises that as Christians pray about **all** the matters that bother us, “The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Even before God answers our prayers, we can be at peace because we have truly cast all our cares upon Him (1 Pet. 5:7).

Prayer reminds us of our dependence on God – Jesus taught His followers to be persistent in prayer (Luke 11:5-8; 18:1-8). The reason for persistence is not because God is reluctant to answer; far from it (James 1:5; Matt. 7:7-11). Rather, we need to be persistent in prayer because it helps us remember that God is the Source of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17). We depend on Him for our lives, our daily bread, and our salvation. Persistent prayer humbles us and glorifies God (1 Cor. 10:31).

Prayer is an active demonstration of faith – Nobody is to pray like the proud Pharisee who merely wanted to show God and others how good he was (Luke 18:10-14). Indeed, Jesus taught us not to pray in order to be seen of men (Matt. 6:5-8). On the other hand, it is overwhelmingly wonderful and deeply influential for children to see their parents praying together. Those who are truly “salty” in their Christian influence are those who actively demonstrate their faith in the act of prayer (Matt. 5:13-16).

Prayer drives us toward Scripture – The disciples once begged Jesus to teach them to pray (Luke 11:1). Prayer is a learned discipline (1 Tim. 4:7-8). One of the best ways to learn to pray is to get deeper into Scripture. Some of the best prayers are those that flow naturally from the things God has already told us He is willing to do (1 John 5:14-15). The Bible contains dozens of examples of the prayers of righteous men and women through the ages. One of the benefits before God ever even answers our prayers is that praying encourages us to get into His word more.

Considering all the benefits of prayer, shouldn't it be a greater part of your life? **--JB**