

Does God Always Answer our Prayers?

December – 49



INTERNATIONAL MISSIONARY SOCIETY SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH REFORM MOVEMENT

Youth Department of the General Conference

My dear youth:

Many Christians have serious doubts that God always answers their prayers. That uncertainty leads them to neglect prayer. The question with which we want to begin this pastoral letter is: Does God always answer our prayers?

A human prerogative

Due to sin, we cannot communicate with God directly, so He established the method of prayer. After the fall, prayer is a gift from God to the human so that he can continue to have a relationship with his Creator. Praying is the most excellent and perfect method of talking to God. We can tell Him our secrets, our concerns and intimacies, bring our problems and needs to Him and, of course, express our gratitude and joy for the countless blessings that He grants us every day.

Through prayer our spiritual life is strengthened, making us stronger to resist the enemy and to recreate the character of Christ in our life. Hence, the enemy will do everything possible to make us neglect this exercise of the soul, which is why many Christians find it difficult to create prayer habits. This reflection is intended to help young people understand the importance of praying every day, insistently, fervently, humbly, in order to reach the graces of the Spirit. We want to learn that neglect of

prayer makes us weak in faith, while constant and faithful prayer makes us strong in the Lord, but the question is, “does God always answer our prayers?”

Prayer in the Old Testament

It is not a question that appears only in the New Testament, already in the Old Testament many stories of prayer can be seen. The practice of praying does not appear immediately after the fall, but this does not mean that there was no communion with God. The relationship was obvious when Abel began to present sacrifices to the Creator, there a divine-human communication is established. Later it will be said more explicitly: **“Then men began to call on the name of the Lord.”** Genesis 4:26. Here it is spoken from the moment that Adam and Eve have their son Seth, he sees the relationship of God with His children and of these with their Maker, terms such as intercede, praise, supplicate, cry out, etc., are a clear demonstration of existence of prayer, that is, of the act of communicating with God.

We have examples like those of Abraham, who was talking to God, when he went to Ur of the Chaldeans, by divine order, when he asked God not to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, when God asks him to sacrifice his son Isaac, etc. Jacob is another example of prayer, especially when he makes a covenant with God to give him tithes, when he asks him to bless him in that fight he had with the angel, etc. Moses also spoke with God through prayer and that is how he was able to go to Egypt and ask Pharaoh to let the Hebrew people go. How could he have carried out this undertaking without knowing the divine will?

Whenever Moses faced a problem with his people, he would take it to God in prayer. David is one of the people who most expresses his praise, adoration, and prayer through his psalms. Let's remember when he sinned, he asks God in Psalm 51, forgiveness, restoration, purification. His son Solomon also spoke with God, Elijah prayed to the Almighty to manifest his power. Daniel was a man of deep faith and prayer, giving thanks for the visions and revelations that still serve as a guide to God's people today. Other well-known characters who clung to prayer were Nehemiah and Hezekiah.

Prayer in the New Testament

In the New Testament we can find many examples of prayer. It is practically where the prayer is most explicitly manifested. The disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray. In Matthew 6:9-13 we find the model prayer. In Luke 8:13 we find a publican raising a prayer to God and asking him to have mercy on him, because he felt like a sinner. The first Christian martyr also prayed to God when he was being killed (Acts 7: 59-60).

The Lord Jesus Himself prayed constantly and sometimes throughout the night. It is an example for all of us to follow. Jesus' intercessory prayer is recorded in John 17. Jesus prayed on the cross for His enemies and His disciples teach us the same when Paul says that we must pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Our prayer today

Today we have the privilege of praying to God, it is the prerogative of everyone who believes in God and in His Son Jesus Christ whom He has sent. But does God always hear our prayers? Let's see what the Scripture says: **“And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. ‘Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.’”** Matthew 6:5-8.

Here we are told that when we pray there is to be no hypocrisy, the desire to show oneself. It must be discreet, in secret when it is private, not of vain repetitions, but with meaning, with the heart, and as if speaking to a friend. If it is so, God always hears. “God hears the prayers of all who seek Him in truth. He has the power that we all need. He fills the heart with love, and joy, and peace, and holiness.” *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, pg. 169. Here we are told that God always hears the prayers of those who sincerely seek Him. He does not say of that those who do not have any defect, but those who seek God in their great need.

“The prayers you offer in loneliness, in weariness, in trial, God answers, not always according to your expectations, **but always for your good.**” *Prayer*, pg. 7.

“The prayer of faith is never lost; but to claim that it will be always answered in the very way and for the particular thing we have expected, is presumption.” *Prayer*, pg. 260.

CONCLUSION

I did not want to end without making a small, and at the same time important point. God always answers our sincere prayers, which spring from a heart that seeks restoration, holiness, and the love of God. But... unfortunately there is a “but.” There are prayers that never go beyond the roof of our house. What does this mean? Could it be that there are prayers that God cannot answer?

God's Word tells us: **“For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”** 1 Peter 3:12. Here is the reason why a prayer is not answered: when the person clings to sin and does not want to abandon it. I repeat, it is not that God does not listen to the one who sinned, because if he repents, his prayer reaches the throne of grace. But when the person has no interest in changing and abandoning his sin, then the words of the epistle of Peter are fulfilled, that God is against the wicked, since evil is a transgression of the Law of God. This is what the Testimony confirms: “If we regard iniquity in our hearts, if we cling to any known sin, the Lord will not hear us; but the prayer of the penitent, contrite soul is always accepted. When all known wrongs are righted, we may believe that God will answer our petitions.” *Prayer*, pg. 282.

May our good God help us to never neglect prayer, because it is the breath of the soul, and even if we have made a mistake, let us not stop going to the throne of grace in search of forgiveness and restoration; we will find it for sure because God loves us. Amen.

José Vicente Giner
*Pastor and leader of the Youth Department
of the General Conference*

For reflection:

1. How would you define prayer?
2. Give some examples of prayer from the Old and New Testaments
3. Why should we always pray and what loss do we suffer if we don't?
4. Discuss if God always answers our prayers
5. Are there any cases in which prayer is not answered?