



16. How to Talk With God and Know He Listens

"I feel as though I am talking on the telephone but there is nobody on the other end of the line." "I feel as though my prayers do not rise above my head." "What is the use of praying when God already knows what you need?" "I have tried prayer, and it does not work; I did not get any answer."

These are a few comments from people who have wrestled with the problem of prayer. There are also many others who have comments like these:

"I know God hears my prayers and I have perfect confidence that He answers." "The Lord has never let me down." "The Lord has always heard my cry, even when I know I am not worthy." "I would not be alive today if it were not for prayer."

One down-and-out girl testified that she was in the deepest despair when someone taught her to pray the simple Lord's Prayer, from her heart. In less than 24 hours she had found a TV program that led her to a study of the Bible and a rich, satisfying faith that changed her life. Today she is happy--and all because she knelt and prayed the Lord's Prayer with humility and sincerity.

Do not allow yourself to feel that prayer is useless. Follow the suggestions in the Bible. Learning to talk with God and to recognize His answers is the most important skill you can master.

What is God's Attitude Toward Us?

1. Read Hebrews 11:6, and answer the following questions:

(a) Before you can come to God, what must you first believe?

ANSWER: "For he that cometh to God must _____ that He is."

(b) After you have begun to believe that God is, what must you believe about His character? (Rom. 3:26)

ANSWER: "... That He is a _____ of them that _____."

There is no point in dialing a phone number unless you believe there is someone to talk to. If you believe that God is, and that He rewards those who come to Him, you are ready to talk with Him and know He listens.

2. How willing is our Father in heaven to give us anything that we really need? Matthew 7:9-11.

ANSWER: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give _____ unto your children, how much _____ shall your _____ which is in _____ give _____ to them that _____?"

3. How can you know if God will listen to you? John 9:31.

ANSWER: "If any man be a _____ of God, and _____ his _____, _____ he _____."

If "God heareth not sinners" at any time, we have no hope, for we are all sinners. But He listens to anyone who sincerely asks Him for forgiveness. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:13). The man who prayed, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" was heard and forgiven (Luke 18:13, 14). Please don't ever stay away from God because you know you are a sinner! No matter how sinful you may feel, come to Him as you are. Don't wait to try to clean yourself up first. You can't. Get on your knees and say, "Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner. I come to You because You invited me, and because You are my Savior."

4. Where should we go in order to pray? Matthew 6:6.

ANSWER: "When thou hast _____ thy door, _____ to your Father who is in secret."

Jesus often went out to the forest or the mountains to pray (Luke 6:12; Mark 1:35). This was because He wanted to talk to God alone, where no curious ear could hear what He wanted to say. Many of us cannot now find such a place to pray; but we can usually find some spot or some time where we can be alone for a little while. Do you want to? You can!

5. Read Matthew 6:7, 8. Put an X before the correct statement:

_____ Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend, in simple words of our own choosing.

_____ God is pleased only with a set form of words, prepared by an expert.

6. Here is a promise Jesus made that we need to understand. Read John 15:7, and fill in these blanks:

(a) "If you _____ in _____, and my _____ abide in you."

(b) "Ye shall ask what ye will, and it _____ _____ _____ _____ _____."

7. Does this mean that we can ask for anything we may want selfishly? John 14:14.

ANSWER: "If ye shall ask anything _____ _____ _____, I will do it."

Suppose you are employed by a business firm. The manager sends you to the bank with a note asking for \$500,000.00 for the company payroll. You hand your letter to the bank in the name of the company. They give you the money without hesitation because they know you will use it for the payroll. If you asked for the money in your own name you would get nothing. So, to pray "in Jesus' name" is not a magic formula, but it is asking for something to use in His work of helping others, in saving the world.

8. What secret will make anyone's prayers successful? Isaiah 58:6-9.

ANSWER: If we are willing to _____ people in need, when we call, the Lord will "_____." When we cry, He will say, "_____ I _____."

Simple Principles Anyone Can Learn

9. Do you know the Lord's Prayer? Learn it. Matthew 6:9-13. Answer these questions:

(a) To whom should prayer be addressed? To _____.

(b) What comes first, asking for things for ourselves, or asking that the Lord receive His reward? "Thy _____ come. Thy _____ be _____ in earth, as it is in _____."

(c) Do you think the word "daily bread" includes other necessities of life such as housing, clothes, and spiritual blessings? _____.

(d) How does God forgive us our wrongs? "... As we _____ our _____."

(e) In whose name do we pray? John 15:16. "... Ye shall ask the _____ in _____."

"Jesus said, 'Ye shall ask in My name: and I say unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father Himself loves you.' 'I have chosen you: ... that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you.' John 16:26, 27; 15:16. But to pray in the name of Jesus is something more than a mere mention of that name at the beginning and the ending of a prayer. It is to pray in the mind and spirit of Jesus, while we believe His promises, rely upon His grace, and work His works." Happiness Digest, p. 48.

10. God is sometimes ready to give us something when we are not ready to receive it. Before we can "receive from Him whatsoever we ask," what is our duty? 1 John 3:21-23. List three things:

(a) "... _____ His commandments," and "do those things that are _____ in His sight."

(b) "... _____ on the name of his Son. ...," and

(c) "... _____ one another. ..."

Can We Short-Circuit Our Own Prayers?

11. If one stubbornly and contemptuously refuses to obey the Lord, what will happen to his prayers? Proverbs 28:9.

ANSWER: "Even his prayer shall be _____."

12. Why is it that sometimes our prayers are answered with a clear "No"? 1 John 5:14, 15.

ANSWER: "And this is the _____ that we have in _____, that, if we _____ anything _____ to _____, He _____: And if we know that He _____, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the _____ that we _____ of Him."

David says of our God, "No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." Psalm 84:11. No wise parent who loves his baby will give him a sharp knife because he cries for it. Don't forget that no matter how old you may be, you are still a child when it comes to knowing what is best for your future.

"When we do not receive the very things we asked for, at the time we ask, we are still to believe that the Lord hears and that He will answer our prayers. We are so erring and short sighted that we sometimes ask for things that would not be a blessing to us, and our heavenly Father in love answers our prayers by giving us that which will be for our highest good--that which we ourselves would desire if with vision divinely enlightened we could see all things as they really are." Happiness Digest, pp. 45, 46.

13. What kind of prayers did Jesus pray? Hebrews 5:7, 8; Matthew 27:45, 46.

ANSWER: "... With _____ and _____ unto Him that was able to save Him from death, ..." On the cross, He felt that God had _____ Him.

During those dark hours on the cross Jesus drained the cup of human suffering to its dregs. All our tears and pain were upon Him.

"Keep your wants, your joys, your sorrows, your cares, and your fears before God. You cannot burden Him; you cannot weary Him. He who numbers the hairs of your head is not indifferent to the wants of His children. 'The Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy' (James 5:11). His heart of love is touched by our sorrows and even by our utterances of them. Take to Him everything that perplexes the mind. Nothing is too great for Him to bear, for He holds up worlds. (See Happiness Digest, p.47 for practical suggestions on prayer.)

14. Do you join the disciples in their request, "Lord, teach us to pray"? _____.

"Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you." 1 Peter 5:7 "Pray without ceasing." 1 Thessalonians 5:17

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