

## BIBLICAL PRAYER (41)

The right type of faith in prayer is not a faith that is waiting or looking for some feeling. Praying in faith often contradicts what our feelings are suggesting.

**(Biblical Faith Observation #4)** - Praying with the right type of faith is based on God's Word.

A steadfast, established faith that prays with power is one that stems from deep knowledge of God's Word. The thing that establishes one's faith and the thing that is able to take one deep, even in one's prayer life, is instruction of and in God's Word (**Colossians 2:7; Hebrews 5:13-6:1; I Peter 2:2; I John 5:13**).

The deeper our understanding of God's Word the more stable will be our faith and the more powerful will be our prayers. There is a major difference between having believing faith and having believing faith that is Biblically and doctrinally accurate and precise. It is the latter type of faith that accomplishes powerful things in prayer.

There are many confused modern day religious teachers, especially among the charismatics, who use a verse like **Mark 11:24** as a proof text for praying to God and asking for any sign or miracle. When this verse is cited, the conjunction "and" which begins **verse 25** is never pointed out.

This conjunction is a critical part of the teaching of Jesus Christ because it connects these verses (**vv. 25-26**) with the preceding verses. The principle that is revealed in these verses is very clear, namely God will answer prayer when His people are praying if they are willing to line up their lives with the Word of God. It is not just some emotional prayer of faith that moves God; it is a prayer that analyzes one's own personal life in view of God's Word prior to the request.

In other words, the type of faith that prays and moves God is one that lines up with the Word of God and in this case in examining one's own relationship with others. I have heard many confused people cite **Mark 11:24**, but I have yet to hear one of them make the grammatical connection to **Mark 11:25-26**, which demands that they meet this prerequisite when praying.

John R. Rice once told the story of a woman who asked God for a baby girl and became very disappointed and depressed when God gave her a baby boy. Dr. Rice said nowhere in the Bible does God promise us a baby girl, and there is certainly nothing diminished in the character of God by Him giving a baby boy. Dr. Rice went on to say that the real problem was that the woman's confidence was not based on true Biblical doctrine because God's will was that this woman first have a son. He also said that in the long run, this woman would discover that the baby boy was the best possible answer to her prayer God could have given her (*Prayer*, pp. 159-160).

This woman truly believed that if she prayed, believing for a baby girl, God was obligated to give it to her. But she neglected all the other instruction about prayer, specifically instruction about praying for God's will.

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There are many misinformed and wrongly taught believers who truly think that God will definitely answer their prayer requests because they pray believing He will. What these individuals neglect to realize is that **an accurate believing faith is a precise faith that is based on the Word of God.** Our praying faith is not a blind faith; it is a Biblical faith.

As we have seen time and time again, unless we are willing to move in the direction of conformity to the Word of God, our prayer life will be lacking, no matter how much faith we have (**I John 3:22; John 15:7**).

There are also many confused people who believe that God will answer their prayer if they have enough faith. **We need to remember that it is not the quantity of faith that moves God, it is the quality of faith that moves God (i.e. Matthew 17:20).** One who is faithful to God's Word in all knowable areas at the time he prays, is one who can and will greatly move God through prayer.

J. I. Packer, in his discussion of faith, says the following: "Beliefs, as such, are convictions held on grounds, not of self-evidence, but of testimony. Whether particular beliefs should be treated as known certainties or doubtful opinions will depend on the worth of the testimony on which they are based. The Bible views faith's convictions as certainties and equates them with knowledge (**I John 3:2; 5:18-20**), not because they spring from supposedly self-authenticating mystical experience, but because they rest on the testimony of God who 'cannot lie' (**Titus 1:2**) and is therefore utterly trustworthy" (*Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, p. 400).

Simply stated, faith is based on God's written facts. The more we know of the Word of God, the more we may expect that our prayers will be answered, because we will understand more of the boundaries, limits, parameters and ground rules that need to be implemented for God to answer our prayers. We will be always willing to put our requests to various Biblical tests - **i.e. James 4:3; I Peter 3:1-7; Matthew 6:14-15; I John 3:21-22.**

It would be possible for a person to spend hours begging and pleading with God for something and not even ask whether or not the motive of the prayer is wrong (**James 4:3**). In such a case, the person could have all the faith in the world that God will answer the prayer, and God will not ever answer the prayer because the faith is not a faith that conforms to the Word and truth of God. One could pray for something contrary to God's Word and actually have all the faith in the world and it will never happen. For example, I have known of people who have tried to "pray through," begging God to make them reach a level of sanctification that they are sinlessly perfect. God will never answer that prayer for many reasons. First, no one even begins to be spiritual until he realizes that "nothing good *continually* dwells in me" (**Romans 7:18**). Second, we will not be in a sinless state until we are rid of this flesh body (**Romans 7:21-24**).

When one's faith is developed to such a degree that **Mark 11:24** can legitimately be applied, one has become very precise in his faith and in his prayer life. One prays, knowing everything is in line with Scripture, and that is a faith that pleases God and will move God to answer prayer. This is the kind of prayer that will see God do great things.

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Our conclusion is that the type of faith that is impacting in prayer, is a quality faith that conforms to the Word of God. It is not a faith based on circumstances, signs or feelings. It is a faith that knows what the prayer prerequisites are and then meets them. This kind of faith will move God many times and in many ways.

J. Oswald Sanders tells the story of the original owners of Mt. Morgan, which was one of the outstanding gold mines in Queensland, Australia. He said that they toiled for many years on its barren slopes, just barely eking out a frugal existence. They were totally unaware that just a little under their feet lay one of the richest mountains of gold that had ever been found in the world. Mr. Sanders says the potential wealth, which lay under their feet, was incalculable, but they lived on the bread line because they were totally ignorant of the wealth they possessed (*Prayer Power Unlimited*, p. 57).

So it is when it comes to prayer. The Bible is filled with precise instruction and teaching concerning the prerequisites we must meet to move God in prayer. When we know the Word and by faith live the Word, we can have a powerful and impacting prayer life that does move God.

### QUESTION #9 – What does prayer change?

This question is one that takes us deep into theology. The full answer to this perplexing question will probably not be fully known until we are with the Lord. However, there are some Biblical insights we may gain in attempting to understand and answer this question.

We may rephrase the question this way - If a believer is willing to meet the Biblical prerequisites for prayer established in the Word of God, what is it that one may hope to accomplish through prayer? What can we really expect to change by prayer? There are four major potential areas of change that prayer may accomplish:

**(Area of Change #1) - Prayer will change one's own relationship with God.**

There is a very personal and theological side to prayer in that it can change one's own status and relationship with God. For example, the unbeliever, who prays a prayer for salvation (**i.e. Romans 10:9-10**), is instantly saved and changed from being dead in trespasses and sins into being alive unto God.

The believer who prays the prayer of confession (**i.e. I John 1:9**) is instantly restored to full fellowship and harmony in his relationship with God. From these two examples, we certainly learn that prayer is something that will change one's whole relationship with God. In fact, one who isn't praying is one living contrary to God's Word and needs to begin to pray in accordance with God's Word. This step of obedience will, in itself, be a positive change in one's own relationship with God (**i.e. I Thessalonians 5:17**). There will be a sense of strength, calm, stability and purpose to one who prays. There will be an intimacy developed with God through prayer. When you get alone with God and shut the door, you shut out the world.