

ANSWERS TO PRAYER

Authors: Mel and Susan Finlay

“I know my prayer life isn’t what it should be.” If you are feeling guilty or inadequate about your prayer life you are not alone. It is interesting that, in an era of highly advanced and constant communication, a profound sense of inadequacy prevails about our communication with our Father, God. For many of us, offering spontaneous prayers throughout our day or week is quite natural. But, at the core of our being is a yearning for not only frequency but a richness of communication with God – to know Him, to discern His will for us, to experience Him fully. This cannot happen on the fly. Communication is fundamental to the health of every relationship and is only fulfilling when it is both spontaneous and intentional. So it is with prayer.

“Few Christians have anything but a vague idea of the power of prayer; fewer still have any experience of that power” writes Edward Bounds. Prayer nourishes the life and power of God within us; the more intentional and disciplined we are in our approach, the greater our intimacy with and usefulness to God. Prayer is the key to experiencing the freedom and transforming power of God.

First, it requires the discipline of **praying daily**, consciously bringing oneself before the Lord at the same time each day. It involves reminding oneself that God is God, the Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer, and Ruler of all of life. We need to spend time worshiping Him, listening to Him, offering our day and our lives to Him, and asking that He will

align our wills with His. Prayer is much less about answers and much more about our knowing God. We can leave the outcome to Him; our focus is on being faithful in our prayer life.

Secondly, it requires the discipline of **listening to God**. Active listening involves both uninterrupted time with Him and an attitude of openness to His voice in the midst of life. How do we hear Him speak? The Apostle Paul instructs us to “be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will” (Romans 12:2). Through prayer the Holy Spirit is released to bring to life God’s will for us and to transform the focus of our minds and lives to His.

Thirdly, it requires the discipline of **thankfully accepting God’s will**. How often do our prayers reflect resignation rather than anticipation in praying that God’s will be done? It is only when we know at our very core that God’s will is perfect, that we can know freedom and a life that overcomes. Of course, there is nothing wrong with letting God know our personal preferences; in fact, He knows them already. Jesus was very clear in the Garden of Gethsemane as to what his preference was: “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me.” If he had stopped there, then we could too. But Jesus did not stop there. And neither can we. “Yet not as I will, but as you will.” (Matthew 26:39). We need to seek God’s will, to accept it and to live it out thankfully in our own lives, as Jesus did in His.

Fourth, it requires the discipline of **letting God use us** as He answers prayer. Prayer is much more about aligning our wills with God than it is about God answering our specific requests. And it is much more about having the eyes to see God's hand at work all around us than it is about asking God to be active. If we are praying, God will be active; we need have no doubt about that. But knowing He is active, and seeing His hand at work, are two different things. One is a matter of thought, of conviction; the other is a matter of being at His disposal.

Many devout believers are persuaded that we are poised for revival in Canada. For that to happen, more than the prayers of Christians are required. We must be willing to act courageously, to let God work through us, and to be "faithful in prayer." (Romans 12:12)