

Speaking to the soul



Prayer

We are confident that God hears us whenever we ask for anything that pleases him. And since we know he hears us when we make our requests, we also know that he will give us what we ask for. 1 John 5:14-15

Prayer is of absolutely crucial importance to our lives. It has been wisely said that you and I are as strong as our prayer lives and no stronger. Every part of our lives depends upon prayer, so it is really important that we are clear about the Bible's teaching on this subject.

One of the most important things to recognise is that prayer is never a matter of simply saying certain words to God. Bishop Ryle said: "We have learned a great lesson when we have learned that 'saying prayers' is not praying." Prayer is all about a relationship with God in which we talk to him and open our hearts so that he can work in our lives. The Old Testament prophets often observed that people said prayers that were completely unacceptable to God because their lives showed that they had no interest in serving him. God spoke particularly bluntly through Isaiah: "When you lift up your hands in prayer, I will not look. Though you offer many prayers, I will not listen, for your hands are covered with the blood of innocent victims" (Isaiah 1:15).

Prayer is therefore never a matter of us declaring to God our personal and probably selfish shopping list. It is about grasping hold of what God wants, because his will is always best. When we pray like that, we can pray with confidence, because we can be sure that God will always want to answer our prayer. Many people want prayer to be a form of magic in which we take control and compel God to give us everything we want and act in the way that suits us, but prayer is always the complete opposite of that. Prayer is about listening to God so carefully that we get to know him better and therefore increasingly ask for those things which are in line with his will.

QUESTION

How important is prayer in your life?

PRAYER

Loving Father, thank you that you love to hear my prayers.
Help me to grow in confidence in prayer. Amen

Photo - Church flowers

