

20. Learning to Know God Answers Prayer

In our last topic, we saw that one of our goals, as Christians, should be to help our physical and spiritual children learn that they can be certain that they have eternal life. We saw that those who have repented of their sin, and placed their trust in Christ, can have the assurance that their sins are forgiven and that they have eternal life. That assurance is very important for our children and for all Christians. Today, we will see what God says about how to help our physical and spiritual children know that God will answer their prayers as they pray to Him.

1 John 5:14-15 tell us, “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.” Here, we see that every Christian can know that Christ will hear and answer their prayers if they learn to pray according to the will of God. This means that we want to show our physical and spiritual children how to pray according to the will of God so they can know their prayers will be answered.

Many times, as Christians, we do not know how to pray because of our own weakness. Romans 8:26-27 says, “Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.” Here, we see that when we pray in our weakness, the Holy Spirit understands the desires of our heart and makes intercession for us when we do not know how to pray. At those times, we see that the Holy Spirit prays for us and makes His prayers according to the will of God.

However, we also want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to pray according to the will of God. Our children will learn to pray according to the will of God as we do two things. First, we show them, by our own example, that we make it our purpose to pray according to the will of God. Second, we help them to understand the example Christ has provided for us. In Matthew 26:39, we read, “He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, ‘O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.’” Christ knew He would soon experience separation from the Father as He hung on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins. He told the Father that if there was any other way to pay for sin to let this cup pass from Him. However, Christ wanted the will of the Father, even if it meant separation, suffering and death. We want to encourage our children to follow the example of Christ.

In addition, we want to help them understand the things that God clearly states are His will so they can pray for the things that are the will of God. Then, they can expect the Lord to answer their prayers. Different words are used for the will of God. One of those words speaks of the purpose or will of God. It speaks about those things God desires. In James 1:18, we see that God saved us by His own will. That verse says, “Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.” Here, we see that we are saved by the will of God, not our own will. We are the first examples of what God does when He makes people new

creations.

This word is also used in 2 Peter 3:9, where we read, “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” In this verse, we see that it is not the desire of God that any should perish. It is His desire that all come to repentance. One of the things we can encourage our physical and spiritual children to do is develop a list of their relatives, friends, co-workers, neighbors and other acquaintances who are not Christians and begin to pray daily for their salvation. Because we, and our children, can know that as we are praying according to the will of God when we pray for the salvation of others, we can know that God hears our prayers and is working in other’s lives in accordance with His will.

In 1 Corinthians 12:11, we see that God also gives us spiritual gifts according to His will. That verse says, “But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.” That entire chapter points out that God has given those gifts so each of us will be able to carry out the will the Lord has for each of our lives. Some of our children are given gifts of speaking. Others are given gifts of serving. 1 Peter 4:10-11 indicates that we should pray that we will use our gifts to carry out the will of the Lord. Those verses say, “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” If God has given us a gift to speak, we need to pray that the Lord will speak through His Word as we share the Word of God. If God has given us a gift to serve, we need to pray that we will serve with the ability which God supplies.

A second word that speaks of the will of God is the word that Christ used as He prayed in garden. That word speaks of the things God wishes or determines will be done. That is the word used in 1 John 5:14. We also see many things that God wills to be done. We also need to show our children, by example, the importance of praying for these things. In 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18, we read, “Pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” In these verses, we see that we are to pray at all times and for all things, with thanks to God, in our lives. One of the most important things we can do in our lives is show our physical and spiritual children how to be thankful to the Lord in all situations.

This word is also used in 1 Thessalonians 4:3, where we read, “For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality.” Here, we see that it is the will of God for us to avoid any form of sexual immorality. For this reason, we need to show our children the importance of praying for victory over temptation. 1 Corinthians 10:12-13 says, “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.” Here, we see that learning to pray for the will of God means that we pray the Lord will give us His strength when we are tempted to sin.

Ephesians 5:15-18 says, “See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is, and do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit.” Here, we see that we are to show our children how to have a godly walk in their lives and also learn to make wise use of their time. In order to do these two things, we need to show them the importance of praying for wisdom to know what the will of the Lord is. Then, we pray that the Lord will give us His strength, as we yield to the Holy Spirit, to do those things so we can make our lives count and have an impact for eternity.

Ephesians 6:5-7 shows us that we need to teach our children to pray about the way they work. Those verses say, “Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men.” Here, we see that we want to help our children understand the importance of praying that they will work to please the Lord by doing the will of God from their hearts as they work. In this way, their lives will be a testimony for the Lord as they work.

In Colossians 1:9-12, Paul gives us an example of the way to pray for our children, when he says, “For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.” As we pray for our physical and spiritual children to know the will of the Lord, we will also see the Lord answer our prayers for them.

As our children learn to pray for these and other things the Lord says are His will, the Lord will be able to work through the lives of our physical and spiritual children in a powerful way. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children the fact that God will answer their prayers as they pray according to the will of God.