

Prayer - Does it make sense?

When you discuss prayer, you often hear remarks such as, "It's not for me. It has no reason, it doesn't seem to help." Many people refer to problems, either their own or the world's and say, "prayer doesn't make sense; you don't see any change for the better. Why should you still want to pray?"

Does prayer make any sense? We want to answer the question with the Bible as our source. That's where we can read about prayer.

You can call prayer "speaking with God". Of course you should be clear on what God means to you. Your relationship to the One Whom you address is crucial.

Have you ever been approached by a beggar? The beggar addressed you. He asked you for money. But there was no real relationship between you and the beggar. For him, you were no more than an incidental passer-by. He had to wait, therefore, to see if you were in a generous mood. He couldn't depend on a handout.

Entirely different is the situation of a child speaking with his father. There is a very intimate father-child relationship between them. The child knows that he can depend upon his father. Father loves him, and he loves his father. If he asks his father for something, he can count on his father having heard him; he knows his father will give him what is good for him.

Real prayer demands that same trust in God. You must have that same Father-son relationship with Him. Prayer demands faith. Prayer should not be a try, a gamble. Not an incidental appeal such as a beggar makes - unsure of whether or not God is listening.

The Bible says a lot about prayer, without actually defining it. The Bible isn't a book of definitions; it is the Word of God in which He declares His love for His children. In the Bible God gives His comforting promises to those who acknowledge Him and trust in Him as Father.

The Bible contains vivid depictions of prayer, such as; "Spread out your arms to God..." (Ps. 143:6); "Lift up your soul to God..." (Ps. 25:1); "Seek God's face..." (Ps 27:8).

It is as if we see a child running to his Father, his Heavenly Father who will surely hear him.

This is even more clear in such expressions of prayer: "Pour out your hearts to Him..." (Psalm 62:8); and "Cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you..." (Peter 5:7). Often, we read "Seek God..." That doesn't mean, of course, that God is far away and cannot hear us; that we are estranged from Him. No, seeking God means calling upon God for help, asking Him for counsel and solutions, because He is our One and All.

Prayer is the most beautiful and important part of our lives. The bond with God has been restored, through Jesus Christ, and everyone who prays experiences that.

We may address God and He will listen to us, because we are reconciled to Him through Jesus Christ. The debt of sin has been paid. God has forgiven our sins through the suffering and death

of His Son on the cross. We know what Christ has obtained for us and we know what God has promised us as a result. Our being allowed to pray confirms this. Through Christ, God has become our Father again. And therefore Christ has also taught us to speak to God as "Our Father in heaven" (Matthew 6:9).

In this reality of God's grace in Jesus Christ lies the deep significance of prayer. It sometimes said that trouble leaches prayer. But that is untrue. Despair often leads to the opposite; to cursing. A person in distress never turns to God of his own accord. He does this only if he trusts in God already, if he knows God through the Bible and is already one of God's children. If then some calamity comes upon him he seeks help from God. And he finds it, for God is his Father.

A father who loves his child knows exactly how that child needs his help in everything. He does, however, wish to be acknowledged. He expects his child to ask for help. The asking shows his child's love, his child's recognition of his dependence. The asking strengthens the bond of love. In the same way, God wants us to pray to Him. He expects our thanks for his grace in Christ, our praise for His love and mercy, and our request for help.

If you pray like that, God will certainly hear you. He listens to His children, He holds on to them. Never doubt that. You never will, if you believe in God. For Christ's sake He will hear and answer. Only: He does it at His time, and in His way. A wise father will not always say yes to whatever his child asks. Occasionally he has to refuse a request. A child may consider this unreasonable and unloving; but later the child will understand that father was right. The father's decision is based on love. God, our heavenly Father, is perfectly wise and holy. In responding to our prayers He does what He knows is good for us.

You can, then, only understand the deep significance if prayer is done in faith. For that, you must know God. You also have to acknowledge your deepest need; to be freed from your sin before God. These things can only be learned from the Bible.

We must return to the Bible every time. The Lord Jesus said, "Ask (pray) and it shall be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you." (Matthew 7:7)

God does not leave a praying believer out in the cold. Make sure you have contact with the Almighty; and maintain it! Then you will be saved and safe. That's His promise.

The Lord Jesus taught us to pray (Matthew 6:9-13):

*Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be your Name,
Your kingdom come
Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven
Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors
And do lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one.
For Yours is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory, forever.
Amen.*