

Does Prayer Actually Work?

Habakkuk 1:2 (NIV)

How long, Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen?

Or cry out to you, "Violence!" but you do not save?

Many years ago when a drought struck a farming community, the pastor of the church called for the local farmers and families to attend a special prayer meeting to ask the Lord to send rain. Virtually everyone in the area crowded into the church. However, only one person brought an umbrella. It was a little 5 year old girl. Of all who attended the prayer meeting she seemed to be the only one who expected an immediate answer.

Did Jesus not say, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you. Luke 17:6 (NIV) So our Lord intended us to believe and see things happen.

Elsewhere our Lord said, "Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete." John 16:24 (NIV) What an open promise for us. However, is this promise without any limits? Do we take this verse by itself and ignore other biblical teaching on the subject of prayer? I think not.

James wisely writes, "When you ask, you do not receive, because

you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures." James 4:3 (NIV) When we pray simply to make life easy for ourselves, God is not inclined to answer. Our motive for answered prayer must be higher than selfish concerns.

The wonderful prophet Habakkuk lived in an especially evil time. Injustice was everywhere. Judges in courts accepted bribes from people so they would get the verdict they wanted. Violent criminals seemed to get away with their crimes. There was no relief from the criminal activity. Habakkuk had sought the Lord and asked Him to intervene and make righteousness reign.

Yet for all his prayers, the man of God did not see the Lord act. Habakkuk did not ask for selfish reasons. He was definitely a man of faith, and what he asked for was certainly the will of the Lord for the nation. Why then did God not hear and act?

Have you ever been in a position like Habakkuk? You seek the good of the people for whom you pray. What you ask is not sinful nor is it selfish. Yet the prayer seems to go no higher than the roof of your home. Where is the Lord in these dry

seasons of the soul?

When you come to such a silent time from the Lord, keep on with your prayer. Take heaven by storm. Do not let up until there is an answer for your need or the need of those for whom you pray.

George Mueller (1805-1898) was a man who exhibited the most productive prayer life of possibly any Christian of any generation in the history of the church. Yet, for all of the miraculous results of his prayer life, there was something unresolved that he had prayed for over many years. When asked about it he simply said that he did not intend to cease praying until the Lord gave him the answer.

Can you persist in prayer my friend? Will you keep asking your Father in heaven until the desired matter is resolved? Go back again to the prayer room of your home and use the promises of Scripture to plead with the Lord. He shall meet you and give you the desires of your heart when you pray without ceasing.

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