



“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.” (Psalm 119:105)

Two fundamentals of living the Christian life are reading the Bible and praying. So firstly, I thank Dave van Wyk for a printed version of a talk that he gave in the chapel at Falcon College towards the end of last term. I am putting this Saltshaker together in something of a hurry so a single long article is much appreciated. And it is, of course, well worth reading. He, as you will see, speaks about prayer. I will tackle Bible reading.

Currently I am reading a novel. I have read over 200 pages (out of about 320) and I still don't know that I understand what it is all about. It is very disconcerting and not something I have often experienced.

It may all tie up beautifully when I get to the end but so far I am baffled and on a couple of occasions, I have wondered why I bother continuing. All this is in stark contrast to the Bible. Oh, I am not going to deny that there are parts of the Bible that are tricky but the truth is that it is not so much that we don't understand them as that we don't want to apply them and wish they weren't included. Indeed, someone (Mark Twain?) is once supposed to have said, “It isn't the parts of the Bible that I don't understand which worry me; it's the parts that I do” and there is a lot of sense in that.

David tells us that God's word is a light for our lives, showing us the way. Paul writes to Timothy that *Scripture is useful for teaching, rebuking,*

correcting and training in righteousness so that the man [and woman!] of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 4:16,17). And it is. We can demur and debate but at the end of the day, it is clear 99% of the time exactly what God requires of us. Of course there is more to the Bible than just giving us guidelines and instructions but let us read the Bible with confidence, secure that it will light up our life.

Does God hear me? Does he really answer my prayers?

Every person of faith calls on the name of the Lord for every kind of reason because He expressed His desire to answer the prayers of His people. The Lord said He would answer, and He does! “When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honour him.” (Psalm 91:15) But is there more to getting answers to prayer than just approaching God?

Paul wrote, “...in everything, by prayer and supplication with gratitude, make your requests known to God.” (Phil. 4:6) Ephesians 6:18 says to pray “with all kinds of prayer”. 1 Thessalonians 5:16 says to “pray without ceasing”. A lifestyle of prayer is grown from a spiritual awareness of His presence with you and you bring your thoughts and the moments of your life to Him throughout your day as you would to a close friend.

But one of the hardest things about getting answers to prayer is that **you won't always get the answers you want, or the answers don't come in the manner in which you were hoping** and then you struggle in your faith and wonder if God really does answer prayer, or you wonder if He heard you, or cares or even if He said “no”.

When you pray according to His will, He will answer according to His will that He led you to pray. That means your role in getting answers to prayer is to pray **according to His will.** When Jesus spoke

the words of the Lord's Prayer, it was because His disciples said, "Lord, teach us how to pray."

Does getting answers to prayer mean overcoming reluctance in God? No! God hears and answers prayer, that is a promise! However, the only Scriptural expectation when it comes to getting answers to prayer is that God will answer, but not with an expectation of how.

Have you ever thought that, perhaps, God's answer to the situation you're praying about might be... **you**?

Getting Answers to Prayer Sometimes Means Looking Within

When you pray, sometimes the answers from God are a clear "yes", or "no" or "not yet", but mostly your answers will be found in the Word of God. Psalm 138:2 says the Lord honours His Word above His name. Getting answers to the prayers you've brought to the Lord means **aligning your prayers with the Word He has spoken**, not expecting Him to agree to the words you speak.

1 John 5:14-15 says, "This is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. So if we know that He hears whatever we ask, we know that we have whatever we asked of Him."

Getting answers to prayer

God hears and answers prayer! God **sees**, (Gen. 16:13) and He **knows** (Luke 12:7) and He **understands**. (Heb. 4:15-16) Don't let the enemy make you doubt Him! He has your answer, but sometimes, in the most honest way to see things, **the answers God has for you may be right in front of you – a more practical answer than a "supernatural" one**. Sometimes what the **miracle** God wants to do is **in you, first**.

As you think about your life and your situations, you need the Lord's perspective on it all so you must **fix your eyes on Jesus** and let Him

show you what you can't see. Psalm 40:1-3 says, "I waited patiently for the Lord, and He turned to me, and heard my cry. He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet on a rock, and established my steps. He has put a new song in my mouth, even praise to our God; many will see it, and fear, and will trust in the Lord."

Psalm 18:6 and 16 say, "In my distress I called on the Lord, and cried for help to my God; He heard my voice from His temple, and my cry for help came before Him to His ears...He sent from above, He took me; He drew me out of many waters."

It's easy to ask God to make things happen, or to make them go away according to your own will or desires, but it's hard to ask the Lord to show you what He sees, to tell you what He wants to do, to learn His plans for a situation, to show you how you can be part of the solution, or to give you His perspective on the challenges, experiences, trials and struggles you're facing.

Getting Answers to Prayer is a Spiritual Partnership

Just like any other relationship, your relationship with the Lord must be personal, committed, nurtured daily and must be built upon the most raw, honest version of who you are - and a willingness to let Him make adjustments as needed. That is one of the most important principles to getting answers to prayer!

If you're not getting answers to prayer, one real possibility may be that **you've been expecting something God may not plan to give.** If you're not first offering your life to Him, willing to be an active part of your own miracle, you might miss the answer! A lifestyle of worship and praise will keep you strong as you wait on the Lord for your answer.

The foundation of answered prayer is partnering with God's will, not asking Him to partner with yours.

Getting answers to prayer isn't overcoming reluctance in God. He wants to answer your prayer, He promised He would - and maybe He

already has! Ask the Holy Spirit to show you the answer, even if you have it within yourself. Don't seek "miracles", seek Him in His Word as you pray and His answer will be on time, a perfect fit and a new testimony of His power.

You are living witness to the power, goodness, faithfulness, mercy and love of God. That means you are the answer to the prayer that Jesus prayed in Matthew 6:10 when He said, "Your kingdom come; Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven..." He has sent you as the answer to someone else's prayer too!

Let us pray:

Dear Lord, we ask for Your guidance. Give us the power of Your grace so that we may hear Your divine instructions. Remove any barriers that keep us from drawing near to You. Open our hearts and clear our vision so that we may follow Your path. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Dave van Wyk

Knee Polishing

In the light of the articles in this month's Saltshaker and also bearing in mind the following quotation, I ask you to make time, hopefully daily, to read through the Bible and to pray to God about what you read and how it applies to your life. If we are all able to do that, we might be surprised by what strength we gain as we go about our daily lives.

Sometimes I think we're too quick to outsource assistance to alcohol, advice from friends, or self-help books. Why are we so reluctant to beg for God's help when we know He's the only one who can truly rescue us?

Jennifer Benson Schuldt

UNANSWERED PRAYER

The preacher's 5 year-old daughter noticed that her father always paused and bowed his head for a moment before starting his sermon. One day, she asked him why. "Well, Honey," he began, proud that his daughter was so observant of his messages. "I'm asking the Lord to help me preach a good sermon."

"How come He doesn't answer it?" she asked.

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