



## God's Resources for Life and Healing

### Part 4A: Prayer

In our study of the resources that God provides to enable us to live the extraordinary life that He desires for us (John 10:10), we will look next at the privilege we have to talk directly to God in prayer. God has always desired to interact with His children. He actually did so in person in the Garden of Eden. When sin spoiled that, man became limited to speaking to God only through prayer. In Old Testament times the connection to God was somewhat more distant and depended on the priests having made atonement for one's sins through a sacrificial system. Since Jesus came to earth, however, and permanently atoned for man's sins, anyone who has personally asked by faith for this atonement to cover his own sins is able to have direct access to God at any time (Heb. 4:14-16; 10:10-22).

While God always hears our prayers (1 Peter 3:12), the way that He responds to our requests depends on various factors. John 14:13 gives two of the most significant insights to making our prayers most effective. Here Jesus told His disciples that He would do anything that they asked 1) *in His name* 2) *so that He might bring glory to the Father*. We will examine these criteria in our next issues.

Praying "in Jesus' name" is never something that should be taken lightly. Fulfilling this directive means much more than tacking His name ritualistically onto the end of our prayers. God's solemn command not to misuse His name (Ex. 20:7) still bears relevance in our lives today and must certainly apply to how we use it in prayer.

In biblical times one's name represented his complete identity or overall character, somewhat similar to the authority of one's signature today. Therefore, we should not expect that we can live in a manner that is totally contrary to the character of Christ and yet be able to pray effectively "in His name." This is a dreadful misuse of His name and opens us to receive the discipline of the Lord rather than the answers we seek. We can only truly pray in Jesus' name when our hearts are sincerely in line with His.

The model prayer which Jesus taught His disciples begins with such an expression of personal alignment with the will of God, both in heaven and on earth. It also demonstrates the respect and honor with which we should come before God and the purity of heart that is required (Ps. 24:3-4), having confessed our sins and examined our hearts for any lack of forgiveness towards anyone who has wronged us (Mt. 6:9-13). Only then can our hearts be truly in line with His so that we can effectively use His name in our prayers to the Father.

Aligning ourselves in this manner with the character, motivations, and desires of Jesus encompasses many of the other requirements given in Scripture for effective prayer as well. These include the need to walk in righteousness with our sins confessed (James 5:16), to keep His commandments, and to do what is pleasing in His sight (1 John. 3:21-22). Furthermore, we can only do this as we allow God's Word to be a living reality in our daily lives, another requirement for effective prayer, given in John 15:7.

Saturating ourselves with the Word of God will also enable us to understand the will of God so that we can bring our requests in line with it (Eph. 5:17; 1 John 5:14-15). It will also strengthen our faith to believe that He will truly answer such requests when we bring them to Him (James 1:6-8; Heb. 10:22; 11:6). When we pray in this manner, truly in line with all that the name of Jesus represents, He delights to give us the desires of our hearts (Ps. 37:4; Mat. 7:7-11).