



# SERMON NOTES

From In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley

## DOES PRAYER INFLUENCE GOD?

**KEY PASSAGE:** Matthew 7:7-11 | **SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE:** Exodus 32:9-14 | 2 Chronicles 7:14 | Psalm 40:1-3  
Isaiah 57:15 | Matthew 6:8; 9:37-38 | Luke 6:28; 18:1; 22:40 | John 14:14; 15:7 | Ephesians 1:18-19  
Philippians 3:10; 4:19 | Colossians 4:3-4 | James 4:2; 5:14-15 | 1 John 5:14-15

### ► SUMMARY

**One of the most powerful assets and practical gifts the Lord has given Christians is the privilege of prayer, but it's often neglected because we're uncertain whether it influences God or not.**

Instead of approaching the Lord with confidence that He'll hear and answer, we'll have a "hope so" kind of prayer life.

Yet in Matthew 7:7-11, Jesus tells us to "ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." Then He assures us that the heavenly Father loves and cares for us. Even human fathers give good gifts to their children, so how much more will our Father in heaven give what is good to us when we ask?

### ► SERMON POINTS

With this in mind, let's consider several aspects of prayer that answer the question, "Why does God bid us to pray?"

#### Reasons to Pray

**1. Prayer honors God.** "For this is what the high and exalted One who lives forever, whose name is Holy, says: 'I dwell in a high and holy place, and also with the contrite and lowly of spirit in order to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite'" (Isa. 57:15). When we humble ourselves in prayer before the sovereign ruler of heaven and

earth, we honor Him by acknowledging that He controls everything and is the source for all our needs.

- 2. Prayer is a primary means for spiritual growth.** As we read God's Word, pray in response, and obey what He says, He'll enlighten our understanding so we can grow in knowledge of Him and intimacy with Him. But prayerlessness is a road to spiritual defeat because we'll lack God's power in our Christian walk.
- 3. Prayer is a way to participate in God's work.** A prayer offered with a pure heart in accordance with His will is powerful. It's like a triangle. Our intercessions go up to the Father in heaven, who then responds by impacting the lives of the recipients to achieve His purposes. That person is blessed, and God is glorified in the process.
- 4. Prayer is the means by which our needs are met.** God knows what we need before we even ask (Matt. 6:8). Yet requesting His provision honors Him by acknowledging that we're totally dependent upon Him to meet our needs.

#### Exhortations to Pray

- **Luke 6:28** "Pray for those who are abusive to you."
- **Luke 22:40** "Pray that you do not come into temptation."
- **Matthew 9:37-38** "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore, plead with the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest."
- **Ephesians 1:18-19** "Pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the boundless

greatness of His power toward us who believe.”

- **Colossians 4:3-4** Pray “that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; that I may make it clear in the way that I ought to proclaim it.”
- **James 5:14-15** “Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.”

## Promises of Prayer

- **John 14:14** “If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.” This doesn’t mean we can get everything we want from God if we tack on the phrase, “In Jesus’ name.” To pray in His name means we place ourselves under His authority and ask our petitions in submission to His will.
- **John 15:7** “If you remain in Me, and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.” This promise is conditioned on abiding in Christ and having His words remaining uppermost in our lives.
- **1 John 5:14-15** “This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.”

## Answers to Prayer

God doesn’t always answer our requests immediately, and we may not see the results of our prayers during our lifetimes, but He is always faithful. So be patient.

- **Psalm 40:1-3** “I waited patiently for the LORD; and He reached down to me and heard my cry. He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the mud; and He set my feet on a rock, making my footsteps firm. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God; many will see and fear and will trust in the LORD.”

## Questions Regarding Prayer

- 1. Since God already knows my needs, why do I have to ask?** We don’t inform the Lord with our petitions, but by asking Him to provide, we’re demonstrating complete dependence on Him as our only source for help.
- 2. If the Lord has already predetermined what He’s going to do in a situation, why should I pray about it?**
  - a. Although God knows His desired outcome, we don’t. For example, we don’t know whether He’ll heal a sick friend, but we should continue to intercede until His will becomes clear.
  - b. Our prayers may be the means the Lord uses to bring about His predetermined plan.
- 3. Does the success of God’s eternal decrees depend on our prayers?** No. An eternal decree is a course of action that the Lord determined before creation. These are things He will do no matter what. Yet we are expected to be faithful in prayer. If we aren’t, our lives will be fruitless and powerless.
- 4. Do our prayers change God’s mind?** No. There are passages like Exodus 32:9-14 that say the Lord changed His mind after Moses interceded for Israel. But actually, God moved Moses to plead for mercy because of His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, which would be fulfilled in Israel. God’s character, promises, and purposes can never change.

### ► RESPONSE

- How would you describe the God you pray to? Does your concept of Him align with His revelation of Himself in the Scriptures?
- Do you consider prayer a serious business, or is it something you take lightly? How would you characterize your prayer life?
- What keeps you from being faithful in prayer? What are you forfeiting when you don’t pray?

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