Contemporary Comments

"The Promise of Prayer" | March 3, 2012 | Order Info

Text: Colossians 4:2; Romans 12:12; Matthew 26:34-44; Hebrews 11:6; James 4:2; John 14:15; 1 Thessalonians 4:3.

Do you believe in the power of prayer? Some people don’t. A few scientific studies have concluded that intercessory prayer just doesn’t work. For example, a 2005 study at Duke University showed that patients undergoing high-risk heart procedures did not benefit from the prayers of distant family and friends. In 2006, the largest study on intercessory prayer indicated that 1,902 heart bypass surgery patients did not benefit from prayer.¹

But what about the other studies? The ones that prove prayer does matter? A 1988 study of hospital patients with heart disease who had prayers said for them needed less antibiotic therapy than patients with a similar medical condition, but who did not receive prayer. A study done in a Missouri intensive care unit in 1999 showed that those who had prayer actually recovered faster than those who did not. Nearly 1,000 patients participated in this study. Interestingly, neither the patients nor the doctors knew which patients had prayers said for them. And in 2001, the Journal of Reproductive Medicine reported that women who had people praying for them became pregnant twice as often as those who did not have prayers said on their behalf.²

But is prayer a science? Do human study results matter? Regardless of what scientific studies show, people are still praying. According to The Teal Trust ministry, Christians are making prayer a part of their lives. A survey of over 6,000 Christians in different countries produced these figures:

- 64% of respondents claim to pray alone each day
- 86% believe they have experienced prayer being answered
- 35% of respondents claim to spend an hour or more each week in private prayer
- 75% of respondents would like to spend more time in prayer
- 39% pray regularly with other people³

Scriptures in this week’s lesson show the benefits of prayer:

- It helps us when we’re tempted - Matthew 26:41
- It helps us persevere – Luke 18:1
- It brings unity – 1 Timothy 2:8
- It keeps us alert for end-time events – 1 Peter 4:7

The lesson also makes it clear that we can’t pray haphazardly. We can’t use God like a vending machine, ordering what we want. We have a responsibility in our communication with God. For example, when we pray, we need to have faith to believe that God will not only hear, but will answer—even if that answer is a no. Also, when we pray, we should make sure that we’re living right, and doing everything we can to cooperate with God.

So many of our prayers are “asking” prayers. We want this and that from God. But let’s not forget that prayer can be simply being in God’s presence. It can be visiting with God. As David said in this week’s memory text, “Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice (Psalm 55:17). All day long, we can have the privilege of communicating with Jesus!

~ nc

For inspiration: You Tube

1. Health MSN
2. Nat
3. Teal

How to Order Sharing Scripture

1. Order this week’s Sharing Scripture study guide for $1.49, click here.
2. Order the entire electronic 1st Quarter Sharing Scripture for $8.75, click here.