



Obeying What We Learn in Prayer

Chapter 10

Lesson 10

What is the relationship between prayer and obedience? In my estimation this is one of the most significant chapters in our book study.

1. Reflect on 1 John 3:21-24. What are the qualifications for “whatever we ask we receive”? According to this passage, who abides (*lives*) in Christ and is the benefactor of such a promise? How is God challenging you in your prayer life?

In his article, *The Prayer-Obedience Relationship*, R. Bingham Hunter writes:

“And if you wish—as we all do—to become personally ‘powerful and effective’ in prayer, to more frequently experience the joy of having our Lord give you the “desires of your heart,” then *you must become committed to reading, memorizing, meditating on, and obeying the written will of God in the Bible*. There are no short cuts, no seminars, no amazing prayer-power techniques, nor any ‘secrets’ which bypass this reality. The path to spiritual maturity—to answered prayer—is the way of obedience.

The relationship between prayer and obedience draws at least two uncomfortable conclusions: (1) *We are unlikely to pray better than our commitment to obey*. There is no shortcut to effective prayer that bypasses basic Christian discipleship. (2) *Those who want to be more effective in prayer must think very hard about the implications of Luke 6:46: ‘Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?’* Unless we respond to this verse *before* we pray, we may well receive it as the answer to our petitions.

The underlying spiritual principle is found in John 9:31: *‘We know that God does not hear sinners [because they neither respect, understand, nor pray according to His will]; but if anyone is God-fearing, and does His will [who has been trained through their reverent obedience to understand God’s will and pray according to it]; He hears him’* (NASB). The same truth is found in Romans 12:1-2: pleasing God in how we live is directly linked to the Spirit’s renewal of our minds, which, in turn, is essential to accurate perception of God’s will.

Make a commitment to live more like Jesus, and God will teach you to pray more like Jesus. Our Savior said, ‘Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me’ (John 11:41-42). He had such effectiveness in prayer because in His humanity, *He was totally committed to obedience: ‘My food is to do the will of him who sent me’* (John 4:34; cf. Hebrews 10:7), and ‘I seek not my own will but the will of him

who sent me' (John 5:30). Through the prayer-obedience relationship, the Spirit of Christ will increase your understanding of the mind of Christ: He will help you learn to pray more frequently as Jesus always did: according to the will of our Father who is in Heaven."

2. Considering the reading above, have you linked prayer and the Scriptures or, stated in another way, prayer and knowing God's will? Is it possible to pray according to God's will without God's word renewing your mind by the power of the Holy Spirit? Consider Romans 12:1-2. How does James 1:21 contribute to your understanding of this process?

Read chapter 10 in *Experiencing Prayer with Jesus*, and then consider the following question.

3. The authors state, "It was precisely in His afflictions that Jesus learned obedience in the sense of personally and practically taking hold of every aspect of obedience in every situation that awaited Him." How is that process taking place in your own life?

4. What has helped you to grow in obedience—to continue learning obedience, as Christ did?

5. What can you learn from the example of Jesus about dependence on the Holy Spirit—and about your need for constant "intervention" and empowerment from the Spirit?

Beyond the Book:

The prayer-obedience relationship describes a way of life, not a system one "works" to get things from God. Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?