

# *Spiritual Considerations...*

*Selected articles designed to assist in our Bible study and Christian walk.*



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*Dave Phillips, editor*

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## Answered Prayers

**Dave Phillips, Germantown**

How does God answer prayer? Mortals continually grapple with this timeless issue. We must find an appropriate response. We cannot let the question remain unanswered. Does God answer our prayers? If so, how?

Interestingly the Bible gives numerous instances of answered prayers. These answers sometimes are positive responses, such as the case of Jabez in 1 Chron. 4:10. Jabez, brought into the world in a time of pain by his mother, shines as a bright light among his brothers. This was, perhaps, because he was a man of prayer. God answered his prayer and granted his desires.

Sometimes the answers are given in different forms than they were requested. David, a man after God's own heart, desired to build a temple to God. Because he was a man of blood, God chose to have his son, Solomon, build the temple. David's numerous prayers are recorded in the Psalms where he asks for a deeper relationship with God. He receives this deep relationship, but not always by receiving an affirmative answer to specific requests.

Who can forget Paul's prayer in 2 Cor. 12 to be relieved of the 'thorn in the flesh.' Paul's response was that "power is perfected in weakness." This is hardly what Paul initially desired, but apparently what he learned was best. We remember that he said he had learned to be content in whatever circumstance he found himself. So, even though Paul had prayed about a specific matter, prayed repeatedly about the matter, and apparently maintained a "blessable spirit" (1 Pet. 3:7) so that his prayers would be heard, he did not receive the answer he sought.

So it is with us. We pray and we wait. We don't see an immediate response to our request. Does this mean that God is not answering our prayers? No. It means that God is hearing us, working in and around us to bring about what is best for us and His cause.

How does God answer prayer? According to His Sovereign power in perfect wisdom, perfect love, perfect understanding and perfect timing. That in itself is an answer to prayer.

## Words of an Elder

**Bill Davis, Smyrna**

*(This article appeared in the "Messenger," a bulletin (March, 99) of the Millington church of Christ. I thought the message was worthy of serious consideration. I do not personally know the author, though the article states that he is an elder at the Smyrna church of Christ in Smyrna, Tennessee. I understood this article as a plea for more personal and careful study of the Bible - DP)*

As I lay down my pen for awhile, I want to take this opportunity to share some things with you that give me cause for deep concern. I believe, as a congregation of God's people, we must do more in-depth Bible study. We must take the time it takes for us to develop *our* faith. God is going to hold us personally accountable for *our* understanding of, obedience to, and love for His Word. It is all right to read what others say about the Scriptures, and we should accept things that are said when we document them for *our* personal study.

Some time ago a person made a statement to a friend of mine about something I had written. He said, "Bill is just wrong about the passage of Scripture," and he might be right because I don't claim infallibility. But his next statement illustrates my concerns. He said, "Brother (*name deleted, DP*) told us what that meant several years ago." He didn't say Bill is wrong and I know he is wrong because I have spent a great deal of time in personal study, and here is what is wrong with his position. Let me take my Bible and show you. No!! He was letting Brother (*same man, DP*) do his

thinking for him! Therein lies the danger in the church. It is all right to listen to Brother (*same man, DP*). He is certainly a Greek scholar. It is all right to listen to anyone, whether he is a brother or not. The church of Christ scholars are not the only ones who possess wisdom and knowledge. Regardless of who the person is, we must critically evaluate what they say and teach in view of Scripture.

We must be willing to sit down together and study issues over which we disagree, and we must realize that good and honest people can study an issue, come to different conclusions, and still be friends. There is no reason to brand people as "unfaithful members," "change agents," or "false teachers" just because they have come to a different conclusion based upon their honest and sincere study. When we sit down together to study an issue, it should be to learn as much as we can from the other person instead of trying to prove our particular point of view. Not much can be learned with a closed mind or Bible.

### **True Value**

#### **Excerpt from *Some Things Are Too Good Not To Be True***

**James W. Moore (Dimensions Press, 1994), 129**

A friend shared with me a beautiful legend about a king who decided to set aside a special day to honor his greatest subject. When the big day arrived, there was a large gathering in the palace courtyard. Four finalists were brought forward, and from these four, the king would select the winner.

The first person presented was a wealthy philanthropist. The king was told that this man was highly deserving of the honor because of his humanitarian efforts. He had given much of his wealth to the poor.

The second person was a celebrated physician. The king was told that this doctor was highly deserving of the honor because he had rendered faithful and dedicated service to the sick for many years.

The third person was a distinguished judge. The king was told that the judge was worthy because he was noted for his wisdom, his fairness, and his brilliant decisions.

The fourth person presented was an elderly woman. Everyone was quite surprised to see her there, because her manner was quite humble, as was her dress. She hardly looked the part of someone who would be honored as the greatest subject in the kingdom. What chance could she possibly have, when compared to the other three, who had accomplished so much? Even so, there was something about her -- the look of love in her face, the understanding in her eyes, her quiet confidence.

The king was intrigued, to say the least, and some-what puzzled by her presence. When he asked who she was, the answer came: "You see the philanthropist, the doctor, and the judge? Well, she was their teacher!"

That woman had no wealth, no fortune, and no title, but she had unselfishly given her life to produce great people. There is nothing more powerful or more Christlike than sacrificial love.

*The king could not see the value in the humble lady. Often we miss the value of those around. I think it would surprise us to know how often we miss the presence of Christ just as Cleopas and his brother missed the significance of the stranger on the road to Emmaus.*

### **It Pays to Double Check**

An Illinois man left the snow-filled streets of Chicago for a vacation in Florida. His wife was on a business trip and was planning to meet him there the next day. When he reached his hotel in Florida, he decided to send his wife a quick e-mail. Unable to find the scrap of paper on which he had written her e-mail address, he did his best to type it in from memory. Unfortunately, he missed one letter and his note was directed instead to an elderly preacher's wife whose husband had passed away only the day before. When the grieving widow checked her e-mail, she took one look at the monitor, let out a piercing scream, and fell to the floor in a dead faint. At the sound, her family rushed into the room and saw this note on the screen:

DEAREST WIFE: JUST GOT CHECKED IN. EVERYTHING PREPARED FOR YOUR ARRIVAL TOMORROW.

P.S. SURE IS HOT DOWN HERE.