

**Is God
REAL
To You?**

"Why God Is Not Real to Most People"
Original text by Herbert W. Armstrong (1892-1986)
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"God Still Answers Prayer Today!" and
"The Answer to Unanswered Prayer"
Original text by Roderick C. Meredith
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I WONDER if you are like the person who said to me: "I believe in God, but it seems like God is so far off—so unreal!"

Why is it that so many people feel this way? Why does God seem so remote from their day-to-day lives?

The answer is bound up in two factors: the unreality of God to the average person, and the actual source of one's religion.

Let's understand this mystery!

What Is the Source of Your Religion?

What is religion, anyway?

Religion is the obedience, service, or adoration rendered to the object of one's worship—a system of faith and devotion to a superior authority—the profession, practice or observance of whatever belief and practice is required by that superior authority.

The very source of your religion, then, is that superior authority. Whatever that authority that to you has appeared superior—you received your religion from it, and you profess whatever belief, and observe whatever practice it requires!

The question, then, now becomes: "What is that superior authority?"

Is that source of your religious belief and practice a Supreme, All-Powerful Personal God?—a God who created all matter, force and energy—who created everything that exists?

The incredible answer, in nearly all cases, believe it or not—is no!

Many of the world's organized and recognized religions do not believe in any One Supreme, Personal, All-Powerful God!

Most of the many sectarian divisions of the professing *Christian* religion do claim to believe that there is one Supreme, All-Powerful Personal God—but, in reality, is such a Personal God the real source of their religious belief and practice? The astonishing answer is no!

Most intelligent people believe there had to be some original first cause—a first cause of all that we see and know around us—of the

Why God Is Not Real to Most People

Millions who claim to believe in God would be shocked if they knew the actual source of their belief and practice.

earth, the sun, the moon, the stars, the weather—of animal life and plant life—of human life. But is that first cause an actual personal Being possessing mind, intelligence, purpose—and the powers to bring into existence the things that we see around us—and the power to guide, direct and control the earth and the entire universe?

Why God Seems Unreal

If such a Supreme, Living, All-Intelligent, All-Powerful Personal Being does exist, then why is it that this God seems so unreal to people—so far off as to seem nonexistent? Why?

Consider this:

The hour that you were born, you knew nothing about any one Supreme Personal God. You knew nothing! Whatever concept you have about God has come into your mind *since* the day of your birth. How did knowledge begin coming into your mind? There are only five channels through which any knowledge can come, naturally, into the human mind—that which you see, hear, taste, smell, or feel—the five physical senses.

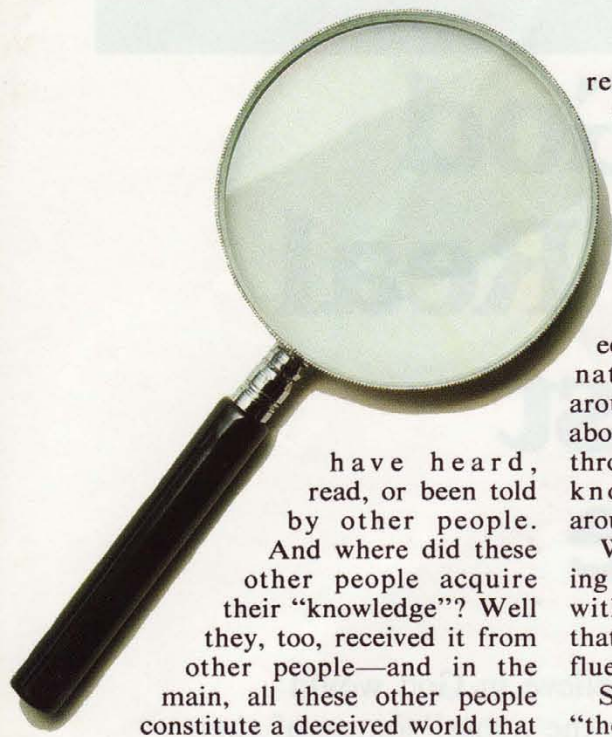
There exist three dimensions. But the natural mind of a mortal human person is aware of only two.

Babies grow into little children—and they grow toward adulthood with an awareness only of the *within*, and the *around*. You grew toward adulthood with no real knowledge of the *above*—for the above is spiritual—it cannot be seen—you cannot hear, taste, smell, or feel spiritual things, beings, or truths.

And so, if there be any one Supreme Spiritual Being who is God, you couldn't see Him—you couldn't hear Him—you had no actual personal contact of any kind with Him—you could know absolutely nothing of God through any of these natural channels by which you receive knowledge.

Well, then. There are many millions of professing Christians who say they believe in such a God—and who profess to know more or less about Him. How did this happen?

The answer is that they know what they have read or been told by those around them—what they have received from other people. What most people know about God—or think they know—often has not come from the above—not from God Himself directly, in any personal contact—but from the around—purely from what they



religious practices have come from this source.

Two-Dimensional Minds

So now stop and think! The natural human mind is conscious actively of only two of the three dimensions—the within and the around. Knowledge comes from without—and, naturally, is confined to the around, since knowledge of the above is not naturally transmitted through any of the five senses. So knowledge comes from the around—from people and things.

Within is the process of reasoning from that knowledge. And also within, guiding and influencing that reasoning, is the invisible influence of Satan the devil.

Satan is revealed in the Bible as “the god of this world” (II Cor. 4:4), who has deceived the whole world—all nations (Rev. 12:9). He is revealed as “*the prince of the power of the air*, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2).

He works in people by broadcasting. Satan actually goes on the air. The spirit that is in every human (Job 32:8; I Cor. 2:9, 10) is in tune with Satan’s wavelength. Satan does *not* broadcast in words or in any language; he does *not* broadcast in sounds. He broadcasts in attitudes, impulses, moods. He broadcasts in attitudes of selfishness, criticism, envy, unhappiness, etc. These, in the human mind, we have called *human nature*.

So what has been termed “human nature” is nothing more than Satan the devil’s influence, which expresses itself in many ways: covetousness, greed, selfishness, jealousy, envy, resentment, hatred.

But what we have called “human nature” is also suffering from a sense of inferiority, and it desires desperately to be relieved of this painful feeling. This inferiority manifests itself in a desire to belong to a group, club, society, church, faction, or a nation. In order to avoid feeling inferior, the *self* instinctively desires to be accepted by other people. This leads to a spirit of rivalry, party spirit, and consequently loyalty to the particular party, club, faction, church, group, or nation to which

one belongs. One would fear to be disloyal, lest the others in this factional group consider him as a traitor, and therefore as evil—and he feels inferior, which is a painful feeling.

This particular element in the human mind is often called the “sheep instinct.”

People just naturally follow—go along with—other people. Consequently they fear other people. That is, they fear to disagree—they fear to act or perform or believe contrary to the other people of whatever society they feel affiliated with.

If you can get a fad or a style or a custom started in any society, or nation, or group to which people adhere, all the people attached to it will usually follow like blind, dumb sheep.

Why are so many teenagers—both boys and girls—involved with drugs, tobacco, alcohol and sex today? Two compelling reasons are the vanity of feeling more adult—and the sheep instinct. That is, because others they associate with—and wish to be accepted by—do it, they are afraid they will not be well thought of if they don’t. It is a practice they follow in order to conform to whatever code or belief is laid down by the society in which they travel.

The Unrealized Source

This society, then, the pattern or system which is of human origin, is the actual source of nearly all of the beliefs and the practices of nearly all the people on earth today—and that includes religious beliefs and practices.

People believe what they do, usually, because the society with which they are connected believes that way. They practice whatever customs they follow because the people with whom they feel connected dictate these practices.

Most people the world over have accepted the religion of those people with whom they were most closely connected from infancy to adulthood—their parents. And by the time they grow up, they find themselves surrounded by a larger group than their immediate family—a religious group or church or society or nation—all of which ac-

have heard, read, or been told by other people. And where did these other people acquire their “knowledge”? Well they, too, received it from other people—and in the main, all these other people constitute a deceived world that has no direct knowledge of or contact with any one supreme spirit being, who is God!

Of course, although most people neglect Bible reading, some have read *about* God in the Bible—but their concept of God has been so firmly implanted into their minds by other people during childhood, before they started reading the Bible, that they continue picturing Him in the same way.

Well, no wonder, then, that most people who profess to believe in such a God say that God seems unreal to them. They are like the patriarch Job. He thought he knew all about God. But after God actually revealed Himself, and spoke directly and in person to Job—after this personal contact had been established—Job said to God: “I have *heard* of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye *seeth thee*!” (Job 42:5.) Yes, now, God had become real. Job’s source of knowledge previously had been from the around—he had heard about God by the hearing of the ear—from other people. God wasn’t real to him. But once that direct personal contact was established, God became real.

There is a way by which you can establish actual direct personal contact with God, so that He will become absolutely real.

But what is the source of the religions of this world? Beliefs and

cept the same religious beliefs, and follow the same religious practices. And, if ever such a person is in any manner tempted to question these beliefs and practices, the fear of what all the others with whom he is attached might think and say dissuades him—usually!

Yes, it is human to fear the society to which we have become attached in the way that we should fear the Creator God! But this immediate society around us is near—it is real—we see and hear these people—we want to be accepted by them—and God seems so far away—so unreal!

It ought to begin to dawn on our minds that the actual source of the religious beliefs and practices of nearly all individuals is—society—other people—and this society of other people is what the Bible calls this world!

How Religions Originated

A few times, in the history of this world, in one nation or another, a person of higher-than-average intellect has dared to think for himself—to think and to reason within himself independent of, and contrary to the society around him. As he has meditated upon some of the deeper things of life, he has dared to come to conclusions different from those of the accepted religion of his people. Such a person has been confined, in this reasoning, to whatever factual knowledge he has gained from without—and he has been confined to the around—to this material world of people, plant and animal life, and things. He has been unable to see, or to hear, or in any way to know about spiritual things.

And since the real principles of life—the very purpose of life, the way to peace, to happiness, to joy; the meaning of life, of death, or whether there is life after death, and of its nature—since all these fundamental principles of life are not to be seen, or heard, or knowledge of them transmitted through the five senses; and since this basic knowledge can come only from above, from the Creator Himself; and since these leaders were utterly cut off from this true source of knowledge about life, then their reasonings and philosophic and

religious conclusions have been of necessity in error.

Yet they have seemed plausible. In nearly every case these individuals who have founded some new religion have found very few sympathizers at first, or even during their lifetimes. Only a few have ever been willing to break away from the established ideas and customs of their immediate society. All others have avoided them or persecuted them. But in some cases their few followers themselves became leaders, and gradually, very slowly at first, new converts were added, until in time these new ideas became an established religion with many followers—often numbering many millions.

That is why there are different religions in different countries—that is how it all came about.

The Source of This World's "Christianity"

But—marvel of marvels—the actual source of what is commonly accepted as "Christianity" today is altogether different from what professing Christians call the heathen religions. Yet almost no one knows what it is.

It is a new thing in the earth; and it originated, not from the philosophies of a human mind apart from the truth of God and of Christ, but in actually seizing onto the true religion of Christ and *counterfeiting* it in order to exalt and deify a human being.

The Prophet Daniel foretold it. In the longest prophecy in the Bible (Dan. 10, 11, and 12), it is recorded: "And the king shall do according to his will [not God's]; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things *against* the God of gods [the true God] . . . Neither shall he regard the gods of his fathers [heathen gods] . . . and a god whom his fathers [pagans] knew not shall he honour . . ." (Dan. 11:36-38).

Differing totally from all previous pagan religions, the true Chris-

tianity was counterfeited, with a former pagan belief or practice substituted for almost everything vital in the true belief and practice which came from God, and yet seizing on the name of Christ, and the name of God, and labeling this religion "Christianity." Vehemently it *professed* to abolish idolatry, by substituting the names of God and of Christ for pagan gods, while substituting pagan beliefs and practices for those of Jesus Christ!

And all the world is deceived!

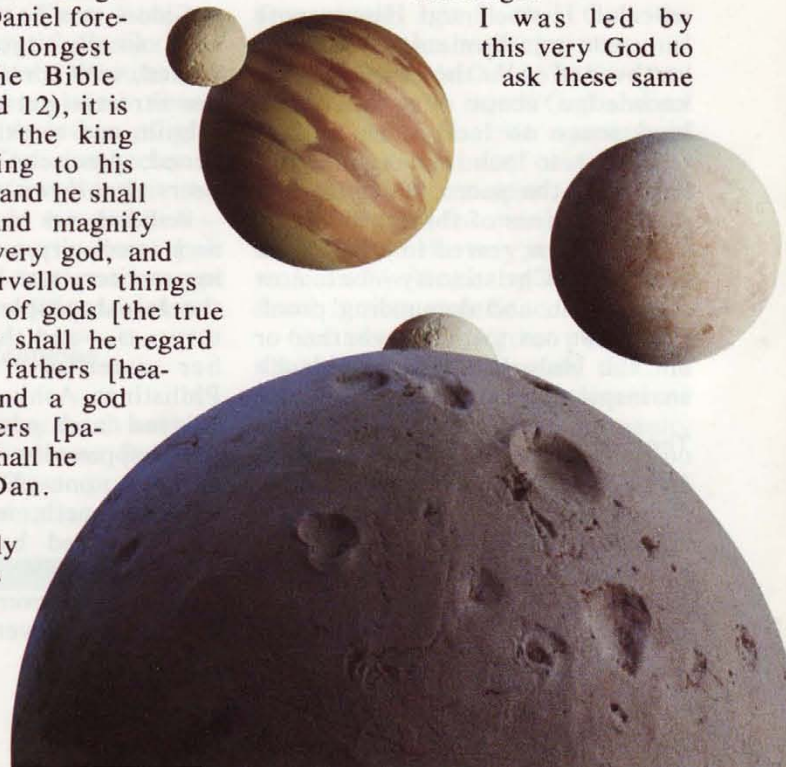
Does God EXIST?

But—if there is a true first cause—a Supreme Personal Being who had wisdom and power to actually create this earth and life upon it—I say that if there be such an intelligent Supreme Personal God, it is not reasonable that He should have failed to make Himself known to mankind—and to communicate to mankind the knowledge of the truth, the knowledge of the purpose of life, the spiritual laws that govern life and all relationships—and of the hereafter!

Is there such a God? Does that God exist?

Did He ever communicate such a revelation of essential knowledge to mankind?—and if so, I ask you, why is the world today groping so helplessly in the darkness of confusion—with actually hundreds of different and conflicting religious teachings?

I was led by this very God to ask these same



questions—and to seek their rational and absolute proof, one way or the other.

The PROOF

Since I could not see this Supreme God, I turned to what could be seen, or heard—measured and examined and absolutely proved.

Matter itself is not the great first cause, as some seem to think—for there was a time, long, long ago, when matter came into existence. Something could not bring itself into existence out of nothing.

There was, then, a creating power that is apart from, and independent of matter. Next, was this first cause—the Creating Power that created matter—intelligent? I found accurate and absolute proof, unanswerable, that this Creator

was a supreme Intelligence—an intelligence infinitely higher than that in man. The reader can have this same proof by writing for our free booklet *Does God Exist?*

But what was this Creator like? Ah, I could not prove that by the laws of science. I could prove only that there is a Creator, who is intelligent.

But, regardless of whether the Creator be a personal God, if He is intelligent, it would be an insult to intelligence if He had not revealed Himself and His purpose in creating humanity on this earth—and all the fundamental knowledge about life that mankind seems to lack.

I began to look into the religious writings—the sacred Scriptures—of the religions of the world. Being an American, reared in what I was told was Christianity—but now doubting it, and demanding proof, I first set out to prove whether or not the Holy Bible could be such an inspired revelation.

The Proof of Inspiration

In this book I found One actually quoted, saying He was God Almighty—a Personal Being who had created everything that exists. This God is quoted directly as speaking, and as delivering decrees

and sentences on the greatest of the ancient city-states, on the greatest of ancient nations and empires—and foretelling what He was going to cause to happen to those cities, nations, and empires a very few years later or a thousand years later or several thousand years later—and throughout eternity!

Now no mortal man could put such colossal pronouncements in writing, and bring them to pass. No man could cause such results. No man could know the future!

The only One that could inspire such writing—if events actually happened as written in advance—is the most High Creator who actually controls all the forces and powers that exist, who is also supreme ruler over the entire universe!

I found such prophecies respect-

“What most people know about God—or think they know—often has not come from above . . . but from the around—purely from what they have heard, read or been told by other people.”

ing not merely one, not merely two, not merely four, but concerning most all of the existing great cities of the world at the time the words were written.

Sidon was to be reduced to a very small city, continually attacked, with continual bloodshed in her streets—yet continuing to be rebuilt, and to exist. That has happened, precisely as written 2,500 years ago, down to this very day!

Ashdod was to continue to exist as a small city, until all surrounding territory was to be occupied by the Jewish people in this 20th century A.D.—and that happened! But her sister city of the ancient Philistines, Ashkelon, was to be destroyed and never rebuilt—and that happened!

Egypt, one of the greatest nations on earth, was prophesied to be conquered by the Chaldeans, reduced to a minor nation—always to exist, but never again as a major nation—and never again ruled by a

native prince. And that happened, exactly as the One quoted saying “I am the Eternal God!” said it would!

After defeating Egypt, the Chaldean Empire became a world-ruling empire. This God of the Bible, 2,500 years ago, inspired the prophets to write that it was to be conquered by the Persian Empire. It, in turn, by a great general from Greece—who turned out to be Alexander the Great; and he was to be cut off from life at an early age, and his kingdom divided into four divisions—and they, in turn, were to be absorbed by a rising Empire from the west, to be the most powerful of all empires. This same God inspired the writing, 2,500 years ago, that this great Empire, which was the Roman Empire, was to be

overthrown, but to be resurrected ten times! Nine of those resurrections have already come and gone, and that same God wrote in those same prophecies, 2,500 years ago (some of them 1,900 years ago), that yet in our time, there would be another resurrection of that empire.

And these are only a few of the scores and scores of prophecies in this remarkable book—many of them already startlingly fulfilled—the others right now on the verge of being fulfilled in our time! Yes, I found that prophecy has absolutely proved that the Scriptures called the Holy Bible were directly inspired by the very Creator God!

God Answers Prayers

Then I found other proof. I found that this same God, in this same Bible, had hundreds of promises written down for you and for me, saying that under certain terms and conditions, He would actually cause certain things to happen for us—if we would ask Him in believing prayer! I found promises to deliver us from trouble when we get into it, to supply our every need when we really need it, to fight our personal battles for us, to heal us when we are sick—yes, even to prosper us financially. These were

promises of outside supernatural help I saw that every person often needs. Time after time came when I actually needed some of these things—and by this time I had come to believe what God had written and promised—I followed His instructions: I prayed. I asked for what He had promised, I set myself to yield to, and to obey this God of the Bible—to believe what He said in the Bible. And, believe it or not, the answers came—yes, miracles were performed! I learned that there was really Someone there when I prayed to this God—there was Someone who actually heard, and who actually answered!

I have had petitions to that Great Invisible God answered hundreds upon hundreds of times! And so can you—if you can ever get to really know this Great Universe-Ruling Creator—if you will unconditionally obey Him as He commands in this very Bible—and if you will implicitly and unswervingly believe what He has promised there!

And I found other proofs. I knew, then, that the Bible is the very revelation of vital knowledge without which this world lives in darkness and in religious confusion—and in unhappiness, wretchedness, and suffering. I had found the one and only true source of truth—of the only true belief and practice—the only true way of life!

And I found the source of this world's religious belief—a source that I was dumbfounded to learn is at total variance with what is commonly believed and taught and practiced today in the Western world under the name of Christianity! Astounding though it was, I found that the Christianity of this world is not the teaching or the practice, of the Holy Bible!

That discovery sent my head to spinning! That discovery was the most shocking truth of my life!

“Christianity” Not Founded on the Bible

I found that there is absolutely no organized religion on the face of

the earth that has as its source of faith and practice the Holy Bible.

I found that every one has as its source the precepts of human beings, derived from error-filled human reason based on limited knowledge from the around, and reasoned out within, as directed by the vanity of human nature!

But how could such a preposterous state of affairs come about? The Bible itself plainly reveals the answer. Its history tells how the very first man, Adam, rejected the knowledge of God, and was influenced solely by the within and the around.

It tells how, after the Flood with only eight souls left alive on earth—and those eight possessing a true knowledge of the true God, the great grandson of Noah, Nimrod, and his wife Semiramis, rebelled against the revelation, the knowledge, and the rule of God and began organizing human cities and governments, and a human-devised religion which was the actual parent of all the religions of the world today.

It tells how, even in the nation God chose as His own, the people rejected His knowledge and His rule. They stoned the prophets through whom He offered them the true knowledge that man needs and lacks.

It tells how God sent His own Son, born as a mortal human, with His message for mankind—and how men crucified the very Son of God, Jesus Christ. Then, later, rejecting His Message from God and His way of life and His rule over them, men appropriated Jesus' name, and called their own religion “Christianity.” The prophecies of this same Bible *foretold* that this whole world would be deceived—that they would turn away their ears from the real truth, and accept fables, and the traditions of men.

The Source of Religious Confusion

Many religions today teach nothing about the One Supreme Personal Creator God. Most professing Christian denominations use the

names of God and of Christ. They teach *about* God and *about* Christ, but they have embraced a mixture of a part of the truth of the message of Christ and the revelation of the Bible with ancient pagan superstitions and false philosophies, and their own comparatively recent ideas of men.

The real source of their practice and their belief is not the above—it is the around, it is society, it is this world! Even as the Bible says—all nations are deceived (Rev. 12:9).

They profess to accept the Bible. They profess God and the name of Christ as Saviour. But most of their beliefs are at total variance from those of God as revealed in the Holy Bible.

Most professing Christians today do not look into the Bible to learn what to do in life, in business, in society, in government. No, God is unreal—far off to them. They have heard about Christ. They think they follow the Bible, because the actual source of their religion—society—has caused them to believe that its teachings and practices came from the Bible. They merely read the Bible superficially for inspiration. It is not their one infallible authority—their constant daily guide in belief and in practice.

And this very same Bible inspired by the Living God foretells precisely what God is going to do about it all—yes, and in our time!

It reveals that God made man a free moral agent—that God decreed from the beginning that man must choose whether to believe and obey God, or to reject God and set up on earth his own systems of religion, government, and society; and that God set apart a duration of 6,000 years for man to cut himself off from the very real God, and to learn his lesson by writing it in cruel human experience.

God reveals His great purpose in all this—and He reveals that, in our time, He is going to intervene in world affairs before humanity destroys itself. He shall set up on earth His rule over all nations to bring world peace at last! □

God Still Answers Prayer Today!

There is a God "out there" who hears—who answers. Here are keys to help you contact the living Creator and Supreme Ruler of the universe!

The atheist doesn't receive any answers because he doesn't bother to pray. The agnostic receives no answers because he's not sure that God really exists.

Fair enough.

But what about the average believing churchgoer in today's "Christianity"? Why doesn't he get more answers? Why is he so often unsure if God is really listening, or caring, or intending to answer?

The late Philip Wylie in his memorable book *Tomorrow* described fictitious American twin cities under atomic attack. He detailed with shattering effect the aftermath of an atomic explosion: the destruction of the central-city areas, the polluted water and food, and the subsequent fanning out to the countryside of the lawless and hungry mobs—now bent on burglary, murder and rape in a situation that approached anarchy.

Hearing of civil insurrection, Farmer Brown armed himself with his shotgun to protect his home and foodstuffs, and especially his wife and teenage daughters. But the mob shot him, broke into his home, and looked menacingly at his wife and daughters.

"Let us pray, children," the mother intoned.

But, Wylie concluded the chapter dramatically, "God wasn't hearing any prayers that night."

How often have you heard, or known of, or experienced times like that when it seemed that *God just wasn't answering*? How often have you or others prayed for various causes, and your, or their, desires just weren't granted?

Why?

God Is Not Whimsical

The true answer to the dilemma involves an understanding of the nature of God, of His will, and of His promises.

The Creator is a God of love and concern, and also of design, of beauty, of harmony, and of consistency. "*For I am the Lord, I change not,*" says God (Mal. 3:6).

Consider: In war, how could God answer the prayers of bishops and chaplains on one side asking His blessing and protection for their troops, while at the same time grant the prayers of opposing bishops and chaplains asking the same blessing for their side? What of similar cross-purposes in peace?

Whom will—whom can—God answer?

God says in His Word to the majority of mankind: "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" (Isa. 59:2). So how can

He turn right around and answer the prayers of those who persist in living in a sinful, unchristian way of life?

He can't! For God is logical and consistent.

God Hears the Obedient

This, then, is the first of the vital keys to effective prayer—and those who have put it to use know it works: Obey God. God's Word tells us: "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight" (I John 3:22).

Frankly, most modern "Christians" don't take the Ten Commandments literally. A "little" lying or stealing, a "little" cheating on their wives or husbands, a "little" lusting, hating, fighting, cursing—they think these things aren't serious. But, as we have already seen, God says our sins—our transgressions of His law (I John 3:4)—have separated us from Him so He will not hear!

God hears the person who is truly repentant and is *turning from* his sins (Luke 18:13-14). He does not expect "instant perfection." Rather He tells us: "But **GROW** in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 3:18).

So come before God and say (perhaps your first prayer that's bound to be answered): "Father in heaven, I'm weak, but from henceforth I will sincerely try to keep your commandments and walk in your paths. I want to serve you; I want to be like you; and with your help I'm going to make progress. Please, almighty, all-powerful God, hear my prayer."

If you really mean it, and you are studying God's Word and learning more and more day by day to walk in His ways and to keep His laws, then He will hear and answer. But if you will not obey God's law, notice the result: "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, *even his prayer shall be abomination*" (Prov. 28:9).

It's not complicated. Just really *study* the Bible and do what you find that God says. "He *heareth*

the prayer of the righteous" (Prov. 15:29).

Pray to the True God

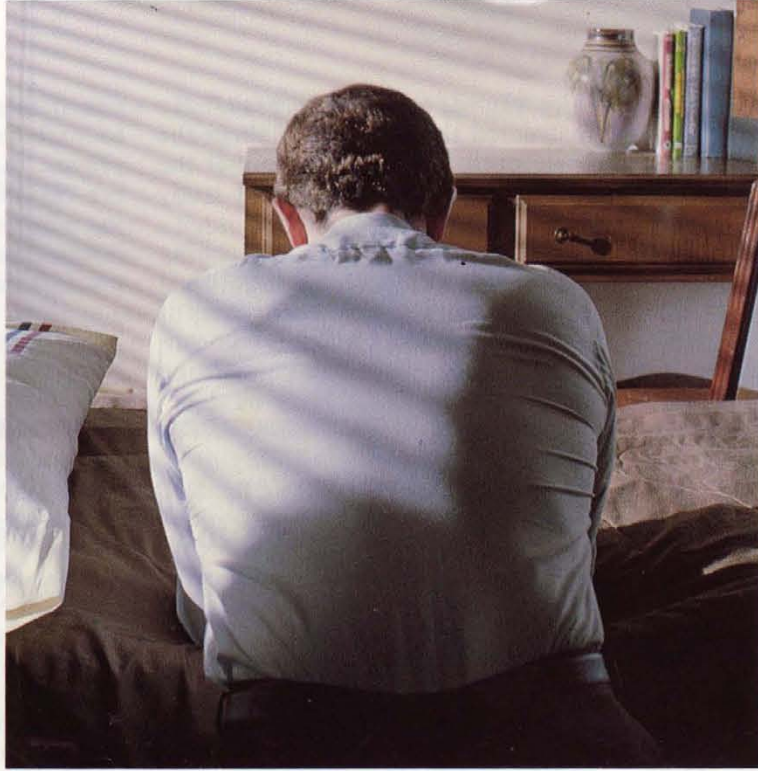
Though you may be offended by this assertion, it is a fact that millions of people pray regularly to the wrong "God" or "gods"!

"For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him" (I Cor. 8:5-6). In this passage, the true God is identified as being the Creator—a real Spirit Personality who designed and created the universe; a God of law, order, symmetry, beauty, and total power.

Under threat of persecution, the early Christians "lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is..." (Acts 4:24). Notice here and elsewhere how the true God is constantly identified as the Creator, and the God of David or, often, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

This is because the true God is understood in terms of His character—by how He dealt with Abraham, Moses or David—and by His tremendous power in creating the universe, with His vast sense of design, beauty and unchanging law which is manifested by and through His creation.

So, when you pray, learn to bow your knees and lift your heart and hands to the great Creator God, the originator of all that exists in the entire universe (Eph. 3:14-15). Recognize the great privilege it is to be able to come into the very presence and receive the personal



Faith . . . involves a deep understanding and commitment to the great central fact of human experience: God is, and He is working out a purpose here below.

love and attention of the Almighty God of heaven and earth!

How to Ask in Jesus' Name

If someone commands you to "open up in the name of the law," they had better be bona fide representatives of the law. Otherwise, they are imposters and are themselves acting illegally. Likewise, when one prays "in the name" of Jesus Christ, he should be sure he is acting and asking within the authority Jesus has given—which means to ask in accordance with the revealed will of the Son of God.

Fortunately, the Bible is a detailed setting forth of Christ's will. Anyone who sincerely studies the way of life, the examples, the prohibitions and the promises in the Bible has literally hundreds of pages of information to tell him what God wants him to do, what God directly instructs him to pray for, and many examples of what and how God does answer prayers! Of course, you need not always have a specific promise in the Bible to know that something is God's will. Often it is a matter of apply-

ing the principles from biblical situations to modern situations which may arise.

Notice, for some examples, the attributes David mentions in his prayer to God: "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower. I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies" (Ps. 18:1-3). God, then, will give us *strength, protection and deliverance*. In what is called the "Lord's Prayer," Jesus instructs us to pray for *forgiveness, for our daily bread, for His kingdom to*

come, and for *deliverance* from temptations or trials (Matt. 6:9-13). The apostle James instructs us to ask for *wisdom*, and for *healing* when we are sick (Jas. 1:5; 5:14-16).

Jesus stated: "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name [that is, by my authority], that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it" (John 14:13-14). Visualize Christ now seated at God's right hand in heaven—at the magnificently impressive and glorious throne of the universe. Know that He understands your trials and feelings; that He was tempted in every basic way all of us are tempted and He is there to be for us a merciful and understanding and faithful High Priest (Heb. 4:14-15). With that profound realization, do come boldly before God and talk to Him about anything, reason with Him and ask Him to even help you understand what to pray for and for the strength and mercy you need (verse 16).

What a fantastic opportunity!

Be grateful for this privilege,

and use it often to pour out your heart before your Creator and your Father.

Ask in Faith

"Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him" (Heb. 10:38).

Faith becomes a whole way of life. It involves a deep understanding and commitment to the great central fact of human experience: God *is*, and He is working out a purpose here below. He has laws and standards by which human life should be governed; He rewards those who surrender to His will and walk in His ways. Again: "But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6).

Notice also the emphasis put on the fact that we must "diligently seek him." God intends that we go after Him, in a sense, "hammer and tongs"; that we burn our bridges behind us and commit ourselves to doing His will and then trust HIM for the extra strength, wisdom and love that we need.

James tells us to ask for wisdom: "But let him ask in FAITH, *nothing wavering*. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed" (James 1:6).

When Jesus healed people, He stated over and over: "Thy faith hath made thee whole" (Matt. 9:22; Mark 10:52; Luke 17:19). "Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you" (Matt. 9:29). Again: "When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy. Son, thy sins be forgiven thee" (Mark 2:5).

Ask God for faith. *Build faith* into your life by reading the Bible regularly (Rom. 10:17), and by exercising faith and seeing the results of your trust in God's Word and in His promises. Then, bit by bit, you will learn to sincerely feel and say along with God's prophets, not "I think" or "I hope," but: "I *know* that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth" (Job 19:25).

Pray Persistently

When Jesus' disciples came and

said: "Lord, teach us to pray," He instructed them by giving them the basic outline of prayer we call the "Lord's Prayer." We should study and follow this approach.

But He continued His teaching with an example of how we must keep on praying and not give up if our prayers don't seem to be answered right away. He gave, as an analogy for prayer, the story of a man pounding on the door of a friend until there is an answer. Then Christ said: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Luke 11:9).

Sometimes you do need to keep knocking, so to speak, and let God know that you deeply desire whatever you ask Him; that you are willing to wait patiently for the answer; that you are willing to repent of any sin, right or wrong, overcome any problem, in order to be worthy of His answer to your prayer.

What if my fifteen-year-old son asks me: "Dad, please help me get an imported sports car." What will my answer be?

"Wait!" That will be my answer.

I'll think to myself, "He's not old enough. He doesn't have much driving experience, and there are all kinds of lessons I'd like to see him learn before he has a fast sports car. And besides, the car will mean a lot more to him, and he'll take better care of it and be more responsible if it doesn't come too easily."

Do you see the analogy?

God is supremely intelligent, loving, protective and logical. He wants us to prepare for some things before we receive them. As our Father, He wants us to learn certain lessons and overcome certain sins or weaknesses *before* He will answer some of our prayers!

So as you pray to God, talk to Him about these things. Reason with Him as Abraham did in Genesis 18:23-33. Ask Him to show

you if there is any lesson you need to learn before He will answer your prayer. And unless you find you are "asking amiss" (Jas. 4:3)—asking for something you shouldn't have—keep on praying to God until the answer comes.

Fervency

Keep on praying—but in what

Prayer, along with meditation, is a good time for self-examination to determine whether you yourself have truly repented and completely forgiven others.

way? With a tired, monotonous, routine approach? With a careless "let's-see-if-it-works-this-time" approach?

A thousand times NO!

Remember James 5:16: "The effectual FERVENT prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Realize that you are coming to plead your case before the Supreme Governor of the universe, the Lord and Giver of life. Put your heart, your mind and your being into an alert, profound, and heartfelt communion with your Creator. For our good, God wants us to serve and reverence Him in this way. The Moffatt translation makes plain God's concern about Israel's halfhearted prayers: "Though it was I who redeemed them, they have lied to me; *they never put their heart into their prayers . . .*" (Hos. 7:13,14).

Even Jesus Himself, preparing for a slow and torturous death, poured His very being into His final hours of prayer to God: "And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:44). No doubt this is where the expression "to sweat blood" comes from.

In our jaded and sophisticated society where many want to act cool and noncommittal, we need to be reminded of the personal examples of Jesus and of king David of Israel (see Ps. 69:1-3) and how they cried from the heart and

poured deep emotion and feeling into their prayers!

If Your Need Is Forgiveness

Jesus said: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. 6:14-15).

We must sincerely and completely forgive others. We must not hold grudges or harbor animosity. Otherwise, there is no way our prayer for forgiveness—or indeed, any other prayer—will be heard. But, if we forgive others, and "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9).

Prayer, along with meditation, is a good time for self-examination to determine whether you yourself have truly repented and completely forgiven others. But you can't "fake it." And even here, you've got to ask God for help and humility.

Make Prayer a Habit

Many articles have been written on the amazing power habits have over our lives. They describe how building proper thought patterns and daily habits—even in little things—often spells the difference between success or mediocrity in many areas of our lives.

In *no area* of life is this more important than in the spiritual area of regular Bible study, meditation and personal prayer to God.

God puts examples in the Bible for a reason. Let's notice.

The prophet Daniel, in danger of losing his life if he prayed, nevertheless followed his daily habit—the pattern of life which made him one of the most honored and powerful servants of God in history. "Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed [forbidding asking anything from anyone but the king], he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks

before his God, as he did aforetime" (Dan. 6:10).

Note the statement "... as he did aforetime." It was Daniel's habit to pray on his knees before God three times a day.

Notice also the example of king David when he was in great distress: "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice" (Ps. 55:17). David was all man. He was a mighty warrior, an excellent musician and composer, and an inspired leader. But he was often in trouble. Hence his "supplications" (Ps. 55:1, for example)—the word means repeated prayer on the same subject. He had to pour out his heart and ask repeatedly for mercy, strength, guidance and deliverance. The result?

You cannot read through the inspired psalms of David without realizing that he was a man who lived in close and continual contact with his God. He was vitally alive and lived one of the most exciting, romantic and yet meaningful lives in the history of the human race! His constant and even passionate communion with God certainly added depth and breadth to his magnificent life and character.

Reading David's psalms, you note the obvious fact that David was not just praying on his knees; he was constantly talking to God, relating all things to God—the very center of his existence. He was, as we say, in an "attitude of prayer" many times throughout each day.

So should we be.

Do we greet each morning's sunrise with a quiet "Thank you, Father" as we first look out the window? Do we bow our head in thanksgiving over any of our private breakfast, lunch and dinner meals—teaching our children by this and other acts that God is our Creator and the Giver of every good gift?

Do we ask God's protection as our children leave for school, as our car leaves the driveway, as our plane taxis out for takeoff? Do we ask our Father and Friend for wis-

dom and guidance, for patience and mercy, for strength and love, as we face various challenges through each day of our lives? We should—for this, too, is the meaning of prayer, and of learning to "walk with God" as did great men of old like Enoch, Noah and Abraham.

Often Jesus rose up early in the morning—"a great while before day"—and went to a private place to pray (Mark 1:35). He wanted to reestablish that close contact with God early in the day.

So should we.

At other times, times of unusual stress, or before making a big decision such as choosing His twelve apostles, Jesus would pray long and hard through part or even all of the night—reasoning and pleading with His Father for help, wisdom and guidance on the problems and decisions of the morrow (Luke 6:12-13).

It was the HABIT of our Savior, who is our perfect example, to pray to God continually and with His whole heart! So when it came His time to die, the most obvious and natural thing He could and did do was to drop to His knees, lift up His heart and hands to the Almighty one with whom He had shared eternity, and pray. With perspiration pouring off His body and with tears streaming down His cheeks (Heb. 5:7), He begged God for the strength and love to become the perfect sacrifice which He, and He alone, could be.

Then, finally, when He knew He had the Father's answer, He returned to find His disciples sleeping—seemingly unaware of the momentous events which were about to occur. "[He] said unto them, Why sleep ye? Rise and PRAY, lest ye enter into temptation" (Luke 22:46).

In this age of potential world annihilation, we, too, had better learn to do just that. We need to make the habit of constant and fervent prayer to God as much a part of our lives as breathing. For, as with the air we breathe, the quality and ultimate length of our lives directly depend upon it. □

The ANSWER to Unanswered Prayer

Are your prayers answered? Do you even know how to pray? It is time we understood what contact with God means.

Has God gone “way off” somewhere? Why do polished prayers seem so empty and futile? Why don't they get RESULTS?

The fundamental reason why the prayers of most people are *not* being answered today, is that they do not really *know* the true God. They think of God as a sort of vague, far-off, indefinable something. They don't know the *true* God who is the *active, law-giving* RULER of the universe. They seem to forget that God *reveals* Himself in His Word, the Bible, and that He shows us the *kind* of God He is—that God informs us *how* we should OBEY Him, and what He has PROMISED to do for us.

Believe the Bible

Can we take God's Word literally? Does God *mean* what He says in it?

Jesus thought so. He said, “Thy word is TRUTH” (John 17:17). The apostles constantly taught and acted as if God's Word were *literally true*.

Who is right? Are you going to follow the differing ideas of *men*, or

do you want to obey Jesus and live by *every word of God?* (Matt. 4:4.)

To get RESULTS in your prayers, you should *believe in the God of the Bible*. Believe His Word is *truth*. And be willing to *act* on God's Word and His commands.

Free yourself from the hide-bound traditions of this confused world. *Seek* the true God in prayer. *Study* God's Word to find out His commandments and His promises, then believe what the Scriptures say.

The Bible reveals *seven basic conditions* which you should fulfill when it comes to praying.

What are they?

Seek God's Will

In James 4:1-4, the apostle showed that the children of this world—fighting and warring as they do—fail to receive help because they often neglect to ask God's help. And when they do, it is only to ask for their own selfish ends. To ask *selfishly* is to “ask amiss.” You can expect *no answer* to such a prayer.

To get an answer, follow Jesus' example when He said, “I seek *not* mine own will, *but the will of the Father* which hath sent me” (John 5:30). But can you *know* God's will? “Wherefore be ye not unwise, but *understanding* what the will of the Lord is” (Eph. 5:17).

STUDY God's Word as Paul commanded Timothy (II Tim. 2:15). Then you will begin to think more as God thinks. You will come to *know* what God's will is in every circumstance. If you believe and know that God is *love*, that His will is for *our good*, then you will want to pray according to God's will.

You need not always have a specific promise in the Bible to know that something is God's will. Through experience and guidance, you will learn how to apply the *principles* of God's revealed will to any situation which may arise.

The point is that you must pray according to *God's* will to receive an answer. “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing *according to his will*, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we *know* that we have the petitions that we desired of him” (I John 5:14-15).

Asking according to God's will is the *overall, fundamental condition* of answered prayer. All other conditions could be grouped under this one because they are the specific points of *God's will* in regard to prayer.

Believe God

Most people do not realize that a *lack of faith* is simply a *disbelief* that God will keep His promises or back up His Word. Have you ever thought of it that way?

Real FAITH is not an emotional “feeling” that you generate by thinking certain thoughts over and over. You don't “talk yourself into,” or “think yourself into” real, believing faith. Godly faith is simply your willingness—through *God's help*—to quietly, patiently *trust* God to perform His Word. Abraham had that kind of faith. The apostle Paul wrote of him: “He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in *faith*, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform” (Rom. 4:20-21).

Abraham relied *completely* on God to perform His promises. Do you?

If you lack real *faith*, ask God to

give it to you. Faith is one of the *gifts* of God's Holy Spirit.

James was inspired to write that a man *must* have faith to receive answers to his prayers (James 1:5-7). A man who *wavers* will not receive an answer. "For let not *that* man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord" (verse 7).

God has made hundreds of promises in His Word which we can claim.

Be Fervent

It is common in our day for parents to teach their children memorized prayers. The father often mumbles a hurried, routine prayer of thanks at the table. The minister either reads or recites from memory an eloquent prayer which *sounds* very impressive.

The "fruits" show that God rarely hears such prayers, for they are usually *not answered*.

This is so because people don't put their *hearts* into their prayers (Hos. 7:14). They don't "cry out" to God with their whole being as the ancient prophets did—and as Christ did when He prayed (Luke 22:44).

In James 5:16, we read, "The effectual **FERVENT** prayer of a righteous man availeth much." We have to pray *fervently, earnestly, zealously*, if we expect God to hear.

Put your *whole heart* into your prayers!

Fear and Humility

The very *first* prerequisite to a knowledge of God is to fear Him and respect His Word. "The *fear* of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Ps. 111:10).

Carnal man needs to realize that he is only *dust* and shall return to the dust unless and until he receives the Spirit of God, which is the begettal to eternal life. Eternal life is a *gift* from God (Rom. 6:23), not something we already have.

We need to *fear* God, realizing that our lives are in His hands. We should be humble, realizing that any gifts or talents we may have are ours *because God gave them to us*.

When we can approach our Creator in *that* attitude—respecting His power and authority over our

lives—then He will hear our prayers.

When Christ was in the human flesh, even He feared God—as we should. "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that *he feared*" (Heb. 5:7). When we fully realize our own *helplessness*, then we will cry out to God as we ought to.

Peter wrote, "be clothed with *humility*: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (I Pet. 5:5).

The attitude of *humility* and *godly fear* is vital in prayers, and at *all times*.

Be Persistent

In Luke 18:1-8, Jesus spoke a parable to teach us that we should always pray, and never give up hope. He showed that even an unrighteous judge would finally hear the pleas of a widow who *kept coming to him*. So we should keep praying to God, *even though He doesn't answer right away*.

God has made many promises in His Word. But He has *nowhere* said that He will perform them at the *time*, or in the *way* that we choose. Sometimes it is good for *us* not to have

our prayers answered immediately. God is building patient *faith* into our characters.

James was inspired to write, "the trying of your faith worketh patience" (Jas. 1:3). If God doesn't answer your prayers immediately, exercise *patience* and keep praying until He does answer.

Don't nag at God. He has supreme wisdom to know *when* and *how* it would be best to answer your prayers. But if you have prayed as you should, He will answer. God *always* keeps His promises! So be *persistent*. Keep

praying in faith, and God is *bound* to perform His part.

Obedience

A sixth condition of answered prayer is one which is neglected and violated consistently by most professing "Christians." This hinges directly on the before-mentioned fact that very few people today really know the true God. People do not look to God as the **AUTHORITY** in their lives. Instead, they make a "god" out of this world's society and its customs, traditions, and religious practices.

God inspired Paul to write, "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to *obey*, his servants ye are to whom ye obey" (Rom. 6:16). If you obey the ways of sin practiced in this world, you are putting this society and its pagan customs *in place of* the true God!

God wants more than "lip service." He requires **OBEDIENCE!**

If you haven't learned to fear the true God and accept His Word as the *authority* in your life, then you don't even really *know* God. "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth

Godly faith is simply your willingness—through God's help—to quietly, patiently trust God to perform His Word. . . . Faith is one of the gifts of God's Holy Spirit.

not his commandments, is a *liar*, and the truth is not in him" (I John 2:4).

How can men persistently refuse to keep God's commandments, and then expect Him to answer their prayers? Peter answers, "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (I Pet. 3:12).

Sin is simply breaking God's Law (I John 3:4). God will *not* hear the prayers of those who persist in sin—in evil. If people would

obey God, they would get *answers* when they pray. Then God wouldn't seem so far away, so unreal—as He does to so many people. Think it over. Then *do something about it*.

Does God ever hear the prayers of the unconverted? Yes, He does. God Himself has blinded the eyes of many to the truth at this time (Rom. 11:7-8). It is His *responsibility* that they don't know the truth yet. So God does sometimes hear and answer the prayers of those who *obey as much as they know*.

The lepers and cripples who came to Jesus to be healed didn't know all of God's truth. But they did realize that Jesus was sent from God and could heal. And *they acted on what they knew*.

So it is a matter of your *heart* or *attitude*. If you come to God in a humble, repentant spirit and are determined to obey Him *to the best of your knowledge*, He will hear your prayers. But for anyone who knows the truth, this is *no excuse* to disobey God!

True Christians can have a special confidence that God *will answer* their prayers *if* they are OBE-DIENT. "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, *because we keep his commandments*, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight" (I John 3:22).

Use Christ's Name

The seventh condition of answered prayer is the correct use of Christ's name. This is a greatly misunderstood subject, and the use of Christ's name is often abused.

After Jesus had been with His disciples for over three years, and had taught them *God's will* and how to obey it, He said, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father *in my name*, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing *in my name*: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:23-24). These verses give us the privilege of employing Christ's name—asking by His authority—when we pray to God. But most people misunderstand *how* we can ask "in Jesus' name."

When a government sends an ambassador to another country, he is given *authority* to carry out certain business *in the name* of his country's government. He can act *in the name* of his government because it has conferred on him the *authority* as its chosen representative to carry on certain business on its behalf. His authority is *limited* to do only what the government has specifically authorized him. If he exceeds his delegated authority, his actions are *null* and *void* and will *not* be backed up by his government.

So to pray in Jesus' name, you must at the same time be *yielding* to His will to the best of your knowledge. "In Jesus' name" means *by His authority*. You are praying through Him as your High Priest (Heb. 4:14-16).

Christ—our High Priest—was tempted in all points like we are (verse 15). He understands our weaknesses. It is His revealed will to give us of His Spirit (Luke 11:13) and to help us live a more abundant life (John 10:10). You need to *study* God's Word to know the principles of His will, that you may ask by His authority.

Praying in Jesus' name is a great privilege. Use Jesus' name *correctly*, and *your prayers will be answered* because of the authority conferred through Him.

Action Will Follow

If you faithfully conform to these seven *conditions of answered prayer*—with God's help, you may then have *absolute confidence* that God will hear your prayers. You will be changing, growing closer to God each day. You will be actively seeking and doing His will.

This intimate contact with the Creator of heaven and earth will give you a peace of mind and quiet confidence that *nothing* can destroy. But your confidence will not be in *self*; it will be in the greatest POWER there is. In *every* trial and problem, you have the right to call on the Supreme Power—the active, living God who reveals Himself in the Bible.

God has inspired an example of

how He heard and *answered* even the prayers of an unconverted man *because* that man was in a *right spirit*, and had *obeyed* what he knew. In II Kings 20:1-11, we read the account of how King Hezekiah was about to die and sought God's deliverance.

God's own prophet, Isaiah, had told Hezekiah that he would die. But Hezekiah knew that God was all-merciful, and that he had obeyed God the best he knew how.

So Hezekiah "wept sore" and besought God's intervention (verse 3). He put his *heart* in his prayer!

In *spite* of the fact that He had previously told Isaiah that Hezekiah would die, God heard and *answered* Hezekiah's fervent prayer! He added *fifteen years* to Hezekiah's life!

What a *result* of prayer!

But was that all?

No indeed. Hezekiah did not *doubt* God's power to *intervene* and *act* as this world doubts. He made a *further* request that God would give him a special sign that he would be healed (verse 8).

God's servant, Isaiah, gave Hezekiah the choice of the sign—the shadow would either go forward ten degrees, or backward ten degrees. Hezekiah said it would be *harder* for the shadow to go backward ten degrees. "And Isaiah the prophet cried unto the Lord: and *he brought the shadow ten degrees backward*" (verse 11).

Because of Hezekiah's faith, obedience, and fervent prayers, God Almighty not only *healed* him and added *fifteen years* to his life, but *He actually caused the sun—from an onlooker's point of view—to reverse itself in the heavens!*

This was *not* an "optical illusion." God's miracles are *real!* "For with God NOTHING SHALL BE IMPOSSIBLE" (Luke 1:37).

If you believe that God's Word *is truth*, this should inspire you to pray as never before! Pray for God's Work, for God's *servants*, for His people everywhere. Ask in *faith* for your own needs. *Rely* on God in every trouble. He is a God of *power!* □