

Does God hear all of our prayers?

For some, it's a matter of great concern. Can it be that God hears some of us, and not others? Why?

Are we children of God?

Anyone can pray, but not everyone is heard. Jesus clearly said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." [John 14:6] How do we come to the Father through Him? We must receive him and believe in his name. [John 1:12]

That requires a decision on our part. There is more to it than praying "in Jesus' name." We must decide that we believe He is the Son of God Who died for our sins. This believing is more than "understanding the truth." Even evil spirits believe in Jesus in that way.

Coming to the Father through Jesus requires that we believe in a deeper sense: being persuaded of a truth and, as a result, placing confidence in it. It means to trust, to rely upon. [Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, p. 118] It's to take a leap of faith -- the difference between accepting intellectually that an airplane can fly you to Chicago, and actually getting on the plane.

There must come that moment of decision in our lives, when we take our stand and say, "This is what I believe." It needs to be verified with a prayer to the Lord. God doesn't need to hear us verbalize what we believe -- He knows our hearts. But *we* need to hear it. *We* need to know that we have decided. Simply sitting in church doesn't make us believers. Being born into a family of Christians doesn't make us Christians. We must choose.

If you've not thought through your decision and affirmed it with prayer, you might consider praying: *Father, I believe that Jesus is Your Son who died for me on the cross. I confess my sins to you . . . and ask you to forgive me. Thank you for your mercy. I receive Jesus as my Lord and Savior, and I thank you for loving me, in His name, Amen.*

Is there unconfessed sin in our heart?

Even being a child of God is no guarantee that God will hear our prayers, if we do not regularly confess our sins. In Psalm 66 we read, "If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened." [Psalm 66:18] And in Isaiah, "But your iniquities [unconfessed sins] have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear." [Isaiah 59:2] Unconfessed sin grieves His Holy Spirit and breaks our fellowship with the Lord. Until it's confessed, He will not hear our prayers

There is one unconfessed sin that is especially serious. Jesus, in the verses following the model prayer, or the Lord's Prayer, of Matthew 6, admonishes His disciples: "For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins." [Matt. 6:14-15]

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Yet, we need not fear broken communication with our Lord. Keeping the lines of communication open with God our Father is a simple thing. The apostle John assures us, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." [1 John 1:9] The key word here is "if." We have a choice. It is up to us whether or not we confess our sins and ask for God's forgiveness.

Note that John said "sins," plural. So did Jesus, in His model prayer, when He referred to asking our Father to forgive us our "debts" or "trespasses" -- other words for sins. [Matt. 6:12] We must ask for forgiveness for specific sins, identifying them individually, agreeing with God that we were wrong, and asking His forgiveness.

There is no sin our Lord will not immediately forgive, if we are genuine in asking -- so long as we have first forgiven everyone who has offended us. The moment we ask, He forgives and will again hear our prayers. But think of the consequences of our living for days, weeks, months or years without confessing our sins or forgiving someone. We might pray for years, and never be heard.