

# Does Prayer Change Things?

Crucial Questions

**R. C. SPROUL**



Does Prayer Change Things?

Crucial Questions booklets provide a quick introduction to definitive Christian truths. This expanding collection includes titles such as:

Who Is Jesus?

Can I Trust the Bible?

Does Prayer Change Things?

Can I Know God's Will?

How Should I Live in This World?

What Does It Mean to Be Born Again?

Can I Be Sure I'm Saved?

What Is Faith?

What Can I Do with My Guilt?

What Is the Trinity?

TO BROWSE THE REST OF THE SERIES,  
PLEASE VISIT: **REFORMATIONTRUST.COM/CQ**

CQ

# Does Prayer Change Things?

R. C. SPROUL

*Does Prayer Change Things?*

© 2009 by R.C. Sproul

Previously published as *Effective Prayer* (1984) and as part of *Following Christ* (1991) by Tyndale House Publishers, and as *Does Prayer Change Things?* by Ligonier Ministries (1999).

Published by Reformation Trust Publishing  
a division of Ligonier Ministries  
421 Ligonier Court, Sanford, FL 32771  
Ligonier.org   ReformationTrust.com

Printed in China  
RR Donnelley  
0001018

First edition, thirteenth printing

ISBN 978-1-64289-038-9 (Paperback)  
ISBN 978-1-64289-066-2 (ePub)  
ISBN 978-1-64289-094-5 (Kindle)

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise—without the prior written permission of the publisher, Reformation Trust Publishing. The only exception is brief quotations in published reviews.

Cover design: Ligonier Creative  
Interior typeset: Katherine Lloyd, The DESK

Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked KJV are from the King James Version. Public domain.

#### **Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Sproul, R.C. (Robert Charles), 1939-2017

[Effective prayer]

Does prayer change things? / R.C. Sproul.

    p. cm. -- (The crucial questions series)

First published as: Effective prayer, 1984. Following Christ. Wheaton, Ill. : Tyndale House Publishers, 1992. Does prayer change things? Ligonier Ministries, 1999.

ISBN 978-1-56769-178-8

1. Prayer--Christianity. I. Sproul, R.C. (Robert Charles), 1939- Following Christ. II. Title.

BV220.S68 2009

248.3'2--dc22

2009018823

## Contents

<b>One</b>	The Place of Prayer .....	1
<b>Two</b>	The Purpose of Prayer .....	7
<b>Three</b>	The Pattern of Prayer .....	21
<b>Four</b>	The Practice of Prayer .....	47
<b>Five</b>	The Prohibitions of Prayer .....	73
<b>Six</b>	The Power of Prayer .....	81



## Chapter One

# The Place of Prayer

What is the goal of the Christian life? It is godliness born of obedience to Christ. Obedience unlocks the riches of the Christian experience. Prayer prompts and nurtures obedience, putting the heart into the proper “frame of mind” to desire obedience.

Of course, knowledge is also important because without it we cannot know what God requires. However, knowledge and truth remain abstract unless we commune with God in prayer. The Holy Spirit teaches, inspires, and

## Does Prayer Change Things?

illuminates God's Word to us. He mediates the Word of God and assists us in responding to the Father in prayer.

Simply put, prayer has a vital place in the life of the Christian. One might pray and not be a Christian, but one cannot be a Christian and not pray. Romans 8:15 tells us that the spiritual adoption that has made us sons of God causes us to cry out in verbal expressions: "Abba! Father!" Prayer is to the Christian what breath is to life, yet no duty of the Christian is so neglected.

Prayer, at least private prayer, is difficult to do out of a false motive. One can preach out of a false motive, as do the false prophets. One can be involved in Christian activities out of false motives. Many of the externals of religion can be done from false motives. However, it is highly unlikely that anyone would commune with God out of some improper motive.

We are invited, even commanded, to pray. Prayer is both a privilege and a duty, and any duty can become laborious. Prayer, like any means of growth for the Christian, requires work. In a sense, prayer is unnatural to us. Though we were created for fellowship and communion with God, the effects of the fall have left most of us lazy and indifferent toward something as important as prayer. Rebirth

quicken a new desire for communion with God, but sin resists the Spirit.

We can take comfort from the fact that God knows our hearts and hears our unspoken petitions as well as the words that emanate from our lips. Whenever we are unable to express the deep feelings and emotions of our souls or when we are completely unclear about what we ought to be praying, the Holy Spirit intercedes for us. Romans 8:26–27 says: “The Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.” When we don’t know how to pray or what to pray for in a given situation, the Holy Spirit assists us. There is reason to believe from the text that if we pray incorrectly, the Holy Spirit corrects the errors in our prayers before He takes them before the Father, for verse 27 tells us that He “intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”

Prayer is the secret of holiness—if holiness, indeed, has anything secretive about it. If we examine the lives of the great saints of the church, we find that they were great people of prayer. John Wesley once remarked that he didn’t

## Does Prayer Change Things?

think much of ministers who didn't spend at least four hours per day in prayer. Luther said that he prayed regularly for an hour every day except when he experienced a particularly busy day. Then he prayed for two hours.

The neglect of prayer is a major cause of stagnation in the Christian life. Consider the example of Peter in Luke 22:39–62. Jesus went to the Mount of Olives to pray, as was His custom, and told His disciples, “Pray that you may not enter into temptation.” The disciples fell asleep instead. The next thing Peter did was try to take on the Roman army with a sword; then he denied Christ. Peter did not pray, and as a result he fell into temptation. What is true of Peter is true of all of us: we fall in private before we ever fall in public.

Is there a right and wrong time for prayer? Isaiah 50:4 talks about the morning as the time when God gives the desire to pray on a daily basis. But other passages give times of prayer during all hours of the day. No part of the day is set apart as more sanctified than another. Jesus prayed in the morning, during the day, and sometimes all night long. There is evidence that He had a time set aside for prayer; however, considering the relationship Jesus had with the Father, we know that communion between them never stopped.

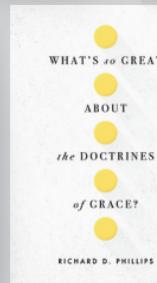
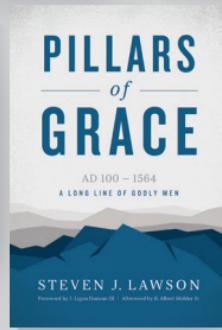
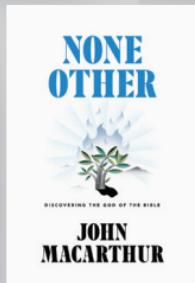
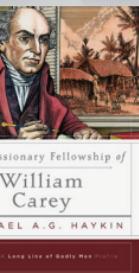
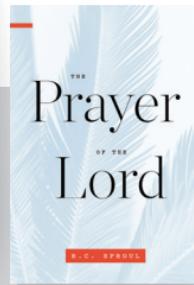
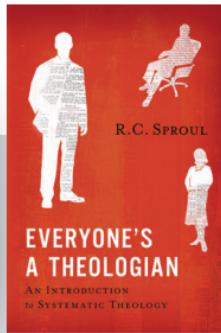
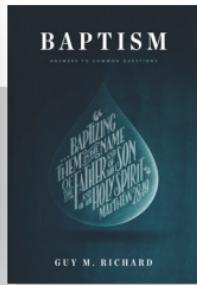
## The Place of Prayer

First Thessalonians 5:17 commands us to pray without ceasing. This means that we are to be in a continual state of communion with our Father.

Prayer, then, is central and crucial in the life of the Christian. Let us look further into this vital but neglected and misunderstood Christian discipline.

We publish books that proclaim the historic Christian faith to new generations.

*These are books you can trust.*



*Order your copy of this title, download the ebook version, or browse our entire collection at [ReformationTrust.com](http://ReformationTrust.com).*

 *Reformation Trust*

# Is there power in prayer?

When a Christian prays, does it make any difference? Does it change anything? Though our prayers do not change God's mind, He ordains prayer as a means to accomplish His will. We can be confident that prayer does change things—including our own hearts.

In this booklet, Dr. R.C. Sproul argues that prayer has a vital place in the life of the Christian and calls us to come before God's presence with joy and hope. Dr. Sproul shares practical wisdom and helps us understand the purpose, pattern, practice, prohibitions, and power of prayer.

The Crucial Questions booklet series by Dr. R.C. Sproul offers succinct answers to important questions often asked by Christians and thoughtful inquirers.

**Dr. R.C. Sproul** was founder of Ligonier Ministries, founding pastor of Saint Andrew's Chapel in Sanford, Fla., and first president of Reformation Bible College. He was author of more than one hundred books, including *The Holiness of God*.



ReformationTrust.com



RELIGION / Christian Life / Prayer