

YOUTH PRAYS-GOD ANSWERS!

Glen A. Coon

Name: _____

Date: _____

Lesson 14:

WORRIED ABOUT CONDITIONS?

MIRIAM BROWN was a young, vivacious college sophomore who had recently learned of the Seventh-day Adventist faith and whole-heartedly accepted it. She was enrolled in the class on the Prayer of Reception, and it was my privilege to interview her one day.

We discussed the conditions to answered prayer. I wanted to know her attitude toward this matter of conditions to answered prayer.

Some of them are:

1. To feel our need. Isaiah 44:3.
2. Faith. Hebrews 11:6.
3. Harbor no cherished sin. Psalm 66:18.
4. Obedience. Prov. 28:9,
5. Unselfish purpose. Luke 11:1-13.
6. Persistence. Luke 18:7.
7. Diligence. Luke 15:8.
8. Through Christ. John 16:23.
9. A forgiving spirit. Mark 11:25, 26; Luke 6:37.
10. An uncondemning spirit. Isaiah 58:9-12; Luke 6:37.
11. Family harmony. I Peter 3:6-11.
12. Humility. Psalms 25:9.

In reply to my question, Miriam said, "In the church of which I was a member before I learned of the Seventh-day Adventist faith, nothing was said about conditions, In fact, very little was said about prayer."

Then she smiled as she said, "I'm so happy to learn about the conditions to answered prayer; for I feel now that I have a real assurance in prayer. I know now that as surely as I fulfill the conditions, God will fulfill His promise. It is most encouraging to me as I pray."

Then she went on to say that there are times when there is a struggle to surrender, to be willing to meet the conditions to answered prayer. "But", she said, "I know it is useless for me to pray unless I am also willing to fulfill the simple conditions."

Youth Prays . . . God Answers

Another student to whom I spoke about this same matter shared with me his reaction.

"To me, meeting the conditions to answered prayer is a way of life," he said. The conditions to answered prayer merely outline what a normal, healthy Christian life is like. If we are living the right kind of life in Christ, then we are also fulfilling the conditions to answered prayer." To him it was just that simple.

To illustrate further: One of the conditions to answered prayer is to have a forgiving spirit. This forgiving spirit should not be turned on only when we want an answer to a prayer. It can be, and should be, a way of life. In the same way the Bible tells us, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psalms 66:18) If Jesus lives in our hearts, we will, as a normal and constant way of life, be devoid of harboring iniquity.

What is true of these two conditions is true of all the conditions to answered prayer. God does not ask the impossible, nor does He make it difficult for us to approach Him in prayer.

We have discovered in our ministry that even the most dedicated men have problems with which they must battle. Someone has done them a grave injustice, and they feel it keenly—sometimes to the point of retaliation.

Bitterness seems to have taken a hold of their feelings and they begin to turn sour in their entire attitude. This condition can creep up on us almost imperceptibly, even as we carry heavy burdens for God.

When someone maligns our purest motives, misjudges our most sincere efforts, and misrepresents our unselfish actions, human nature is going to feel it. To say we are not hurt is to ignore that we are human.

The James Whites had such an experience, and of this Ellen White wrote:

"Our property may go, and we will still rejoice in God, if it be used for the advancement of his cause. We have cheerfully spent the best of our days, the best of our strength, and have nearly worn out in the same cause, and feel the infirmities of premature age, and yet we will rejoice. But when our professed brethren attack our character and influence, by representing us as wealthy, worldly, and grasping for more, it is then that we feel keenly. Let us enjoy the character and influence we have dearly earned during the past twenty years, with even poverty and a slight hold on health and this mortal life, and we will rejoice, and cheerfully give to the cause the little there is left of us." —Testimonies, Vol. 1, pp. 607, 608.

This illustrates the effect injustices can have on the best of saints. These injustices are felt keenly by most everyone wronged this way. But there is a difference between being hurt and being bitter; between being wronged and being retaliatory. The Whites felt the hurt keenly, but they did not permit themselves to dwell in bitterness, brooding over these injustices. They recognized the hurt for what it was, but when they had aired their feelings, they went on in courage and faith, determined to be servants of the God of heaven.

Paul suggests that we "examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith" (2 Corinthians 13:5), from time to time. This can be a painful process, but when we have gone through the experience, we realize that unless we have a companionship with Jesus, of ourselves we are most incapable of living a successful Christian life.

When we realize our need for the power of heaven to transform these hearts of ours, we live in the attitude of surrender and gratitude for what He has done for us. We begin to step out in faith and ask for still greater things from a God Who is willing to give us good things.

Youth Prays . . . God Answers

Some years ago I was thrilled to learn that every Bible promise is for me, personally. I learned it from studying the book "Ministry of Healing". On page 122 I read these words: "So with all the promises of God's word. In them He is speaking to us individually, speaking as directly as if we could listen to His voice."

Then on page 59 of the book, "Christ's Object Lessons", I noted these words: "only he who receives the Scriptures as the voice of God speaking to himself, is a true learner."

Since I, a minister of God and His Holy Word, considered myself a true learner, I also accepted the fact that I must receive the Scriptures as God's voice speaking to me personally.

"What a thrill to know this," I thought. "And what a feeling of joyous anticipation it is to study and read my Lord's messages to me personally!"

Someone reminded me that, "To every promise of God there are conditions." Education, page 253.

"There are certain conditions upon which we may expect that God will hear and answer our prayers." Steps to Christ, page 95.

After studying these conditions, I made another discovery. My own efforts to fulfill the conditions were not enough. Without God's help, it was impossible. So I began to pray earnestly, as I studied, to know just how to comply with these divine requirements.

Then I received an understanding of the whole problem that brought peace and joy to my soul. I realized that long before I was born, God had already prepared all the help I needed to do this.

As I share this knowledge with the young people in the prayer classes, it proves to be a blessing to them as it was to me, and as it continues to thrill my heart, I share it something like this:

First-God gave me a Saviour in His Son, Jesus. John 3:16.

Second-God gave me the Bible. 2 Peter 1:4. (It contains 3,573 promises.)

Third-God gave me faith to accept Jesus as my personal Saviour. Romans 12:3 (last part).

Fourth-God gives me repentance and forgiveness. Acts 5:31; 1 John 1:9.

Fifth-God gives me a new heart and a new spirit. Ezekiel 36:26, 27.

Sixth-God gives me love for others. Romans 5:5; Galatians 5:22.

Seventh-I must obey to receive answers to prayer, and God gives me the gift of obedience. Ezekiel 36:27.

Because God's love for us is so very great, and because He knows our great need for His saving grace in our lives, He freely gives us "exceeding great and precious promises" (2 Peter 1:4), and all the help we need to fulfill the conditions to them.

What less can we do than to Ask, Believe, and Claim by returning thanks to our wonderful heavenly Father that He has fulfilled His promises to us?

Every condition to prayer is itself a free gift promised by our Lord. So, let us ask Him to fulfill in us the very condition needed to receive still other gifts promised, and then use them all to be a blessing to others.

When I first realized that conditions to answered prayer are themselves gifts from God, I sat down and penned these verses which, I think, say what I feel:

CONDITIONS

Youth Prays . . . God Answers

Do God's conditions
To answered prayer
Cause consternation,
And deep despair?

Look twice; you shall see
The conditions, too,
Are gifts from His hand
He has promised you.

For each condition
Is a treasure chest,
Which is, with its gift,
A blessing, and blest.

The two are twin gifts,
Each a precious one;
And God's choicest gifts
Are found in His Son.

But let us not pray amiss. For example, there is the experience of Wayne and Pat. They had been asking themselves:

"Why hasn't God answered our prayer? He knows how much we want to rent that house in Santa Ana Canyon. It's just what we need, with lots of room and different kinds of fruit trees. We've been claiming Bible promises. God tells us in Philippians 4:19 that He will supply all our needs. And in John 16:23 we have the promise that 'Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.' We've certainly been asking. So why doesn't God answer our prayer?" These were the questions that Wayne and Pat Ward were asking themselves.

"Wayne," Pat answered thoughtfully, "do you suppose we could be praying amiss? Maybe our prayers are becoming ritualistic. Let's claim the promise in James 1:5 for wisdom so we can pray aright."

"All right," said Wayne. And this they did, seeking God in all earnestness for wisdom to know how to pray and what to pray for.

Not long after this conversation, the two of them drove to La Sierra to obtain some application blanks for the prayer class. But the folk they came to see were not at home, so they chatted briefly with my wife.

Just as they were preparing to leave, I opened the door and walked in. You should have seen the smiles on the faces of those two young people!

"Pastor Coon!" Wayne exclaimed. "You're the answer to our prayer. The Lord sent you home so you could help us."

Then they went on to explain their problem. "It's about a particular house in the Santa Ana Canyon. Although we've been claiming Bible promises, the Lord has not answered our prayer. Why, I don't know. He has answered all the other prayers we have claimed promises for. We've fulfilled all the conditions. We have even been double tithing. So why hasn't God answered this prayer?"

Youth Prays . . . God Answers

Before giving any counsel I always pray for divine guidance. So after a few minutes of quiet meditation, I said, "Wayne, God has promised that if we ask, He will give. Perhaps we need a coat, but can we tell God that we need a certain, particular red coat?"

"Or perhaps we need a car. Should we say, 'God, I want You to give me the latest Cadillac'? God knows you need a bigger house. He also knows you would like to be out there near your wife's relatives so she won't be lonely. But do you have a right to tell God that you must have that one particular house?"

I could see from their facial expressions that both were following my reasoning, so I continued.

"God has told us in Jeremiah 33:3: 'Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.'

"Now maybe this is not the house God sees is best for you to have. Maybe He has a better one for you. You can pray the prayer of reception for a house, but you must pray the prayer of commitment for a particular house. Then, you may reason with the Lord as He has told you to in Isaiah 1:18."

As Wayne shook my hand he said, "Thank you, Pastor Coon! Thank you. Do you know, your counsel has been a direct answer to our prayer for wisdom? The Lord be praised!"

Wayne and his wife could hardly wait until they arrived home so they could pray the prayer of reception for a house, and then pray the prayer of commitment for this particular house.

When they arrived home, they knelt in prayer. Before they rose from their knees, Wayne added, "Lord, please give us this particular house only if it will be to Thine honor and glory. Amen."

And Pat prayed, "Dear Lord, if it could be possible, could we get it for one hundred dollars a month? You know that is all we can afford."

Our conversation with Wayne and Pat was on a Sunday evening. The very next day they received a phone call concerning the house. They could have it, and for one hundred dollars a month!

Wayne and Pat are convinced this was a direct answer to their prayer of commitment from a loving heavenly Father.

Quiz 14

1. Complete: I know that it is useless for me to pray unless I am also willing to _____
_____.
 2. Complete: As surely as I _____ the conditions, God will _____ His
_____.
 3. Complete: If we are living the right kind of life _____, then we
are also fulfilling the conditions to answered prayer.
 4. Complete: "Unless we have a companionship with Jesus, we are _____ most
_____ of living a successful Christian life."
 5. Complete: "In them [the promises] He is speaking to us _____, speaking as directly as if
we could _____ to His _____."
 6. Complete: "Only he who receives the Scriptures as the voice of God speaking _____
is a true learner."
 7. True or false: We are expected to fulfill the conditions by ourselves. _____.
 8. Complete: "Every condition to prayer is _____ a _____ promised by
our Lord."
 9. Thought question: Take a careful look at the conditions listed on in this chapter. Do you already know
many texts that you can claim to fulfill these conditions? _____.
- Examples: For obedience, Ezekiel 36:26, Philippians 4: 13. For faith, Romans 12:3, etc. Look for more
texts to fulfill conditions.
10. Why did not Wayne and Pat at first receive the house they prayed for? _____
_____.