

Seek And Follow God's Guidance

By Paul Jetter, Pastor, Upper Valley Community Church, Piqua, Ohio
www.uvcc.info



If God gave us everything we prayed for we would be miserable. We often think we know what we want only to find out that instead of bringing us joy it makes us a slave.

Take the example of the couple who prays for a "dream house." Suppose they invest all they have, and then borrow all they can borrow. Nothing is too expensive. "After all," they reason, "we have good jobs and will be living here for a long time."

But jobs can change. Then the house seems in the wrong location. Payments eat up most of their paycheck making vacations out of the question. Instead of the house serving the needs of the family, the family becomes the slave of the house.

Garth Brooks sang a song called "Unanswered Prayers". The song tells of a young man who prays for the love of a certain young lady only to have his prayers unanswered. Eventually he falls in love with another woman and is married. Then one day he runs into the woman he prayed for as a youth. Soon he is thanking God for not answering his prayers.

God knows what is best for us. He delights in giving good things to his children. Sometimes that means saying "No" to our prayers. At other times it means giving us something different from what we ask.

But what happens if we keep on praying for something that God knows is not best for us? Sometimes God allows us to have it to teach us a lesson. Other times we get it through our own efforts. Or Satan may give things in order to entrap us in materialism and selfish pleasures.

The Apostle James says that the reason people get the wrong answers to their prayers is that they ask with the wrong motives. *"When you ask,"* he writes, *"you do not receive because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures"* (James 4:3).

Jesus set a perfect example of what it means to seek God's will instead of seeking things for our own pleasures. The most intense prayer Jesus ever prayed was the one in the garden just before the crucifixion. *"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me,"* he groaned. *"Yet not my will, but yours be done"* (Luke 22:42).

Christ's prayer was so intense that *"sweat like drops of blood"* fell from his face to the ground. But as much as he would have liked to have avoided the cross, he wanted to do God's will even more.

The Apostle Paul tells us the result of his obedience. *"He became obedient to death – even death on the cross. Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above all names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth"* (Philippians 2:8-10).

If Jesus had insisted on his own will, he might have avoided the cross. But without the cross there is no resurrection. Jesus would have avoided the pain of sacrifice, but he would have missed the meaning and purpose of his life.

Seeking only what we want can cause any of us to miss the purpose for life. God knows what is best for us. We make the best decisions when we seek and follow his guidance.