

## 4. God Has Provided Before We Pray

Contributed by LG Parkhurst Jr  
Thursday, 24 January 2008

But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. -- Matthew 6:6-8

When they first arrived in Switzerland, Fran, Edith, Priscilla, Susan, and Debby lived in two small rooms in a boarding house in Lausanne. Edith continued to pray that people would once again hear Fran teach the Bible, but she had no idea how God would answer her prayers. They converted one of their bedrooms into a temporary sanctuary, and began Sunday services for their family. They sang hymns, took an offering for other missionaries, and Fran preached a full sermon. God began to answer Edith's prayers when a little Irish woman, who also lived in the boarding house, began to attend their services regularly.

As winter turned to spring, Madame Wildermuth, their French teacher, became concerned about the girls' health and convinced the Schaeffers to spend the summer in the mountains. As their summer in the Alps neared an end, they wondered if they might be able to stay in Chalet Bon Accueil in Champéry for the full year. As they prayed, Edith carefully figured their finances and they looked for a school for the girls. After knowing what they could spend and that schooling could be arranged, they prayed very specifically: "Dear Heavenly Father, if it is Thy will for us to be here this year, the Marclays (from whom they rented Chalet Bon Accueil) could easily get word changing the plans and freeing this chalet, or perhaps there is another chalet suitable for us. Please show us Thy will."

When the Schaeffers prayed to stay in Champéry, they gave God some good and unselfish reasons for staying. In their larger home in Champéry, God had led them to teach the Bible to some of the girls who came to Switzerland for school or on vacation, and they needed this larger home to teach more people. If they stayed, this work with these and other girls could continue. They had also discussed truth and the Bible with others who had traveled to their home, so it was not out of the way. From this new location, they could still travel easily to Finland, Holland, England, and other places to promote Children For Christ. But as they prayed, they also wanted to be fair with Madame Turrian, since they had told her they would return in the Fall. They wanted God to help her to find new tenants and not lose the income she needed.

The whole family prayed that God would answer their prayers by the Friday before they needed to leave. When Friday came, they had received no answer. With downcast hearts, they walked into the village to say goodbye. As they neared the hotel, Madame Wildermuth's sister met them and indicated that her brother might rent them another home, Chalet des Frênes, in Champéry for a year, for less than he would rent it for the four months during the summer and winter vacations. After asking him the price, Madame Wildermuth thought the Lord must have put the amount in his mind: he gave them such a low rate they could afford to stay.

A wealthy English lady had built Chalet des Frênes about twenty years earlier, while Edith was still in high school in Canada. As she went from room to room, Edith discovered that her decorating tastes must have been similar to hers. Could the Lord have been providing this home for them even before they had prayed for it?

The Schaeffers went back to Lausanne and returned to Champéry in November, and just before Christmas a French-speaking minister asked Pastor Schaeffer to provide a Christmas Eve service in English for the Protestant Church in Champéry. Prior to World War I, another English lady had built a chapel for Protestant worship (especially for the English-speaking tourists) in this Roman Catholic canton. She had built it near the train station for everyone to see, and had included Scripture texts on the inside walls as a silent testimony to the gospel. On Christmas Sunday, Fran preached to about 150 worshipers, including girls from England and boys from Scotland. Following the service, he learned that he could conduct weekly services in the church for as long as they lived in Champéry. What an answer to Edith's prayers! Within two years from the time they left America, Francis Schaeffer was preaching "in a real church" again, and he continued to conduct Christmas Eve services in that church for the next thirty-two years. Years before they needed a home in the Alps and a church in which to preach, the Lord had provided for their needs.

When we pray and ask others to pray for us, we never know whose prayers are being answered as God works in our lives. As we think of the hopes and prayers of the English woman who built her chapel in 1912 (the year Fran was born), we do not know if Francis Schaeffer preached there in answer to her prayers offered thirty or forty years earlier, or in answer to the Schaeffers' prayers, or in answer to all their prayers and others prayers combined. In this life, the combination of God's purposes and our prayers remains a mystery. God teaches us, however, that what we do right now;

what we pray, build, say, or write might meet the needs of some unknown person or group tens or hundreds of years in the future. By praying for the Lord's leading and plan, and by doing the very best we can today for His glory, our work can benefit countless numbers of people over an unforeseen number of years.

The Schaeffers really prayed for God to use them fully in any way that He chose. They were careful stewards of the Lord's money. They took nothing for granted, but praised God for His many answers to their prayers. They continued to pray for God's direction, and asked others to pray with them regarding very specific people and things. As they sought God's guidance, they considered the concerns and needs of others, and prayed and planned carefully so others might not be adversely affected in answer to their prayers. They did not want to give God any good reasons for saying "No" to their requests.

Jesus encourages us to pray by saying that our Heavenly Father knows our needs even before we pray. He inspires us to persevere in prayer by telling us that God has provided for our needs in advance. Yet, in some mysterious way, many of God's provisions depend upon our prayers. As we converse with God, we discover God's leading. Through prayer and fellowship with God, we learn to follow God and go to the people and places He has prepared for us in advance. God builds our faith by answering our specific prayers. We see Him going on ahead of us, leading us, guiding us, providing for us, and strengthening our faith in Him. PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father, teach me the lessons you want me to learn from these answered prayers of the Schaeffers. Help me to see that you love and care for me just as much as you love and care for others. Help me to see how much you do for me each day, so I can praise you each day for your wonderful provisions. Help me to be more specific in my prayers as I seek to know and do your will. Help me to glorify your name in all I pray and do. Help me to show and teach others how you want us to pray. Amen.

© Copyright L. G. Parkhurst, Jr. Revised Edition 2008  
Write For Permission To Reprint Any Parts Or Chapters  
Use the Contact Us address or e-mail address form on this website.