

## 11. God Gives More Than We Ask

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Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. -- Ephesians 3:20,21

Francis Schaeffer emphasized that Jesus Christ reigned as Lord over the whole of life. And when he began to write and publish his books in the 1960's, he demonstrated this truth and inspired people to work for the extension of God's Kingdom over every area of life. For Fran, believing Jesus is Lord was not just a theological statement of faith. He desired to live totally under the lordship of Christ; therefore, God answered his prayers and met the daily needs of his family. Fran learned from the Bible and experience that Jesus ruled over all, and this gave his message an urgency that led many to follow the Savior.

In Switzerland, Fran and Edith had to work out the details for their children's education, so they would be prepared to attend either an American or European university. When they prayed, schools were found. If the school became inappropriate, they prayed again, and God provided another school and even the money for them to attend. Their heavenly Father was just as concerned about preparing their children for their future work as they were. Because God wanted their children to learn subjects in a variety of different fields, and not be confined to just the "spiritual things" and a knowledge of the Bible, they can do many things and are highly effective witnesses to all types of people.

One day Priscilla told her parents that she needed help in Algebra. They asked her to pray about it, thinking that God would give her the understanding she needed. And they all prayed for her that evening. The next day, a mathematics professor from a nearby school and his wife called on the Schaeffers at their home. They had some deep theological questions brought on from false teachings, and one Sunday at church they had sensed that Fran might have the answers they needed. They came to spend the afternoon so Fran could clear up their confusions. Fran answered question after question until 2:00 am, when Professor Czerny and his wife bowed their heads and received Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior with an understanding of what that meant.

As we have seen, God can use us and our prayers for years to lead someone to salvation, or He can take only a few hours or minutes. The mystery of God's work in salvation remains with Him, but whether quickly or not, God has wise and loving reasons for His perfect timing in answers to prayer.

Priscilla had served as the translator throughout Fran's discussions with Professor Czerny and his wife, and in appreciation for Fran's teaching they asked if they could do anything for them. With amazed looks at one another, they exclaimed that Priscilla needed a tutor in Algebra, and Mr. Czerny readily agreed to help her. Later, Professor Czerny met Mr. Exhenry, and they became the first two elders in the International Presbyterian Church.

God prepared the Schaeffers for the eventual founding of L'Abri and for demonstrating His existence through answered prayer by answering their prayers in every area of life and by meeting their every practical need. They saw God working every day of their lives. Fran and Edith did not reserve prayer for only the spiritual things or the big things or the major problems or the conversion of sinners. They tried to maintain an open and constant communication with the Lord throughout the day--seeking His will and taking everything to God in prayer. Because they knew God was their heavenly Father, they knew He was concerned about every aspect of their lives and their whole family. When they prayed for Priscilla to have help in math, God taught them that He could provide a tutor as easily as give her the understanding she needed without one. He taught them something about His economy: the Schaeffers could share their knowledge of salvation with a professor who could then share his knowledge of math with them. And God gave Priscilla a born again teacher who, as a new believer, would learn as much about the things of the Lord from her as she would learn about math from him. God gave everyone immeasurably more than they asked or thought when they prayed.

When God begins to teach us more about prayer, He will sometimes allow us to have an unusual need that He will meet in a special way only in answer to our prayers. And then He will wait until we have prayed. And He will not answer us until He is certain that the time is right and we will learn the lesson that He intends for us. God uses many different ways to teach us about His loving nature and longing to hear us pray, and then He cares for us in all things.

The Schaeffers did not always receive a visible answer to their prayers the very next day. As we have seen, they only received some answers after months of persevering prayer, because God must prepare us and others to receive the answer in the way that will do the most good and build up people's faith in the process. Far more is involved in God's

answers to prayer than we will ever understand in this life. Not receiving an immediate answer does not necessarily mean that we are spiritually out of touch with God or being punished for some sin. It may simply mean that God has many lessons to teach us and others before giving us the answers we seek.

Some answers to prayer come like the building of a house. The land must be surveyed and bought, and the plans must be drawn and the foundation laid in just the right order. The frame is constructed before the walls are built and the roof is added. When God answers prayers, He does so with order and precision. And sometimes He will teach us to pray in the right order for things before He will answer our prayers, or He will answer a series of prayers one at a time as we learn to pray for each new need or step. God wants us to learn to think logically, and use our mind as well as our spirit in prayer. As Paul wrote, "So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind" (1 Corinthians 14:15). When God answers our prayers in the right order, He reveals something about His nature and character, and meets the needs of our logical minds. Through prayer, God will strengthen and discipline our rational ways of thinking. And then we will praise Him more and more for building our faith in Him with every answer He gives to every request.

If the Schaeffers had not prayed for Priscilla to get help in mathematics, the professor might never have knocked on their door or they might never have seen his coming as a specific answer to their prayers. Over the years, the Schaeffers came to believe that every person who knocked on their door was sent in answer to prayer, theirs or someone else's, and was special. If the Schaeffers had put their needs before the professor's and asked for his help immediately, the professor and his wife might never have had the time they needed to come to the Lord quickly. Having learned the lesson of praying for God's timing and words from an unselfish heart, God could send them just the right help when needed. Prayer

Dear Father, teach me the lessons about prayer that you want me to learn from this book, so you will not need to spend years teaching me what you can teach me now. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

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