

Does God Answer Prayer?

Bruce Bird—August 9, 2025

- Does God Answer Prayer?
- Does He intercede, change events, and save the day?

Well, I say *yes*, I say He does! He has done and He changes not. Here's why. The date was October 20th of 1942. How many of you have heard of Eddie Rickenbacker? Some of you will. You'll know after today. An event happened to them that changed their lives. And it's adventure that took 26 days. The greatest adventure that man can have where he finds his God. ***It's an incredible story of endurance in the face of terrible hardships!***

He was an American pilot flying a US super bomber, a four-engine job. They were flying from Hawaii to the Canton Islands. And they were hopelessly lost because the navigation gear broke down and they were running out of fuel. They knew they would have to ditch in the ocean and the swells were 10 feet high.

As they plowed in, the ship started to break up and sink very quickly. So, the men had to rush to get three rafts out, and they jumped out with basically the clothes on their back. The total food they had was four oranges, very little clothing, little bit of line and some fish hooks and two knives.

The first night they shivered from the cold and the wet, and also from the sharks rubbing themselves up against the bottom of their rafts. Things were looking bad.

Then in the daylight the sun come up and burned their blistering bodies. On the first morning they divided that orange into eight parts and they ate it peel and all. And then they ate that and ate an orange every second day. They longed for water. They were surrounded by water but none that they could drink.

One of the boys carried a pocket Bible with him. And they often made fun of him calling him the preacher because he'd read this Bible now and again. And no, they weren't joking. They asked, because their attitudes were different, 'Would you read some verses out of there?'

Guess where he turned? Matt. 6 and how more appropriate. Follow along.

Matthew 6:31 (FV): "Therefore, do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'With what shall we be clothed?' For the nations seek after all these things. And your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things. But *as for* you, seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (vs 31-33).

Picture yourself there. Wouldn't there be some silence after that, and thinking? Anyway, after reading these words, some of the men were agnostics and atheists, but they asked God for food and water. *The answer to that prayer was sensational!* They asked for water. *They watched as an enormous bird flew down and landed on top of Eddie Rickenbacker's head*, and he grabbed it real quick and wrung its neck or whatever and they ate it raw.

Their strength started to come back. That night it rained, and they spread out clothes to catch the water and they had all they needed. One of them said later 'that was great water.'

On the 13th day one of the boys died. He'd been hurt pretty bad when the ship broke up. For 26 days they drifted in the South Pacific around the south of the middle of the ocean out there. Many miracles happened in those weeks.

Once a fish even jumped into the raft. On another occasion a cloud approached. They watched it anxiously as the need for water was terrible, and they watched it float away. They cried out to God saying bring the water back. Give us water! And then the wind changed and it came back and dumped water on all they needed. WOW!

After 26 days they were sighted by an allied plane and rescued. Sergeant Bartek later wrote, 'As soon as we are in the rafts at the mercy of God we realize we are in no condition to expect help from Him.'

Did they live pristine clean lives? *Probably not!* But he realized that 'we should not have expected help from Him.' We spent hours confessing our sins to one another and to God. And we prayed and God answered'; it was real! He said, 'We needed water, we got water. We needed food, we got food. We wanted to get fish, we had meat.' You know seagulls don't go around landing on people's heads. He said:

That day the plane the planes flew over. He said we cried like babies. It was then I decided I cried out to God. If You'll send that plane back I will remember You always and I will tell everybody about it. I'll believe in You.'

And the plane came back! *And the others flew on.*

- Did it just happen? *It did not! God sent the plane back!*
- Are they believing in God and answered prayer?

For me those blazing days represent the greatest adventures that man can have is the one in which he finds his God.

We met a stranger in watery waves around the equator I was an agnostic and atheist, but from my companions I learned to pray. I saw prayer answered. My entire life was changed. I'll never forget the adventure.

We often get the idea that only a privileged few get answered prayers. These boys weren't privileged. There's a promise that everyone who asks receives. It doesn't say not almost everyone. It doesn't say the majority. It's not talking about a small minority.

John 14:13: "And whatever you shall ask in My name, this will I do that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do *it*" (vs 13-14).

Whatever you ask the Bible says 'in My name.' That's all inclusive. That's like a blank check all filled out with a million dollars and all you have to do is sign your name and it's yours.

- How about us?
- How do we get our prayers answered?

Well for me, I've had tinnitus for 52 years. I've been anointed several times. It hasn't happened, yet. Will it? *I believe it will!* I've had other prayers answered. For all you Canadians, one of the prayers you've probably been praying the last nine years is the removal of our Prime Minister Tudeau. ***Well we got our answer and the replacement is no better!*** So more prayers are required!

Matthew 7:7: "Ask, and it shall be given to you. Seek, and you shall find. Knock, and it shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it shall be opened" (vs 7-8).

- it doesn't say almost everyone
- it doesn't say the majority
- it doesn't say the privileged few

John 14:13: "And whatever you shall ask in My name, this will I do that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do *it*" (vs 23-24). ***Promise!***

- sometimes it's not right away
- sometimes it's a little later in life

1-Kings 19—Remember Elijah? After the showdown of Mount Carmel he must have been flying 10 feet high. Do we ever get down? *He did!*

1-Kings 19:1: "And Ahab told Jezebel all that

Elijah had done, and all whom he had killed, all the prophets with the sword. And Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah saying, 'So, let the gods do *to me*, and more also, if I do not make your life like the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time.' And when he saw *that*, he rose and ran for his life... [he's got fear now] ... and came to Beersheba of Judah, and left his servant there. Then he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he begged for his life, that he might die. And he said, 'It is enough. O LORD, take away my life, for I *am* no better than my fathers'" (vs 1-4).

I think we could say that Elijah was kind of down in the dumps; maybe a little bit melancholy. Well, he ate twice and goes on:

Verse 5: And as he lay and slept under a broom tree, behold, then an angel touched him and said to him, 'Arise, eat.' And he looked, and, behold, a cake *was* baked on the coals, and a jug of water at his head. And he ate and drank, and lay down again" (vs 5-6). *So, I guess Elijah likes to nap after a meal!*

Verse 7: "And the angel of the LORD came to him the second time and touched him, and said, 'Arise, eat, because the journey *is* too great for you.' And he arose, and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God" (vs 7-8).

What an incredible thing! I think he was eating some pretty turbo-charged food.

Another example of a professing Christian is George Mueller of Bristol, England. He was born in 1805, died in 1898. So he lived 93 years. George Mueller raised up 117 schools for the underprivileged, the orphans, and offered these children education, food, lodging, and get them started in life.

Over his long career, he touched the lives and probably saved a lot of lives, 120,000 orphans. Brethren, this was during a time of Charles Dickens. This was 'jolly old England.' Children were everywhere. Before Mueller, 7,200 children under eight-years-old were in prison. That's how 'jolly old England' was handling the problem. Let's take a look.

We read of his story. It's an incredible read. And he was a Sunday-keeper. When there was no food for breakfast, he would pray. You could just see the kids all lined up like in Charles Dickens are lined up waiting and they've got their spoon and their bowl there and they're looking. Where's the food? And then Mueller would pray. He'd be praying on the food and the kids are sitting there thinking, one eye's open and I don't see anything. They're banging on the back door. Here's a cart backing up with bread and porridge and things like that and saved the day.

That was answered prayer. Never took out a loan, no debt. I'd say the man had ability. He must have turned the charm on. He prayed and he trusted God to provide and neither he nor his orphans went hungry.

Psalm 84:11: "For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly." *We're to walk uprightly!*

Now we'll go closer to home. We have a lady that I've known in my life for a long time, Mrs. Thomas, not her real name, but she and her family were up in the Prince Albert City area. We met her in Worldwide COG years ago. She was about the age of my mother. Her kids were about my age.

She was Ukrainian, didn't know English, had to learn that. She didn't know how to read or write English. Her kids would come home from school and bring their workbooks and teach her how to read and write English. She went to the Greek Orthodox religion, to the priest, with her spiritual questions and problem every Sunday and she pestered him with questions.

Finally he says, 'Here, take this.' It was a *Plain Truth* magazine. 'Read it!' She did and then she got a subscription. She had a hard life, not an easy life at all, and yet a fine family!

Let's take a look at James 5 because one of her girls, got sick. She told me this story over 25 or 28 years ago, a real true story. Her baby got sick and it was sick unto death. Doctors could do nothing. It was:

- wasting away
- pale
- hardly breathing
- hadn't eaten for days
- was gray and limp

James 5:14: "Is anyone sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the Church, and let them pray over him after anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord."

So, she took some oil and she took her baby to the priest. And she says, 'I read in the Bible here that this is what we use oil for, and you lay on hands. Would you pray over my baby? He said, 'Okay.' And he did. *Instantly she was better*, like that night or on the way home the next morning, she was up bouncing around, hungry and eating and skipping. ***A total, total healing!***

She told me that story at least 25 to 28 years ago. What a miracle! She didn't know about a Worldwide Church of God then, but she did later. The priest seemed like a caring individual, very good.

- Why shouldn't we be?
- How do we get our prayers answered?

John 14—we find some answers here, some clues. We see the words of Jesus Christ here in:

John 14:1: "Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in Me."

So, we've got to believe! And in whose name?

Verse 13: "And whatever you shall ask in My name, this will I do that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it. If you love Me, keep the commandments—namely, My commandments" (vs 13-15).

Well, she certainly went on to keep the commandments. So, there's a certain level of performance required.

Verse 16: "And I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that it may be with you throughout the age."

Brethren, what an incredible story. "In His name..."

- What does that mean? *It means the third commandment:*

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. The Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

- Do you have any friends or neighbors that use God's name in vain? *I do!*

We are accountable before God. That name is not to be trifled with. This is certainly not the case with George Mueller or Mrs. Thomas nor the eight men. They learned to petition God in the name of Jesus Christ. One little pocket Bible, lots of time in danger, dehydration, heat and cold and hunger and thirst. A tremendous humbling experience with tremendous results.

We all remember Nebuchadnezzar. He was so pumped of his own greatness, his might. And then one day, BOOM! and he runs out of the place on all four and he becomes like an animal for seven years living out in the grass and the dew.

One day, 'Oh, God, are You there? *And he was a new man!* What an incredible story. Wouldn't you like it if our prime ministers and presidents had to go through that?

King Manasseh, same thing, hauled away with fish hooks, thrown in the dungeon, he repents and God reinstates him. *Not to salvation!*

Anyway, these men in the life rafts experienced this very humbly. They respected God

and they carried it with them the rest of their lives from everything I understand.

- George Mueller was obviously moved with compassion
- Mrs. Thomas learned to believe and trust in God and died in the faith full of years

God demands this of us as Christians, **daily Bible study, and daily prayer!** Does fasting come to mind? Do you suppose it came to the minds of those eight boys in those rafts?

How about keeping the Ten Commandments in the letter and the spirit?

Revelation 22:7: "...Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book." *The prayers must be in Christ's name!*

Matthew 7:21 "Not everyone who says to Me 'Lord, Lord' shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but the one who is doing the will of My Father, Who is in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy through Your name? And did we not cast out demons through Your name? And did we not perform many works of power through Your name?'" (vs 21-22).

They recognized there was power in that name. But God said, I never knew you. It's got to be more than just lip service.

James 1:3: "Knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance." *Those boys had their faith tested!*

Verse 4: "But let endurance have its perfect work, so that you may be perfect and complete, not lacking in anything."

Most of us wish for more faith. Well, how do we feed our faith? It brings to mind in the story that I heard of an old Eskimo gentleman. He was out walking in the snow with his grandson. And he said, 'Grandson, in your heart are two wolves. There's a mean, conniving, cruel one, and he has no care for anybody but himself. And the other wolf is kind and gentle and full of compassion and forgiveness. And they war and fight in your heart all your life. And they win, they fight a war.

The little Eskimo lad said, well, grandpa, if they war, who wins? The old Eskimo said, the one you feed. WOW! Brethren, **that is profound!**

Romans 10:17: "So then, faith comes by hearing, and hearing through the Word of God."

- Did these young men have a Bible? *Yes!*
- Did they have all the time in the world? *Yes!*
- Did they have any distractions? *Nope!*

We all read of the Apostle Paul; he had a

physical malady that wasn't healed right away. But he went on to do incredible works. We all know the story of Paul and the shipwreck at the island of Melitta, where they broke a shore and they all came in. And then he got a viper attached to him and he shook it off.

The people on the islands said, 'He's going to die!' *And he didn't!* They said, 'He's a god! He's a god! Why do we need a god around here? He started healing people. I mean, they gave him the keys to the city. He talks about the Isle of Melitta being like a very warm people and how great that is.

You know, I read a lot of Louis Lemur old cowboy books and I read Acts. There's so much similarity to it. There's a story flow. What an adventure. I read a lot of Western novels. I also got one in the truck and in the car. They're great, they add color.

Have we gone through incidents of answered prayer? *Well, I have!* And you all have. I was in the bush a couple of years back knocking down some firewood and the chainsaw flipped apart and here the nut had come off that holds the chain on. I thought, oh, that's snow, twigs, bark, leaves. It was gone. And I didn't have another. I said, God, I need that nut.

I looked near and it was in a little snow and I put it back in and away I went. You've had things like that. I've had things like that. Today we've covered a few of the guidelines of answered prayer. God changes not. We know that. He is the same yesterday, today and forever.

We've seen the example of Eddie Rickenbacker and his crew of seven men. And we saw them adrift for 26 days around the equator, south of the equator in the South Pacific. It doesn't get much worse than that. *But we saw miraculous answered prayer!* We saw young men whose hearts and souls were changed.

We remember George Mueller, who fed, housed and educated and cared for thousands of orphans. And only by the power of faith and answered prayer he had no debt.

Who could forget Mrs. Thomas and the Catholic priest? She saw the miraculous interventions of faith and following by what she saw in the Bible that was brought to her attention from an old *Plain Truth* magazine. She saw her baby healed by answered prayer.

Well, in conclusion, brethren, **their prayers were answered and ours can be too!**

Scriptural References:

- 1) Matthew 6:31-33
- 2) John 14:13-14

- 3) Matthew 7:7
- 4) John 14:13-14
- 5) 1-Kings 19:1-8
- 6) Psalm 84:11
- 7) James 5:14
- 8) John 14:1, 13-16
- 9) Revelation 22:7
- 10) Matthew 7:21-22
- 11) James 1:3
- 12) Romans 10:17

Scripture referenced, not quoted: Matthew 3

BB:bo/po
Transcribed: 8/15/25

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