

God's Security System

By Barbara Gordon

Video game, science kit, a drum or violin. I scanned nine-year-old Bryce's birthday list. A bark of laughter escaped as I continued, *a home security system.*

Bryce's misunderstanding of a home security system was evident in his exact words, "I need one to capture special moments in the house and outside."

This morning I examined a different list—my prayer list. I wonder if I, too, could use a lesson or two or three concerning my entreaties. Is my purpose in praying to create special moments or to change the world?

The writer of Hebrews 10:36, lists three actions associated with suffering affliction I find applicable to prayer. "You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised." (NIV) This verse tells me in order to endure hardship and to effectively pray, I need to persevere, do the will of God and then receive his promises.

Dictionary.com tells me perseverance is a *steady persistence in a course of action, a purpose, a state, etc., especially in spite of difficulties, obstacles, or discouragement.* The Bible is our best source of persevering prayers. The prophet Jeremiah continued his pleadings to God despite beatings, mockery and imprisonment. The apostle Paul stayed faithful through all sorts of abuse. Jesus' teachings are clear, we "should always pray and not give up." (Luke 18:1b NIV)

Steadfast praying often results in the answers we seek. After many years of praying for the salvation of a friend, I rejoiced when she confessed her sins and was baptized. Those

years of crying out to God on her behalf gained me not only my request, but also a greater faith and a stronger relationship with God. Persevering prayer has the power to change situations and to change me.

The second action in Hebrews 10:36 directs us to do the will of God. Disobedience hinders our relationship with God, and therefore negatively impacts prayer. John 9:31 is clear, "We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly person who does his will." (NIV) The Old Testament Israelites, found this to be true. Even though they were God's chosen people, during times of idol worship, grumbling and corrupt sacrifices, their connection to God was broken. When they confessed and repented, restoration came.

Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived warns us, "If anyone turns a deaf ear to my instruction, even their prayers are detestable." (Proverbs 28:9 NIV) Recently I experienced a time of dryness in my prayer life. I lacked enthusiasm and my conversation with God felt one-way. I brought my requests to him, but nothing happened. Then the Holy Spirit reminded me of a disagreement with a church leader regarding a ministry area. Though the conflict had been resolved on the surface, I harbored ill-feelings toward my Christian brother. When I confessed and repented of my sin, power in prayer returned. Sin and prayer cannot co-exist.

The Hebrews' author assures us perseverance and doing God's will results in receiving his promises. Abraham persevered, obeyed and received. His wife, Sarah, was ninety-years-old when God announced she would have a baby. Paul describes Abraham's unwavering faith in "being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised." (Romans 4:21 NIV) Genesis chapter twenty-two highlights Abraham's obedient willingness to sacrifice his son, Isaac. Perseverance and obedience equaled promise received.

Bryce made his list with full assurance I, his Nana, would

provide. God is more faithful than even the most devoted grandma. Intercession is the best security system in the world, and I am asking God to teach me to apply Hebrews 10:36 as I put together my prayer list.

By the way, I bought Bryce a drum.

—Barbara Gordon is a prayer leader from Moundville, Missouri.

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