

Why Does God Sometimes Not Answer Our Prayers?

Jesus said, "Ask, and it will be given to you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and it will be opened for you. For everyone who asks, receives. He who seeks, finds. To him who knocks, it will be opened" (Matthew 7:7 & 8). "I tell you, keep asking, and it will be given to you. Keep seeking, and you will find. Keep knocking, and it will be opened for you. For everyone who asks, receives. He who seeks, finds. To him who knocks it will be opened" (Luke 11:9 & 10).

Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, that if two of you will agree on earth concerning anything that they will ask, it will be done for them by my Father who is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:19 & 20).

Jesus said, "Surely I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be cast into the sea,' it would be done. All things, whatever you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive" (Matthew 21:21 & 22).

Jesus said, "Have faith in God. For most certainly I tell you, whoever may tell this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is happening; he will have whatever he says. Therefore I tell you, all things whatever you pray and ask for, believe that you have received them, and you will have them. Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father who is in heaven, may also forgive you your transgressions, but if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your transgressions" (Mark 11: 22 to 26).

Jesus said, 'If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you will and it will be done for you' (John 15:7).

Jesus said, "In that day you will ask me no questions. Most certainly I tell you, whatever you may ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. Until now, you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be made full" (John 16: 23 & 24).

'Whatever we ask, we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do the things that are pleasing in his sight' (1 John 3:22).

These verses seem very promising at a glance. They indicate we only have to believe in Jesus, serve Him, ask and all our prayers will be answered. The reality of Christian life is not that simple. Yes, we must remain dwelling in Jesus; yes, we must serve Him and bear fruit; yes, we must ask but there is much more to having our prayers answered. There are many conditions we have to meet before God will answer our prayers. We must be sure our request is totally in the will of God. 'This is the boldness that we have in him; if we ask anything according to his will he hears us, and if we know that he hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which we have asked of him' (1 John 5:14 & 15).

We must be sure we have the right attitude and motive. 'You ask and do not receive because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it for your pleasures' (James 4:3).

We must not have unforgiveness or any other sin in our hearts or the Lord will not hear us. 'If you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses' (Matthew 6:14:15). 'If I hold sin in my heart, the Lord will not hear me' (Psalm 66:18).

We must not doubt, change our minds back and forth or be 'in two minds' about our request. 'Ask in faith without doubting, for they who doubt are like a wave of the sea, driven by the wind and tossed. Let that person not think that they will receive anything from the Lord. They are double-minded and unstable in all their ways' (James 1:6 to 8).

A man will have his prayers hindered or even cut off, if he does not regard his wife correctly. 'You husbands, live with your wives according to knowledge (of God), giving honour to the woman as to the weaker vessel, as being also joint heirs of the grace of life so that your prayers may not be hindered or cut off' (1 Peter 3:7).

We may have to wait for God's perfect time. 'For everything there is a season and a time for every purpose under heaven' (Ecclesiastes 3:1). Jesus said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the

Father has set within his own authority" (Acts 1:7). A good example of waiting until the Lord's perfect time was in the situation of the death and subsequent raising of Lazarus (John 11:1 to 45). Mary and Martha were desperate for the Lord Jesus to come quickly to heal Lazarus when he became ill, but Jesus deliberately tarried until after Lazarus had died, and both women and some people who were present, accused Jesus of deliberately leaving Lazarus to die (verses 21, 32 & 37). Even so, Martha had the faith to believe that God could raise Lazarus again if Jesus asked Him to (verse 22). Jesus delayed the answer to Mary and Martha's prayers so the God of Heaven would be glorified (verse 40) and so people would fully understand that Jesus was the Resurrection and the Life (verse 25). If Jesus had healed Lazarus when they first asked Him to, the people would never have seen the miraculous event of Lazarus being raised from the dead after four days (verses 39, 43 to 45).

We must have faith in God and have the absolute belief He will answer. Jesus said to them, "I tell you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will tell this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you" (Matthew 17:20). We can see that this is a slight exaggeration because we know we are unable to literally move a whole mountain, but Jesus was saying that even if we have a tiny bit of faith, a huge problem in our lives that we imagine to be mountain-sized, can often be moved.

We must consider a person's own will when we are praying. God will never override a person's free will so if we are praying for the salvation of a loved one, we must take into account that person's own choice. Jesus said, "Whosoever will." In other words, whoever wants to or has the desire to, may accept His plan of salvation, and some chose to never accept Jesus. Salvation is a free-will choice, not a forced situation. 'The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come!" He who hears, let him say, "Come!" He who is thirsty, let him come. He who desires, let him come and take the water of life freely' (Revelation 22:17). 'How do you know wife, whether you will save your husband? How do you know husband, whether you will save your wife?' (1 Corinthians 7:16).

Sometimes we may think He is saying "No", when in fact He is saying, "Wait". Sarah, Hannah and Elizabeth all had to wait many years before the Lord finally fulfilled His promise of a child. When it happened, Abraham and Sarah could hardly believe it and laughed then rejoiced. Hannah prayed desperately then gave her son back to the Lord. Elizabeth's husband Zacharias doubted, questioned the angel and was struck dumb. 'Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, "Will a child be born to him who is one hundred years old? Will Sarah, who is ninety years old, give birth?" (Genesis 17:17). 'Sarah laughed within herself saying, "After I have grown old will I have pleasure, my husband being old also?" (Genesis 18:12). Sarah said, "God has made me laugh. Everyone who hears will laugh with me. Who would have said to Abraham, that Sarah would nurse children? For I have borne him a son in his old age." Isaac grew and was weaned. Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned' (Genesis 21:6 to 8).

'Hannah spoke in her heart; only her lips moved but her voice was not heard ... "I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit ... I poured out my soul before the Lord ... for out of the abundance of sorrow have I spoken." Eli answered, "Go in peace and the God of Israel grant the petition that you have asked of him." Hannah conceived and bore a son and named him Samuel saying, "Because I have asked him of the Lord ... For this child I prayed and the Lord has given me my petition which I asked of him, therefore I have given him to the Lord. As long as he lives he is given to God" (1 Samuel 1:13 to 28).

'They had no child because Elizabeth was barren and they were both well advanced in years ... The angel said to him, "Don't be afraid Zacharias, because your request has been heard and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will call him John" ... Zacharias said to the angel, "How can I be sure of this? For I am an old man and my wife is well advanced in years."

The angel answered him, "I am Gabriel who stands in the presence of God. I was sent to speak to you and bring you this good news. Behold, you will not be able to speak until the day these things happen, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their proper time."

The time that Elizabeth should give birth was fulfilled and she brought forth a son. Her neighbours and her family heard that the Lord had magnified his mercy towards her, and they rejoiced with her' (Luke 1:7 to 58).

These people all had to wait until the Lord's perfect time, even though it seemed impossible. If our situation seems impossible and it looks like the Lord is ignoring our petitions, we need to remind ourselves that God has his own time frame which does not always fit ours. Jesus gave us a parable that indicated we need to keep asking and not give up, even to the point of nagging and wearing Him out with our constant demand. 'Jesus told them a parable, that they must always pray and not give up, saying, "There was a judge in a

certain city who did not fear God and did not respect man. A widow was in that city and she often came to him saying, 'Defend me from my adversary!'

The judge wouldn't for a while but afterwards he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God, nor respect man, yet because this widow bothers me I will defend her, or else she will wear me out by her continual demanding.'

Jesus said, "Listen to what the unrighteous judge says. Will God not avenge his chosen ones who are crying out to him day and night, and yet he exercises patience with them? I tell you that he will avenge them quickly. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:1 to 8).

There are times when God says, "Yes," and He starts working out the solution for us, but earthly circumstances are the reason we wait. Sometimes disobedient Christians cause the answer to prayer to be delayed by not listening to the Lord's voice. For example, a poor person in church may need a new pair of shoes and has been praying for it, and the answer to that prayer is sitting in the congregation ignoring the Lord's prompting to give the poor man his new shoes. Sometimes Government procedures, bureaucracy and 'red tape' are in the way. For example, if a couple are seeking to adopt a child, they have to endure months of questioning, filling in forms and background checks. Sometimes the devil pokes his nose in and causes a delay when God has already said, "Yes." 'Don't be afraid, for from the first day that you did set your heart to understand and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard and I have come in response to your words but the prince of the kingdom of Persia (an evil spirit) withstood me for twenty-one days' (Daniel 10:12 & 13).

The hardest answer we will ever hear is "No" and sometimes God says no, we cannot have what we ask for, even when we have met all of His conditions. When the Lord says 'No' it can cause great distress. The Apostle Paul and even Jesus Himself had to accept a decisive "No" from God the Father. Notice both Paul and Jesus asked God three times to remove them from the situation. Only after the third time, did they stop asking. Paul knew the reason God said 'No' was to keep him from become overly proud of the advanced revelations of divine knowledge God kept giving him. 'By reason of the exceeding greatness of the revelations so that I should not become proud, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, so that I should not be excessively proud. Concerning this thing, I begged the Lord three times that it might depart from me, but He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you for My power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:7 to 9).

Jesus became so distressed he suffered Hematidrosis or bleeding from pores in the skin. 'Jesus took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee and began to be sorrowful and severely troubled. He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me." He went forward a little, fell on His face and prayed saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass away from Me. Nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will." Again, a second time He went away and prayed saying, "My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done." He came again and found them sleeping for their eyes were heavy. He left them again, went away and prayed a third time saying the same words' (Matthew 26:37 to 44).

Jesus took with Him Peter, James and John and began to be greatly troubled and distressed. He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here, and watch." He went forward a little and fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass away from Him. He said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible to You. Please remove this cup from Me. However, not what I will, but what You will" (Mark 14:33 to 36).

'Jesus knelt down and prayed saying, "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me. Nevertheless, not My will but Yours be done." An angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him. Being in agony (of heart and mind), He prayed more earnestly. His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground' (Luke 22:41 to 44).

It is vitally important to ask the Lord's will before we pray and ask for things, then we must accept that His will may not be what we want, otherwise we can wait for many frustrating years for an answer and end up terribly disappointed. When we want something desperately, we can believe that it is God's will, and yet we can be mistaken. The Lord will say 'No' if the answer to our prayer will not increase the Kingdom of God, or is not in our long-term best interests. He will say 'No' if He has another path for us to walk. He may say 'No' to keep us humble. Sometimes the Lord will not answer our prayers even when the scriptures say the answer is right in God's will, such as for healing of our bodies, or having enough food and clothing. There are some Christians in some nations who live in utter poverty, hunger and destitution, yet in other nations Christians have too much. Some people are healed instantly when they are prayed for, other people suffer terrible pain and die. Some people are given a spouse and a family; others have to spend their lives alone. We need to

seek His will and His answers before we seek our own fulfilment. On the other hand, God is sovereign and He does not have to explain Himself to us, nor does He have to obey us – we have to obey Him.

The scriptures tell us God does whatever He wants, and if He wants what we want, then we have our answer. If He does not want what we want, then we go without. Either way, God does what He pleases and we must accept His answer without question. We are after all, just created pieces of dust or clay – He is the Potter. 'Our God is in the heavens. He does whatever he pleases' (Psalm 115:3). 'Who can oppose Him? What His Soul desires, that is what He does' (Job 23:13). 'Who can hinder Him? Who will ask Him, "What are you doing?" (Job 9:12). 'You turn things upside down! Should the Potter be thought to be like clay; should the thing made say about Him who made it, "He did not make me," or the thing formed say of Him who formed it, "He has no understanding?" (Isaiah 29:16). 'O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay and You our Potter. We are all the works of Your hand' (Isaiah 64:8).

Amen and God bless you.

www.bibleabookoftruth.com