

God Answers Every Prayer

As a prayer leader, the most difficult question that I am asked is, “Why doesn’t God answer my prayer?” (And I get asked this question a lot.) Truthfully, God does answer every prayer; it just may not be the answer that we want. So often, we are inclined to think the only answer to prayer is “yes.” Unfortunately, that just isn’t the case. Just as a good parent does not grant all the requests of their child, God does not answer every request in the way we desire.

I find it interesting that throughout the Gospels, Jesus never mentioned “unanswered prayer.” He proclaimed boldly that prayer is always answered. “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened” (Matthew 7:7–8). And, “If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it” (John 14:14)!

The important thing to know is that God always gives the correct answer to prayer. He may not answer in the way you want, but He will always answer in the way that is best for you. As Pastor J. T. Pugh used to say, “He’s God, and He’s good at it ... so we must learn to trust Him.”

Maybe the next time you are asked “why” God hasn’t answered a prayer, this guide will help you respond.

Answers to Prayer:

No. When what you are praying for is not in the will of God, He will say “no.” Too often, we request things as a result of our selfish desires. Other times, we may pray out of sincerity, and the answer may be the same. “No” is frustrating, but we have to trust that God loves us and knows things that we do not know. I read a quote recently that has stayed with me. It said, “There are times God punishes us mildly by ignoring our prayers and severely by answering them.” We have to get to a place where we trust God, even when the answer is “no.”

Yes. Many Scriptures in the Bible indicate that God does indeed hear and answer prayers in the affirmative. “And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him” (1 John 5:14). “For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us” (2 Corinthians 1:20). “Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not”

(Jeremiah 33:3). “And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive” (Matthew 21:22). These verses encourage us to continue asking, seeking, and knocking. Often, God grants our desires and answers our prayers in the way we ask and want.

Wait. Sometimes the timing is not right for the prayer to be answered. Ecclesiastes 3:1 tells us, “To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.” The great news is that God’s delays are not necessarily God’s denials. Delayed answers to prayer are not the same as unanswered prayer. Sometimes we have to simply wait for the right time. Sometimes we just have to be patient and trust that God knows the perfect time to step in and say “yes.”

Stop. “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me” (Psalm 66:18). Sometimes we pray, and God asks us to “stop” and make certain things right. God wants our relationship to be right with Him before He will answer our other prayers. God also wants to make sure that our relationship with others is correct before He gives us a “Yes!” answer. “Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee: Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift” (Matthew 5:23–24).

The fact is, the Lord does answer all prayers, even if we don’t recognize it. Knowing so much more than we do, He grants some, refuses others, and delays still others. But to have what He wants for us without His timing would be disastrous.

Along with all the answers mentioned, sometimes the answer we’ve been praying for is staring us in the face, and we don’t even know it. In Acts 12, the church prayed for Peter’s release from prison and then didn’t even recognize when their prayer had been answered. There are times when we are so intent on praying that the prayer is all talking and no listening. Your answer may be knocking on your door at this very moment. Make sure you look for the answer when you pray.

God always answers prayers.

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