



God Always Answers Prayer but Not As We Think

For most of us, the most pressing concern of prayer is the anticipated answer. Hindered by limited wisdom yet unhindered by boundless emotion and hope, we often want God to answer our prayers quickly and according to our perspective. God, however, initially responds to prayer requests in one of two ways. His answer is either **yes** or **no**, and both answers can be conditioned by **not now**.

God answers prayer in a greater dimension than anyone can comprehend (Ephesians 3:20-21). In His loving sovereignty, God's answer brings Him glory and is given with consideration to the request, to the person voicing the request, to the people who are the focus of the request, and to others affected by the request.

Sometimes, God's answer of "yes" or "no" to a prayer request is readily known. There are times, however, when God answers "yes" but tangible results are not immediately forthcoming. Thus, from a human perspective, God's unseen "yes" answer can be perceived as a "not now" response. There are also times when God answers "no," but indications of that answer are not observable. As a result, God's unrecognizable "no" answer is thought to be "not now" as well. In every request that we may make, God's answer has a wider perspective in mind. While our timeline for an answer is often short, God's timeline is perfect as He coordinates other variables in order for the eventual answer to be in accordance with His will.

How should a follower of Christ respond when God's "yes" or "no" to a prayer request is not readily observable? A believer has at least eight inter-related responses to pursue.

- Be certain that personal sins have been confessed to the Lord (1 John 1:9), since God does not listen to someone who harbors sin (Psalm 66:18).
- Study the Bible to see if the prayer request corresponds to biblical truth. God only answers prayer in accordance with His will (1 John 5:14-15).
- Ask in faith for God to grant wisdom to those involved in the situation and do not doubt His ability to do so (James 1:5-8).
- Determine that the prayer request is not selfishly oriented toward mere physical or emotional gratification (James 4:3).
- Continue to trust God instead of one's own understanding (Proverbs 3:5) and maintain faith in God (Matthew 21:22).
- Rejoice and give thanks in the current situation (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).
- Stay persistent in prayer (Colossians 4:2, John 15:7, Matthew 7:7-8).
- Consistently give praise to the Lord for Who He is (Psalm 34:1, Hebrews 13:15).

God is faithful to answer prayer. His answer may not be readily seen, but His answer will eventually be revealed. God has never failed and never will.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

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

1 John 1:9, If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Psalms 66:18, If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.

1 John 5:14-15, And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.

James 1:5-8, If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

James 4:3, You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

Proverbs 3:5, Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.

Matthew 21:22, And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Colossians 4:2, Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.

John 15:7, If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

Matthew 7:7-8, Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.

Psalms 34:1, I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth.

Hebrews 13:15, Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.