

DOES GOD ALWAYS ANSWER PRAYER?

By Denver Cheddie

There are many scriptures in the Bible where Jesus seems to promise that He would answer every one of our prayers and grant all our requests. In trying to reconcile those scriptures with the common experience that not all our prayers are actually answered, many have arrived at some strange teachings. It seems that they have to keep inventing theory upon theory to explain why all our prayers are not answered never realizing that maybe Jesus did not really promise to grant every request.

Lack of Faith. This is a reason why some of our prayers are not answered (Mark 11:22; James 1:8-10), but it certainly does not imply that every unanswered prayer is due to lack of faith. See my article on [faith](#) for more.

Secret Sin. Again this is a reason for unanswered prayer (Isa. 59:1, 2; James 4:3; 1 Pet. 3:7), but not every unanswered prayer can be attributed to this.

Wrong Wording of Prayers. Here is where it gets ridiculous. It is claimed that if we ask for something ignorantly, our words activate spiritual laws that may even bring us curses rather than blessings. What rubbish! The Bible declares that God knows what we want before we even ask (Matt. 6:7, 8). It is not our choice of words that moves God, but our attitude of faith in Him.

He knows the intentions of our heart, so that even if we cannot express it properly, He knows what we mean. God is not a dummy. Some people view God as a lawyer looking for any technicality to avoid having to answer our prayer. God is not our landlord. Others say that God has no legal right to answer our prayers if the devil finds some fault in them. The God of the Bible does as He pleases (Ps. 115:3), not as the devil pleases. In fact the devil does as God pleases (Job 1:12; 2:6; Acts 4:27,28).

Giving vs. Receiving. Others claim that God grants every request the minute we ask for it, but receiving on our part is not automatic. They cite Dan. 10:12, 13 where Daniel's prayer was heard on day 1, but only after 21 days of fasting was the angel able to come to him with the answer. What this passage teaches is persistence in prayer (Luke 11:8; 18:1). But again not every unanswered prayer is the result of lack of persistence. If God wanted to give us something, He will make sure it comes to us in due time, just like He did with Daniel. The devil tried to hinder Him, but did not succeed. God made sure the answer came to Daniel. No doubt God also put it in Daniel to keep on praying and fasting (Phil. 2:13).

The God many people serve closely resembles the cartoon character Top Cat. On exiting a taxi, Top Cat tosses a coin in the direction of the driver. But attached to the coin is a string that allows him to pull away the coin and escape as the driver catches it. God does not give us blessings with strings attached only to cruelly take it back. Remember Abraham and Isaac.

God Does Not Answer Every Prayer

In 1 John 5:14, 15 John (who heard everything Jesus said concerning prayer) stated that any request according to God's will would be answered. But there are many other passages which seem to say that God answers all prayer period.^[1] In the light of 1 John 5:14 it seems that it was understood to the original hearers that Jesus meant prayers in line with God's will. Besides, Jesus was not addressing people with a 21st century western mentality. He was speaking to those who had forsaken everything to follow him. It was highly unlikely that such people would make outrageously selfish requests outside of God's will. God grants us all we need for life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3). He does not satisfy our greeds (James 4:3) but our needs (Phil. 4:19). Like a good parent, God knows if something is not good for us, He will not grant it. His answer would either be "no", "not yet" or "just trust me".

[1] Matt. 7:7; 17:20; 21:22; Mark 9:23; 11:22-24; John 14:13,14; 15:7,16; 16:23;26.

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