

God Has an Answer

Prayer can be frustrating if we don't understand God's Word and His ways.

Most Christians aren't aware that there are several types of prayer discussed in God's Word, and if you use one type when you should be using another, it won't work. You would be applying the wrong spiritual tool to your needs or request. God intended for each of the six forms of prayer mentioned in the Bible to have different functions, as described below.

Prayer of Agreement

In Matthew 18:19, Jesus introduced the prayer of agreement when He said, "'Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven'" (NKJV).

Right off the bat you can see that for the prayer of agreement to work, the people involved in the prayer have to agree! You cannot know what someone else wants—what someone is believing for—and God cannot answer your prayer for someone else against his or her will. To use the prayer of agreement, you must be sure that the person with whom you are agreeing is in line with what you are asking for.

If someone asks me to pray in agreement with them, I ask, "What specifically do you want me to pray for?" You absolutely must make sure you are in perfect agreement about what your prayer request is before you join with another believer in the prayer of agreement.

Prayer of Faith

The prayer of faith, also known as petition prayer, is the prayer that most people think of when they use the term “prayer.” Petition prayer is between you and God. It is you asking God for a particular outcome.

The key verse for the prayer of faith is Mark 11:24, in which Jesus says, “‘Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.’”

The rule to consider here is when you pray—not after you pray, not when you feel something, not when you see something. When you pray (the moment that you pray) you must believe that you receive what you asked for.

Hebrews 11:1 says, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Your faith is substance—it is something real, something tangible. It is evidence of things you cannot see.

Notice that Mark 11:24 does not say when you will actually see the result of your prayer. It does not tell you how long it will take for that prayer result to appear, and this is where many Christians get hung up.

God lives in one eternal now. There is no past or present for Him. But we are temporal beings who live in the context of time.

When you pray in faith, God immediately gives you what you prayed for—in the spirit realm. But in the natural world, due to a number of factors, it may take time for the answer to

manifest itself.

God answers prayers, and He will answer your specific prayer in line with His Word, but it is your faith that brings that answer out of the spiritual world and into the physical world. How many times in Scripture does Jesus say to someone, "According to your faith"?

He referred to peoples' faith constantly, and even though it was His power that healed them, He always credited their faith with being the catalyst. In fact, when Jesus went to His hometown, we are told that "He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief" (Matt. 13:58).

Did Jesus suddenly lose His power on that visit to Nazareth? No!

His power never changed. What changed? It was the people's level of faith mixed with His power.

There is a simple spiritual explanation for this. God will not do something against your will. God cannot violate free will. If you don't have faith to do something, He won't arbitrarily override your lack of faith.

Prayer of Consecration and Dedication

In Luke 22:41-42, we see outlined the prayer of consecration and dedication: "And He [Jesus] was withdrawn from them [Peter, James and John] about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and prayed, saying, 'Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be

done.'”

He was praying, in effect, “If there is any other way to do this, let’s do it that way.” But the key for Jesus, and for us, is, “Nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.”

You pray that God’s will would be done when you don’t know His will or don’t know if an alternative path that appears is equally “correct” or godly. In the absence of direct instructions, the prayer of consecration and dedication says you will allow God to set your direction or make your decisions.

The prayer of consecration and dedication works when you have two (or more) godly alternatives before you, and you are not getting a clear sense at that time about which option God wants you to take. When the direction is unclear—but any of the options appear to be legitimate, righteous options—that is the perfect time to say, “Lord, if it be Your will, I’m going to go with option A.”

Believe me, He will let you know if you are taking the wrong fork in the road.

Prayer of Praise and Worship

In this prayer, you are not asking God to do something for you or to give you something. You are not even asking for direction and dedicating your life to whatever it is God has called you to do. Rather, you just want to praise the Lord, to thank Him for His many blessings and mercy. You want to tell Him how much you love Him.

A good example of this type of prayer appears in Luke 2:20, which describes the reaction of the shepherds who had seen baby Jesus: “Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, as it was told them.”

In Luke 18:43, the blind man who was healed was described as “glorifying God.” The verse also says all the people who witnessed the miracle “gave praise to God.” They prayed prayers of thanksgiving.

Look at the way Jesus prayed in John 11:41: “‘Father, I thank You that You have heard Me,” referring to His previous prayer regarding Lazarus. In the Lord’s prayer, Jesus told His disciples, “‘When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name’” (Luke 11:2).

Paul wrote to the Philippians: “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God” (Phil. 4:6, emphasis added). This says that even when we pray the prayer of faith, we should always intersperse worship and praise.

Prayer of Intercession

Intercession means you are interceding—acting in prayer—on behalf of someone else. The person may be incapable of praying for himself. Perhaps he is on drugs or mentally confused by demonic doctrines. Perhaps the person is so sick he can’t muster the energy to stay awake, let alone pray.

Intercession involves praying for others. It may involve praying in a general way for such things as the church or the

government, or offering up more specific prayers based on your knowledge of a person's need.

In Ephesians 1:15-18, Paul wrote: "Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints."

Here Paul makes it plain that he prayed regularly for the church at Ephesus and for the individuals there to receive these blessings. He does not set himself in agreement with anyone, so this seems to be a good example of intercessory prayer.

Likewise, in his greeting to the Philippians, he wrote, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy" (Phil. 1:3-4). The fact that Paul said he made requests for them suggests that this also was an example of intercessory prayer.

Prayer of Binding and Loosing

This prayer is found in Matthew 18:18-19. Jesus says: "'Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven.'"

There are several important nuggets in Jesus' statements here, the first being that we have authority here on this earth by virtue of our covenant rights through Jesus.

The second thing we notice is the direction of the action. Things do not begin in heaven and come to Earth, but rather the action starts here on Earth. Notice that it says, "Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

Like all things in God's system, this type of prayer works only in line with God's Word and His laws. You cannot bind things willy-nilly. Binding a team to lose in the Super Bowl won't work any more than loosing someone to love you.

You can, however, bind foul spirits that are at work in people's lives or loose angelic spirits to work on your behalf in those areas where God has already promised you results. When you pray in this manner, God affirms it in heaven and puts His seal of approval on your prayer. Binding and loosing have to be based on the authority God has granted you in Scripture, not on some desire you have.

God has provided each type of prayer for a specific purpose. Though you may use more than one at any given time, it is important to be clear about which type you are using and why, and to be aware of its limitations. If you follow the examples in the Bible, you'll be sure to use them properly.

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