

Break the Pattern of Unanswered Prayer

We've all been told our blessing is coming. We've gotten excited. Preachers have promised us it's coming. But friends, let's face it—there are more people who don't receive what they've prayed for than those who do.

What's the problem?

Many Christians have prayed, tried and cried because they haven't seen any results; they have just given up on expecting much from God. Others blindly expect the moon but have no idea that we have as much to do with receiving from God as God has!

First Corinthians 3:9 says we are co-workers with Him. Our relationships with God should be like any other good relationship—it's a partnership. You have a part, and God has a part.

We can be sure God will keep His part of the deal since He is unchanging, never fails to keep His promises and is not a respecter of persons (which means He has no favorites).

So if there is a failure and we don't get results, the problem has to be on our side of the deal.

What we fail to understand is that almost all of God's promises are conditional. We will receive what He has for us when we do our part. Results depend on some choices we make and some actions we take.

I want to help you put an end to the frustration of unanswered prayer and the disappointment of unreceived promises from God.

I often hear of ministers who are called upon to give comfort and encouragement to people who are hurting, and they simply

say, "Everything is going to be all right," and, "Everything's going to get better."

I don't know about you, but I find that sort of response is not really helpful. I want to know when! When will things get better? I want to know how! How will things change? What has to happen?

I want to get to the point where I can say, "Things were not right, and I was in trouble, but when I learned how to receive from God, then I received and everything changed!"

Let's get some answers. What is our part? (This will work every time.)

1. Believe that receiving your full inheritance from God is as important to Him as it is to you. In Acts 26:17-18 Jesus told Paul to teach people to receive forgiveness of sins and their inheritance. You see, we have all believed it's the will of God and essential to receive forgiveness of sins, but did you know Jesus said it's as much His will for you to receive your inheritance? We must believe it's His will and His desire for us to receive everything He has for us.

2. Ask God for the thing you need and desire. Be specific! If you need an unsaved loved one saved, be specific—name that person to God. If you need a job, be specific about what kind of job, how much money it will earn and where it will be located. Jesus said in John 16:24, "Ask, and you shall receive." James 4:2 says, "You have not because you ask not."

3. Be sure you're asking for the right things. James 4:3 says, "You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss." He tells us that when we miss the mark in what we ask for, we will not receive.

How can we be sure of the right things to ask for? We must ask ourselves:

- **Is it good?** Every good gift comes from God (James 1:17).

- **Is it in the Word of God?** Can you find two or three

Scriptures to support what it is you're asking for? John said in 1 John 5:14, "If we ask anything according to the will of God, He hears us." The Word of God is the will of God. A will is a testament—it is a list of promises that a person who dies leaves for his loved ones. When Jesus died, all His promises became legally available to us. The promises in His Word are His will. His will is not a mystery, as so many Christians have thought.

- **Are you capable of being responsible with it when it comes?** This point is so very important. If I ask God for \$1 million for a business idea that will help millions of people, I am fooling myself if I expect to receive it while I have been irresponsible and unwise with the \$1,000 I have already received.

Many people want to jump from \$10 faith to \$10 million faith, and it doesn't work that way. You have to be faithful so God can give you more. If my 9-year-old son asked me for a car, as much as I want to give it to him, I can't because he's not ready for it. Even if he were 16, I wouldn't necessarily give it to him unless he had been faithful with his bicycle. Did he take care of it? Did he keep it clean? Had he been reckless with it? If he had, why would I think he would act any differently toward more powerful equipment?

This is called faithful stewardship and is mandatory if you want to receive the blessing of the Lord. Proverbs 28:20 says, "A faithful man will abound with blessings." You can't give a loaded gun to a child. And, quite literally, much of our failure to receive has to do with the immaturity in our lives. If we're acting like spiritual babies—not controlling our tongue, whining all the time, irresponsible with our stuff—God will not be able to entrust us with more. It would be poor stewardship on His part.

But the good news is we don't have to stay babies. We can grow

up. How?

1. Control our mouth and words. Make sure the things that come out of your mouth line up with God's Word (James 3:2)

2. Be thankful in everything. Grumbling and complaining is one for the chief reasons the children of Israel did not enter the Promised Land (1 Cor. 10:10).

3. Be responsible now for your life, your money, your body and your possessions. Be a good steward of the things you already have (Luke 12:42). Don't expect God to give you more until you care for what you have.

4. Believe you received it the moment you ask, no matter what you see or feel. This is walking by faith, not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7). You have to break the habit of only believing something when you see it. You must see what is invisible *now* and believe that it is yours, just as a pregnant woman knows there's a baby in her womb because she has received the seed and the doctor has confirmed there is life inside. She hasn't seen anything, but it's there. She knows it's there.

5. Plant a financial seed toward the need you have. Luke 6:38 says, "Give and you shall receive." Your seed is so vital to receiving what it is you have asked for. Galatians 6:7 says, "Let no one be deceived, whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap." We must take action if we want to see results. James 2:20 declares, "Faith without works is dead."

Again, let me remind you, Abraham demonstrated his faith by the offering of his son. While it is obvious God is not requiring your son of you, the principle is the same. We must back up our need with some seed—an offering! Not just any old offering, but one that is valuable to us.

You may ask, "What if the need isn't financial? Why would I plant a financial seed for a spiritual or emotional need?" Simply because money is a proof of trust. God doesn't need your money, but when you give, it shows God He can trust you

because you can let go of one of the most valuable things you have. An example of this is the widow in Elijah's day who gave financial seed and reaped the miraculous harvest of her son's resurrection from the dead (1 Kings 17).

I am convinced if you follow these simple steps, you will put an end to the disappointment of unanswered prayer. Remember, though, that God can't give you something He doesn't have. He doesn't have poverty, sickness, disease and sadness, so don't bother asking Him for any of those. And He won't hurt someone or take something away from someone in order for you to have it. However, He has plenty of "every good thing" for anyone who will ask.

Gregory Dickow is the founder and pastor of Life Changers International Church, one of the largest churches in the Chicagoland area. He also is the host of The Power to Change Today, an international television ministry that reaches a potential audience of more than 900 million households weekly.