

How to Get What You Want From God

My youngest daughter, Sidney, is always telling us what she'd like for her birthday ... even if her birthday was yesterday.

She'll start a sentence, "Next year for my birthday ... "

And I'll say, "But Sid, we just had your birthday."

It doesn't matter. She keeps a running list of what she wants next—or, and in some cases, what she wants *now*!

As much as I find this amusing (and sometimes irritating), the truth is that I have my own running list of things I want from God, and when I would like to receive them. Preferably by tomorrow.

I'm not talking about asking for a new car or the ability to dunk a basketball (though that would be nice). I'm talking about good things like health and happiness and the ability to sleep at night. I feel justified with my wish list because Scripture teaches us that we serve a big God, so we should dream big, pray daring prayers, and have fearless faith.

Psalm 37:4 says that when we take delight in the Lord, He will give us the desire of our hearts. And much like my daughter's never ending birthday list, my heart can desire many things! So can yours. We all have good things we want.

The problem is that God doesn't always deliver *what* I want *when* I want it. And to make matters worse, there are times when I ask God for blessings for *myself* and he gives them to *someone else* (who, incidentally, does *not* deserve it!).

This leaves us with questions. We question our faith, we question the Bible, and we question our God. Let's face it,

there are times when we find ourselves thinking: *Either I'm doing something wrong ... or God isn't as advertised!*

I'll never forget an experience I had at a pastor's conference in Dallas. After a full day of intense discussion, I joined some other pastors from around the country at a local restaurant for dinner. Somewhere between the salad and the steak, we began sharing great stories of how we had seen God change people's lives. I shared a couple, others shared their stories, and then a pastor from North Carolina spoke up.

He began to tell the story of a woman in his community who had run pretty far from God and then was invited to their church. Reluctantly, she showed up and kept coming back. She got involved, eventually gave her life to Christ, and seemed to be making great progress.

But suddenly her journey hit a roadblock.

Her pre-Christian struggles returned. She slipped back into her old ways of thinking and behaving and found herself wondering, *What good is this Christianity stuff anyway?*

Finally, she sat down with her pastor and explained her feelings of buyer's remorse. After listening to her story, the pastor said words to her that I pray she never forgets: "God has a great plan for your life, *but you're going to have to participate!*"

Perhaps when it comes to seeing God work in our lives, *partnership* is the word we are missing. If I think that it's God's responsibility to change the world to my specifications, I will always feel let down when it doesn't work out the way I want.

I think this is what Paul was pointing to in his letter to the Philippians:

"Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling,

for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose” (Philippians 2:12-13, NIV).

In other words: I have my part and God has His. It's not *just* His responsibility, or *only* mine: It's a partnership.

This is the part of Psalm 37:4 that we often miss: WHEN I take delight *in the Lord*, THEN He will give me the desires of my heart. *The way to get what I want from God is to start by wanting the things He wants for me.*

The Bible is filled with these WHEN YOU/THEN GOD statements; statements that invite us into a partnership with God where we begin to experience amazing things—seeing our friends come to Christ, having God work in our finances, becoming like Jesus, and even finding hope that lasts forever—things we really want, but forget about because of our short-sighted wish lists.

God has a plan for our lives, but we're going to have to participate. {eo}

*Excerpted from **Rusty George's** book, When You, Then God, copyrighted and published by Tyndale Momentum, 2016 and used with permission.*

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