

If God Hasn't Answered Yet, Keep Asking

Over the years I've seen countless answers to prayer, both for me and for friends and family members I pray for regularly. I've seen healings, job openings, reconciled marriages, real estate sales, engagements, supernatural provision, divine protection and so many other miracles. I don't question whether God answers prayer.

But I also have a list of prayer requests in my phone that haven't been answered yet. I've prayed for some of these things for several years. If I'm honest, sometimes I get discouraged about this.

I'm tempted to think God isn't listening.

If this has been your prayer experience, you aren't alone. You've been enrolled in the School of Persevering Prayer, and it's not a one-semester class. It's a lifelong journey designed to stretch your faith, develop your character, purify your motives, test your patience and increase your capacity to experience God's amazing love.

I've been in this school for a long time. I think I may have failed a few classes, and I've been required to repeat them.

Recently I was whining about God's delays. For many months I've been bringing the same requests to the Lord, yet the answers seem impossibly distant. My faith wavers from calm assurance to frustrated doubt. In my weakest moments I panic and say stupid things that I regret later, such as: "I'm quitting!"

There's just no way around the fact that prayer requires persistence. One friend of mine even coined a phrase to summarize this painful fact: "God is in the waiting."

Jesus told a parable about an unrighteous judge who granted a poor widow's petition because she badgered him night and day (see Luke 18:1-8). Jesus asked: "Will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night?" (v. 7, NASB). Whatever request you have brought to the Lord, and regardless of how many times you have reminded Him of it, keep these three points in mind as you trust Him to answer:

1. **God's work takes time.** Most people in the Bible who asked God for big things waited years to receive their answers. Abraham turned gray waiting for his promised heir—and he is called the father of our faith. Joshua and his remnant company wandered in the wilderness 40 years before they possessed Canaan. Hannah endured taunts from Peninnah and insults from Eli while she prayed many years for a son.

Prayer isn't a magic formula. We don't wave a wand and say, "abracadabra" to get an instant answer. Your job is to ask, not to dictate or control. You must let God be God. You must let patience have its perfect work. You will eventually reap if you don't grow weary.

2. **Authentic prayer involves a holy process.** Prayer is often compared to birth. When God gives you a promise, you essentially become pregnant with it. If you plan to carry this promise to term, you must wait—and then you must travail.

Surely this is what the apostle Paul experienced when he told the Galatians he would be "in labor" until Christ was formed in them (Gal. 4:19). We often think of the prayer of faith as triggering instant answers, but this was not the case with Paul. While God can certainly answer immediately, He often asks us to carry a promise until we are mature enough to handle the answer.

3. **You have a helper who is praying for you.** You are not in

this process alone. The Holy Spirit intercedes for us, Paul wrote, “with groanings too deep for words” (Rom. 8:26b, MEV). He is praying the perfect will of God, and we are invited to agree with Him. This kind of gut-wrenching prayer is messy and full of anguish; it is not formal or sophisticated.

When we truly pray in the Holy Ghost, we surrender our agendas and allow Him to pray through us. And this takes us deeper with God.

Have you ever been around a woman in her ninth month of pregnancy? She is often in a state of agitation—ready to give birth but weary of the strain. I know many Christians today who are in this same uncomfortable stage of spiritual travail. They’ve held onto promises for a long time. Some are in despair because the gestation period has been so long.

Jesus said: “For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened” (Matt. 7:8). The verbs used are Greek present imperatives, meaning constant asking, seeking and knocking. Prevailing prayer requires persistence, but when we feel too weak to press forward in faith, the Spirit provides the extra push. You are not the only one praying.

You may be asking for the salvation of a wayward child, the funding of a ministry, the reconciliation of a relationship, the recovery of a business, the reviving of a stagnant church or the healing of a sick loved one. Or if you are really adventurous you may be praying for our nation, which is battling unprecedented spiritual darkness.

You’re closer than you’ve ever been to a breakthrough. Keep on knocking. Don’t give up. The God who moves mountains has heard your cry. {eoa}

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