

Why Your Prayers May Be Too Small

If it seems as though God is not answering your prayers, it's probably not because your prayers are too big. Instead, are your prayers too small?

What do you pray about? Have you listened to yourself when you pray? What percentage of your words are asking God to "fix" something? *Please make my spouse be nicer to me. Let this business deal go through. Help me find a parking spot. Bring me a job. Take away my physical pain. Make the storm go somewhere else.*

Even when you pray for someone else, doesn't it sound something like this? *God, please heal my mother's cancer. Give my child a good teacher this year. Make my husband's boss give him a raise. Let my wife pass her certification exam. Bring a buyer for my friend's house.*

If what you wanted works out, hopefully you thank God! And if it doesn't, you may feel tempted to believe prayer doesn't "work," or that God doesn't like you.

God wants us to bring Him our troubles, as a child would do to a loving parent. "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" (Phil. 4:6, ESV). He is interested in everything that concerns us. He is pleased when our first response to trouble is to invite His intervention.

But think about this. How healthy would your relationship with your spouse or best friend be if every time you spoke, they had a list of things they wanted from you? Pretty soon you'd feel "used and abused" instead of like a spouse or a friend.

What God Desires Most

Are you perhaps viewing God as a heavenly vending machine—put in a prayer, get out a blessing?

Please don't stop asking God for things! Jesus taught us to do just that; "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matt. 6:11, MEV). "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!" (Matt. 7:11).

But remember that God is not all about your comfort. While God loves to see His children happy, He has much bigger things in mind.

Would Joseph ever have become second in command in Egypt if he had not been sold by his brothers and ended up in an Egyptian prison?

Would David have ever killed Goliath if he had not been challenged with the lion and the bear while caring for the sheep?

Could Peter, James, and John have ever become witnesses of Jesus' Resurrection and apostles of the early church while having a prosperous fishing business along the Sea of Galilee?

Could Paul have "turned the world upside down" by enjoying a "healthy, wealthy" life in Tarsus, Jerusalem or anywhere?

Would Jesus have been able to save humankind without going to the cross?

Of course, the answer to all of those is no.

Perhaps it seems your prayers rise no higher than the ceiling because you're focused on things that are too small. Yes, God cares about your car payment, your child's grades in school and whether you have a fulfilling job. But friends, He wants so much more for you!

Big New Testament Prayers

Look at a few of the prayers those who came to know Jesus best prayed during the early years after He returned to heaven.

- “Now Lord, look on their threats and grant that Your servants may speak Your word with great boldness” (Acts 4:29).
- “Having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,” (Eph. 1:18, ESV).
- “That according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being” (Eph. 3:16).
- “Accordingly, it is my earnest expectation and my hope that I shall be ashamed in nothing, but that with all boldness as always, so now also, Christ will be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death. For to me, to continue living is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:20-21).
- “At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak” (Col. 4:3-4, ESV).

God wants a bigger life for you, He has a bigger purpose for you, than looking pretty, feeling comfortable, and dying in your sleep in old age—with the world not being much different as a result of you being in it. If that’s all there is, “eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die!”

Look up! Look beyond your current problems or desires. There’s something bigger going on.

Praying Bigger Prayers

Those Bible heroes? They almost certainly had no idea, while

in the middle of their mess, that they were *becoming* who they needed to be for God to use them for a bigger purpose. And you may well have no idea what God is preparing you for right now.

If your life seems small or pointless, be faithful. Perhaps you are parenting a child who will make a big impact for the kingdom of God at the end of time. Perhaps your story will somehow be told, as that of the widow giving her “two mites” in the offering (Luke 21:1-3).

If your life seems hopelessly tragic, keep walking. Perhaps God is using this very tragedy to build in you a resilience that He will need you to have in pushing back the kingdom of darkness in some way.

If it seems you’ve messed things up too badly, give God full permission to change you. Perhaps your story will impact others, like Paul’s story of killing Christians and then becoming God’s emissary, carrying the gospel to the Gentiles.

If you’re lonely, keep shining. You may be the only light someone else sees.

If you’re tired, get a little rest and keep going. Your endurance muscles are growing.

If you’re confused, overwhelmed or frustrated, pause briefly if you must, but don’t quit.

Are Your Prayers Too Small?

As a gospel song says, “God’s got a bigger thing going on than these little old eyes can see.”

Pray bigger prayers. Keep your eyes on eternity. You’ve got a role to play in this epic drama. Can we count on you?

Your Turn: *As you think about your own prayers, do they seem “big enough?” How do you think God might be preparing you right now for something yet to come? Leave a comment below.*

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