

CHAPTER 12

HOW GOD ANSWERS PRAYER

A. WAYS AND MEANS HE MAY USE

There is no doubt that God answers prayers. However, we may not understand all the different ways that He can do this and therefore, we may not recognize the answer when it comes. Knowing how God grants our requests can help us pray with greater faith and confidence. It can also help us look for answers that may not be obvious.

Here are ten ways how God can answer our prayers:

1. God works through people.

When we pray we should be aware that many times God works through human instruments. If we are not aware of this fact, we may not see the answer God is providing when it comes.

In the early years of the Work, God used this method many times to answer Mr. Armstrong's prayers. On more than one occasion he did not have the money to pay for the broadcast, and minutes before time to leave for the studio, a member would show up at his front door with his tithes. One time he was even on his way to the studio when he met someone who gave him just the amount he needed.

On another occasion Mrs. Armstrong was nearing the time for one of her children to be born and they did not have the money for the hospital bill. Mr. Armstrong asked God to provide the money they would need and whatever else they might need. Not long after that they received a check in the exact amount they would need from Mrs. Armstrong's portion of her mother's will as well as the loan of a car until after the baby came. Mrs. Armstrong even received the loan of a robe and slippers to take to the hospital because she had none.

When we realize that God does work through other people, we should not be too proud to accept the help God may provide through them. In many cases the people themselves may not even realize that God has used them to answer our prayers.

2. He also uses the Bible.

Sometimes when we have prayed about a particular problem God shows us the solution through studying the Bible. God can lead us to see the answer through a particular scripture. He can help us to understand something we may have read many times in a new or different light. Suddenly we see how that scripture really applies to us.

If a couple is having marriage problems, they should study those portions of the Bible that talk about that subject. A man and his wife may come to realize where they need to change by studying Ephesians 5. The wife may realize that she is not the submissive wife she should be. Or, the husband may suddenly see that he has been too demanding and selfish and has not been following the command to love his wife as he should.

If a person is having financial problems and he has prayed about it but the answer doesn't seem to come, he should study the scriptures on tithing and other of God's financial laws. He may suddenly realize that even though he has been faithfully paying his tithes, he has been doing it in a wrong attitude — begrudgingly because he has been worried about his money.

3. God also reveals His will when we meditate.

After having asked God for His help, we may be meditating and thinking about the problem and the answer suddenly becomes clear in our mind, and we know just what we should do.

This kind of answer comes through real meditation. It is not just an untried thought or impulse. It comes through weighing carefully the pros and cons of a situation in the light of the instruction of the Bible.

Think through your problem, evaluate and examine yourself to see if you have done all that you can or should do. Ask yourself if you have brought the problem on yourself.

Through this kind of careful and prayerful examination God through His Holy Spirit can show you the answer to your problem or difficulty. Because you have focussed your mind on Him, God can use His Spirit to put the solution to the problem into your mind.

Cultivate this habit of meditation when you study and when you are praying about certain problems in your life. God can use it to show you His will.

4. God speaks through His ministers.

At other times we may have a problem that we are praying about and the answer just doesn't seem to come. It may be that we have not done all that we should do. God has provided His ministry to help us with our problems and He expects us to take advantage of the help He provides.

God can answer our prayers through His ministers. We may not have the answer we need because we have not gone to the proper source of the vehicle God can use. God expects us to use all the avenues that He can use to communicate His will to us.

God also uses His ministry by inspiring them to preach on the things we need to hear. We should pray for the ministry that God will continue to inspire them in this way. Even when we ourselves are not having a particular problem or trial we should ask God every Sabbath to inspire His ministers to give us the kind of sermon that we as the congregation need to hear most.

5. God can work through natural circumstances.

Sometimes we may pray for a solution to a particular problem and when the answer comes it comes in such a natural or normal way we may tend to forget that it came from God. When prayers are answered in this way we should always remember to give God the proper credit and thanks.

Perhaps a single person has been praying about marriage — asking God to provide just the right person and asking God to help them to be the right person for someone else. God can and has worked through normal and natural circumstances to bring people together. Numerous couples have met their future mates at the Feast — God having brought them together when they lived vast distances apart.

Another example might be having someone stop to help you when your car breaks down along the highway. It would be easy to attribute such an occurrence to time and chance. However, if we have prayed about it and someone does stop, we should take it for what it is — an answer from God to help us out of our dilemma. In our day and age it would be somewhat of a miracle for anyone to have the confidence to stop and help anyone. God can and does cause people to do things that they might not otherwise do in another circumstance.

6. God still performs miracles.

The most common way that God uses today in performing miracles is in healing. Throughout history God has instantaneously healed many people of their afflictions and diseases. Most of us have either been the recipient of such a miracle or we know someone who has.

Knowing that God does miraculously heal today can give us more faith and confidence in Him when we are praying about other matters.

God also uses miracles to protect His people. Over the years the "Worldwide News" has featured many incredible accounts of protection of members and their homes in the paths of devastating tornadoes, hurricanes, floods or fires. Many have escaped death without a scratch when logic says they should have died. For instance there is the man who accidentally had a boiling cauldron of molten metal dumped on him and came out without even a burn. God does intervene on behalf of His people.

7. God leads us to the answers to our prayers through His Holy Spirit.

God's Holy Spirit continually works with a Christian ([Phil. 2:13](#)). Over a period of time, much knowledge, understanding and wisdom is accumulated.

Therefore, an answer to prayer may come from the understanding and wisdom gained over several years. Because a person is using God's Spirit daily in his life, God can lead him to see what he should do in a given situation that he has been praying about. A person can apply the principles of God's law and ask himself what Christ would do and come to the right conclusion as to what his own actions should be.

For example, one man was undecided whether or not to finish a degree in education at a local university which he had started a few years earlier. He prayed and struggled with the decision for some time.

Gradually he began to recognize the answer. He realized the need to further develop his talents (Matt. 25:14-30), also knowing that he was responsible to provide for his family. He understood that the days ahead may bring more recession and unemployment and therefore saw the need to act today. (Prov. 22:3). He finally realized that he should finish what he started.

Because this man was living God's way of life, he could apply the principles he had learned in the past to the problem at hand.

8. God can use trials to answer our prayers.

God can and does allow situations to occur whereby we receive His answer through the things we suffer. Many times we may pray for faith and God will allow a trying circumstance which will build patience which in turn increases our faith.

Sometimes God allows us to become sick for a period of time and chooses not to heal us immediately. He wants us to learn patience and to use the time we are sick to really think about our lives and how we have been conducting ourselves in the light of how He wants us to live. God can sometimes help us to see and understand something that we might not otherwise realize by allowing us to suffer.

For instance a young person who is extremely active socially — involved in everything, dating constantly and is a whirlwind of activity from the time he gets up until the time he falls into bed exhausted at night — has probably not taken the time to really consider if he is praying or studying enough — he's been too busy. So, God may allow him to get sick through the normal consequence of not getting the proper rest and not eating properly. When he is flat on his back in bed, God finally has his attention and the person may realize that he has been neglecting the more important things of life in order to maintain his whirlwind momentum.

9. Angels are used in answering prayer.

God sends angels to help His people in times of emergency and crisis. When He sees that one of His people is in grave and immediate danger, He realizes that immediate action is necessary, and He answers instantly.

One member was traveling home late at night along a very familiar road when he topped a hill in the road to see two sets of headlights coming directly at him — a car in each lane. (It was a two lane road). Realizing there was nothing else to do, he drove off on the shoulder of the road almost without thinking. The cars passed and he drove back on the road. As he drove on, he started thinking about the spot where the incident had occurred and he couldn't remember there being a shoulder there. So he turned around and went back to the spot to take a look — sure enough there was no shoulder only a drop off. An angel had obviously held his car while the other vehicles had passed.

10. Existing means can be used to show us the answer to our prayers.

God can use things that have been written by carnal men or lessons that others have learned to show us the answer to our prayers.

A person who is having difficulty in organizing their time and prioritizing things might be led to "accidentally" read the "*Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*" who had a great deal to say about organization and using one's time wisely.

By reading what others have to say about the subject that we are having difficulty with, and by comparing the material with the principles of God's laws, we can find practical solutions to our problems. God's laws work regardless of who applies them and we can learn from the

things that unconverted people have discovered about those laws. God can use them to answer our prayers.

The key is to read in a discerning way to be sure the principles discussed stack up with the way God would have you live your life.

B. GOD DOES NOT ALWAYS ANSWER RIGHT AWAY

At times God may temporarily decide to withhold an answer to your prayers. He may want you to develop patience or to learn certain lessons before He grants your request. Or the answer He gives may not be recognized because it is "no".

1. Attitude in asking.

When our prayers don't seem to be answered, and we have sought the answer through the various means already discussed, we should look at our attitude in asking.

Why do we want God to do what we have asked? Are we asking for a selfish reason — for something that will benefit us and us alone? James 4:3. God wants to give us the good things of life — He wants us to live abundant lives and He has promised to provide us our every need. However, if we get so caught up in the "give mes" and materialism, God will not answer our prayers with a positive response.

After having examined ourselves and found that our attitude has not been right, we may realize we should not be asking for the thing we've been praying about or we will see that we need to change before God will grant our request.

We need to be asking according to God's will and in order to know His will we must be close to God through habitual prayer and Bible study. (II Tim. 2:15). We need to be studying God's word and then we will begin to think more like God thinks and we will be able to see what God's will is. If we believe and know that God is love, that His will is for our good, then we will want to pray according to His will.

We need not always have a specific promise in the Bible to know that something is God's will. Because we have been studying and applying God's laws in our lives, we can learn how to apply the principles of God's revealed will to any situation which may arise.

2. Asking in faith.

Are you asking in faith, or does your faith waver? When we pray, we must have faith that God hears us and that eventually, He will answer. If we give up and say that God is not going to answer because we have waited longer than we thought it should have taken to receive the answer, then God will not answer.

James 1:6,7 *"But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord."*

3. Being Persistent.

Having examined your attitude and your faith, have you applied the principle of the importuning widow? Luke 18:1-7. God expects us to ask more than once sometimes. He sometimes wants to know how important something is to us. We should keep praying to God even though He doesn't answer right away.

Persistence doesn't mean nagging but it does mean that we should show God that we really are sincerely concerned. God has supreme wisdom to know when and how would be best to answer our prayers.

Matthew 7:7-8 *"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you: For everyone that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."*

4. Pray Fervently.

God hears us when we are fervent and sincere not when we are half asleep.

James 5:16 *"...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."*

5. Fear God and Have Humility

We need to realize that we are small and insignificant compared to God — mere dust. The very life we have is a gift from Him. Realizing this we should have the proper fear and respect for God. Any gifts or talents that we may have are ours because God gave them to us.

When we come to God with this attitude, with the proper respect for His authority in our lives, then He will hear and answer our prayers. (Prov. 22:4)

6. We must be obedient.

We must be practicing daily a way of yielded obedience to God or He will not hear our prayers. (1 John 3:22).

When we pray in an unrepentant attitude our sins cut us off from God. If we come to God in a repentant, humble attitude, determined to obey Him, He will hear and answer our prayers.

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