

When My Prayers Seem Unanswered

Topical

The Scriptures indicate that four conditions affect how God answers a believer's prayer.

"So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ¹⁰For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. Luke 11:9-10 (New International Version)

For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer . . . 1 Peter 3:12 (NIV)

- **Condition #1: IF THE REQUEST IS WRONG, GOD WILL SAY, "NO."**

Two Ways a Prayer Request May be Wrong

- A believer's prayer request may be inappropriate.

As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." Luke 9:33 (NIV)

Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask." ³⁶"What do you want me to do for you?" he asked. ³⁷They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory." Mark 10:35-37 (NIV)

And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; ⁵³but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. ⁵⁴When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, "Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?" ⁵⁵But Jesus turned and rebuked them, ⁵⁶and they went to another village. Luke 9:52-56 (NIV)

- A believer's prayer request may be out of God's will.

[Believers must] *live . . . for the will of God. 1 Peter 4:2 (NIV)*

If we are living now by the Holy Spirit, let us follow the Holy Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. Galatians 5:25 (New Living Translation, 1996)

The people asked him to stay longer, but he would not consent. ²¹Instead, he told them as he left, "If it is the will of God, I will come back to you." And so he sailed from Ephesus. Acts 18:20-21 (Good News Translation)

However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name . . . ¹⁹So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good. 1 Peter 4:16, 19 (NIV)

- **Condition #2: IF THE TIMING IS WRONG, GOD WILL SAY, "SLOW."**

So as David stood there among his brothers, Samuel took the olive oil he had brought and poured it on David's head. And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him from that day on. Then Samuel returned to Ramah. 1 Samuel 16:13 (NLT)

David fled from the city of Gath and went to a cave near the town of Adullam. When his brothers and the rest of the family heard that he was there, they joined him. ²People who were oppressed or in debt or dissatisfied went to him, about 400 men in all, and he became their leader. 1 Samuel 22:1-2 (GNT)

I cry out to the Lord; I plead for the Lord's mercy. ²I pour out my complaints before him and tell him all my troubles . . . ⁶Hear my cry, for I am very low. Rescue me from my persecutors, for they are too strong for me. ⁷Bring me out of prison so I can thank you. . . . Psalm 142:1-2, 6-7 (NLT)

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. ⁹"As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." Isaiah 55:8-9 (NIV)

- **Condition #3: IF YOU ARE WRONG, GOD WILL SAY, "GROW."**

If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened . . . Psalm 66:18 (NIV)

In the same way, you husbands must give honor to your wives. Treat her with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God's gift of new life. If you don't treat her as you should, your prayers will not be heard. 1 Peter 3:7 (NLT)

When you bring blind animals for sacrifice, is that not wrong? When you sacrifice crippled or diseased animals, is that not wrong? Try offering them to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you?" says the LORD Almighty.
Malachi 1:8 (NIV)

So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man. Acts 24:16 (NIV)
. . . The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and wonderful results.
James 5:16 (NLT, 1996)

- **Condition #4: WHEN THE REQUEST IS RIGHT, WHEN THE TIMING IS RIGHT, AND WHEN YOU ARE RIGHT, GOD SAYS "LET'S GO!"**

Seek your happiness in the Lord, and he will give you your heart's desire. ⁵Give yourself to the Lord; trust in him, and he will help you . . . Psalm 37:4-5 (GNT)