



SERIES: Becoming Spiritually Fit 2022

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Scripture: 2 Kings 20:1-6 / Jonah 3:5-10 / 1 John 5:14-15

TITLE: Does Prayer Work?

Does prayer work? This is a great question, and it is also a tough question. Honestly, I think it's a loaded question. Here's why; if someone's asking, "does prayer work" I'm going to go out on a limb and assume it's because they've experienced times where they prayed for something specific, and what they asked for was not given or did not take place. They didn't get what they wanted. We have all experienced this in some way. And this can be extremely difficult to accept. But if we want to think deeply about whether or not prayer works, we have to define what we mean by a prayer "working." What's our goal when we pray?

Imagine this. Someone wants to paint something. So they grab a can, shake it up and begin to spray. But instead of a can of spray paint, it's actually a can of air freshener. So they spray and spray and spray, yet the object remains unpainted. This would be understandably frustrating. The person may be inclined to think that the bottle of spray they're using isn't working. But in this scenario, it's not that the air freshener isn't working; it's just not accomplishing the goals the person desires. The bottle of air spray is still working; it's doing what it's meant to do, freshening the air.

Here's the point, maybe the purpose of prayer is more than just getting our desired result. Just because we don't get the result we want doesn't mean our prayer didn't "work." Maybe prayer is more about us being drawn closer to God. Maybe prayer is more about aligning our will with God's will than trying to bend God to our will.

With that in mind. I want to say, God does answer prayer. Sometimes that means getting what we ask for, and sometimes it doesn't.

Think of these examples from the Bible of answered prayers:

In 2 Kings 20:1-6, Hezekiah is very sick and is told, but he's going to die, he turns to God in Prayer, and God responds by adding 15 more years to his life.

In Jonah 3:5-10, we see that the people of Nineveh prayed that God would spare them, and God answered this by not destroying their city.

In Acts 12, the Apostle Peter finds himself in prison for preaching the Good News. The church prays earnestly for his release, and God responds by literally sending an angel to free Peter from prison!

So yes, it is clear that God does answer prayer and that, at times, he does grant us our request. But not always. Ultimately, I believe it comes down to this: if what we are asking for matches up with God's plan, we will get what we want.

1 John 5:15 (ESV), says it this way:

“And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.”

Translation: God grants prayers that are in alignment with his will.

Let's be honest; this is an extremely challenging idea. What reason could God have for not answering the request that I make of Him? At times, unanswered prayers can be devastating. When you prayed for the job you weren't offered; when you didn't pass the test; when you prayed about the sick person who wasn't healed.

Absolutely we want these prayers answered the way we want, and it's painful when they aren't. But we must remember that we serve an almighty God who holds all the time in His hand, and He sees the big picture when we don't. May we as followers of Jesus submit ourselves to the will of God, and above all, pray that our desires might become His desires.

So yes, prayer works, but it all comes back to you and the goal we have in mind.