

WHY DOESN'T GOD ANSWER OUR PRAYERS IMMEDIATELY
(or sometimes at least, the way we want)

Obviously, only God knows the whole picture & the specific reasons in each case, however, throughout the scriptures he has revealed numerous answers that you can trust. So, while you "wait" consider the following:

1. The first place to start (& be sure not to overlook this possibility) is to examine your own life & ask "is there any hidden, unconfessed or unrepentant sin that may be hindering my relationship with God?" (See Ps.66:18; Jer.5:25, 11:11,14; Isa.59:1-2). Certainly from those further passages it is very clear that sometimes God will not answer one's prayers (Prov.1:28, 28:9; Ps.18:41) unless the proper conditions are met (Isa.1:15-19; Jn.14:6; 1Tim.2:5; Heb.4:14-16; Prov.28:13; 1Jn.1:9). Along these same lines, notice how one man's sin caused defeat for all of Israel (Joshua 7). "Sin in the camp" (or church) may be hindering advancement. We need to take seriously the possibility that sin can & will bring devastating consequences to other people around us (also read Jonah 1). Notice what other innocent bystanders went through & lost because of one man being "out of Gods' will". Therefore, we need to make sure that we keep our lives right with God & man. Also "cleansing our homes" to the point of removing from our lives & homes anything that could possibly "short cut" our prayer lives (like books, records, tapes, games, magazines, videos, ouija boards, psychic horoscopes, even jewelry - anything that reflects or represents occultic, satanic, demonic, pornographic, even "New Age" philosophies). Why? Because all Satan needs is a foot in the door & as soon as he gains ground in your life he's likely to take subtle control & more & more! Read what they did in Acts 19:17-20. I'm not suggesting an imbalanced "fear" or "witch hunt" - but if you honestly ask the Lord to show you... he will! I presume that if you are reading this study "seriously", then you would not want anything to hinder God from working in & through your life! In light of the above explanation, consider further this checklist of specific problem areas that may be a hindrance to answered prayer that you may be responsible for:
 - a. Unconfessed, unrepentant sin (Ps.66:18).
 - b. Hypocritical attitudes or insincerity (Mt.6:5) praying just to impress others.
 - c. Selfish motives (Js.4:3) wanting God to do or provide this or that just to satisfy our own self centered longings. (Treating God like a "vending machine" is not just a poor attempt at manipulation, but also an "abuse" of the whole biblical concept of "relationship"...especially with God, as our Heavenly Father).
 - d. Self-righteousness & pride (Lk.18:10-14).
 - e. Unwillingness to forgive others (Mt.6:12-14).
 - f. Refusing to help the needy (Prov.21:13; 1Jn.3:16-17).
 - g. Robbing God (by not giving our tithes & offerings) (Mal.3:8-10). Obviously if one is under a "curse" from God it seriously effects our prayers.
 - h. Unbelief, doubt, double mindedness (Js.1:5-6; Heb.11:6).
 - i. Breaking a vow (Eccl.5:4-6).

- j. Problems between a husband & wife (1Pet.3:7)!
- k. Unresolved conflicts (Mt.5:23-24).
- 1. Refusing to submit to the authority of the biblical teaching (Prov.1:24-28, 28:9; Zech.7:11-14).

Now, if you don't think you would need to take any of these points seriously then read 1Jn.1:7-10. On the other hand, you might raise an objection like this, "does this mean I have to be sinlessly perfect before I'll ever have an answered prayer? After all I'm still a sinner, I might not even be aware of the degrees to which one of these things could be "brewing" in my life!" That's exactly why these verses are a must if you're going to maintain a clear conscience toward God & man! It's serious enough to leave no stone unturned

Ps.139:1-23,24
 1Jn.1:9
 Prov.28:13

2Cor.13:5
 Ps.51

- 2. The next area necessary to consider when our "prayers aren't answered the way we'd like" (& by the way this is an area concerning our control) is that we may not be praying according to the biblical guidelines given. We are responsible of course, to pray the way God has told us. For example, study & observe the pattern that Jesus taught his disciples when they said "Lord teach us to pray" Mt.6:8-13.

Also scripture tells us to pray:

- humbly (Lk.18:9-14;Ps.10:17)
- thankfully (Phil.4:6)
- confidently (1Jn.5:13-15)
- persistently (Lk.18:1-8)
- submissively (Lk.22:42)
- in Jesus name (Jn.14:13-14)
- in accordance with God's will (1Jn.5:13-15), meaning that we're consistent with what he's already revealed in his word.
- worshipfully (Mt.6:8)
- specifically (Phil.4:6)
- honestly (Ps.145:18)
- boldly (Heb.4:16)
- continually (1Thes.5:17)
- in faith (believing)(Heb.11:6; Mt.21:22)

Along these lines of "praying the way scripture reveals", while we have freedom to make all of our requests known (Phil.4:6), we must still be willing to submit all of our desires to the Fathers' will just as Jesus prayed, "not my will, but your will be done" (Lk.22:42). Also see Js.4:13-17. Finally, be sure to read Rom.8:26-27, in order to understand our need to submit our entire prayer lives to the holy spirit, who intercedes for us!

- 3. Sometimes God may be waiting on us before he answers our prayers. Not only is it necessary to examine our lives for sin (unresolved conflicts, relationships & problems) and learn how to pray in accordance with Gods' will...but there may be further conditions that we need to meet as well! (Again you need to make sure that you are not the reason for unanswered prayer)!
 - a. First of all are you "delighting yourself in the Lord"? (Ps.37:4). He will give you "the desires of your heart" if you are (&

of course these desires are not selfish) delighting in him!

- b. Next we need to prove ourselves faithful with what he's already entrusted us with, before he will provide anything more (Mt. 25:23).
- c. Finally he may be waiting for you to do something about it - "put legs to your prayers" (not that you take matters into your hands to force God or manipulate others) simply & honestly pray "Lord, what further responsibility do I have regarding these matters I'm praying about?" Obviously you don't just pray for a new job & then do nothing about it...you must do your part! Read 2Kings 5:1-14, clearly God would only respond favorably in healing Na'aman if he obeyed Eli'sha! Also read Acts 9:14-25 when Pauls' life was in danger, they didn't just pray for protection, they devised a strategy & carried it out! The message of James 2 is "faith without works is dead" so put action to your prayers. Another example is that of praying for an unsaved loved one...read Rom.10:14-15 basically the point is "how will they hear unless you tell them?" We are witnesses (Acts 1:8) & ambassadors (2Cor.5:17-21). We are commissioned to preach the gospel & make disciples (Mk.16:15; Mt.28:19-20). It may be that you need to do your part & then God will do his (Ps.3:8), so don't overlook the possibility that before God answers your prayers, there may be further "conditions" that you need to fulfill or you may need to be a more faithful steward fulfilling your responsibility. In either case is God waiting for you to do your part?

4. A unique reason why prayers & answers may be hindered is because of the spiritual warfare that we are engaged in (Eph.6:10-18; 2Cor.10:3-5). In fact, scripture reveals that sometimes Satan has actually, directly, thwarted spiritual progress & answers to prayer (1Thes.2:18; Job 1:7-22; Dan.10:10-21)! All we could do in such a case (how would we ever really know since it's "behind the scenes?") is to say exactly what Michael the archangel said to the devil "the Lord rebuke you" (Jude 1:9)!

The reasons from here pretty much rest in the sovereignty of God - the aspect of prayer that is clearly "out of our control" & in God's control. It's what we need to just "accept" & trust his will & his timing. Our prayers may not be answered immediately or the way in which we'd like because:

5. God is sovereign, all knowing, all powerful & in total complete control over everything that happens. He is righteous, good & faithful, therefore he can & must be trusted, since he has the whole picture in view (Isa.46:9-11) past, present & future!
6. Since we are limited in our understanding, resolve, perspective, knowledge, strength & abilities...we would be wise to surrender our expectations to an all-wise God (Rom.11:33-36; Isa.40:13-14). There are so many other factors that he takes into consideration!
7. He knows what's best for us & others (Jer.29:11-14). We may regret getting what we want (Ps.106:15)!
8. He has his perfect schedule, plan, purpose & time table (Gal.4:4-5).

- Trust it! A delay may be a blessing in disguise. Remember Hannah in 1Sam. 1?
9. It may mean that greater glory will come to God by his allowing other things to fall into place as a part of his sovereign plan (see Jn.9:1 -3...,11:1-4...).
 10. Sometimes, the circumstances, others or we ourselves are not yet ripe, matured or ready for his answer. He might be simply preparing us for something greater! Remember he is able to do exceedingly above & beyond what we can even ask or think (Eph.3:20)! So, if there is a delay, God may just be saying "wait" (Isa.30:18).
 11. He may want to test our faith, our responses, our obedience (Deut.8:2 -3).
 12. He may want to teach us something more about himself, our values, our priorities, our relationships, ourselves...ask him what he wants you to learn.
 13. He may want you to be "forced" into experiencing something greater (2Cor.12:7-10)! It may be a deeper walk with the Lord, a mature faith, a stronger dependence on him, a greater spiritual capacity to develop or spiritual gifts & service to others, a new awareness of his all sufficient resources, an increase in wisdom & understanding, a love & sensitivity to others, patience, spiritual character, humility, contentment,...(Js.1:2-12; Rom.5:3-5).
 14. He may want to use others in the process that we may not even know of presently!
 15. He may have already answered & the answer is on the way (Dan.10:10-21).
 16. He may have provided the answer in different ways other than what we would be expecting.
 17. It simply may not be his will & he is saying "no, I don't choose to answer your prayers on your terms". Remember, he's not obligated to give in to our every whim & demand. That would create a bunch of spoiled brats! However, scripture clearly stated that he will do what he pleases (Dan.4:17,35; Isa.45:5-7,21-23, 46:9-11; Prov.21:1; Lam.3:37-38; Ps.135:6). You see he is the creator who made us, not the other way around (Ps.100:3). He is the potter & we are the clay (Jer. 18:3-6) & it's by his mercies that we're not consumed (Lam.3:22)! So we had better remember our place & keep a balanced spiritual perspective!
 18. Whether he answers "yes, no or maybe later (wait)", we can still "make our requests known" (Phil.4:6), but submit them to his will & timing (Lk.22:42). We must accept God's sovereign decree or plan (Deut.29:29) as Job did (Job 1-42) & trust & obey regardless (in spite of what transpires). He desires that we seek & know him more than just "the answers" we would like. What's more important to you? Finally even if it doesn't all go your way or even the way it should, can you victoriously declare Habakkuk 3:17-19?