

When God does not answer or says no to our prayers

In the Bible there are examples of prayers that were not answered. Usually God responded to the one praying, but refused the request. Bob elaborates on this information in the **Prayer To Go Lecture Series**. These examples provide us with ways to pray more effectively and may provide understanding as to why God may have said no to our prayers.

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When God says No

In His Word, God encourages His children to pray to Him and also to expect that He will answer them. (James 1.5, Jer. 33.3). Yet there are times when God says no to our prayer or request. Out of 29 of the most prominent prayers of the Bible, over half (17) of the no's to prayers, were because of sin in that individual or the people as a whole. The other reasons for God's prayer request denial, was it was not God's will for that request or that God would be glorified more in saying "no". For instance, King Saul asked for God's guidance and help in defeating an enemy, but because of Saul's rebellion and disobedience to God, God did not respond.

King David experienced the same negative response from God after his sin with Bathsheba and the death of his child.

However, sin was not the only reason God said no to a prayer request. Sometimes, He said "no" because it was not His will to answer yes to that request. Jonah and Elijah both asked God to kill them during some difficult circumstances. God's answer was "no" because it was not his will and He instead provided nourishment, safety and help for them. He had other plans for them. James and John in Mark 10:34 wanted to be in high rank in the kingdom next to Jesus. But Jesus said no to that request, because it was up to God the Father to grant that petition.

Jesus asked God to take the cup of suffering from Him, but it was God's will for him to drink of that cup and He submitted to God's will. Paul the Apostle also petitioned God three times to remove the thorn in his flesh and God said "no". My grace shall be sufficient for you.

God as our Heavenly Father wants to give his children those things or circumstances that will be for their good and which will glorify Him (Matt. 7:11). He desires that we pray at all times to Him and expect an answer from Him (Heb. 11:6). However, He may say no to our request if His purpose and His will be better served in another way to glorify His name and be a witness to others.

Examples:

1. King Saul prayed for guidance but God did not answer him. Saul had pronounced a curse on any of his army who ate before evening. Jonathan, unaware of the curse, had eaten. The lesson for us is we should be very careful about making vows. 1 Samuel 14:37
2. King Saul prayed for help and guidance. Saul had removed so far from God that He no longer answered Saul's prayers. Saul then sought an answer through a medium, this was a clear sin on his part. 1 Samuel 28:6,7.
3. David prayed for the life of his son. The son died because of David's sin with Bathsheba. 2 Samuel 12:13-23. Lesson for us - sin has its consequences.
4. Elijah prayed that he might die. God had much more work for Elijah to do so it was not in God's will for Elijah to die at that time. In the end Elijah didn't die but was caught up into heaven by a whirlwind. 1 Kings 19:4; 2 Kings 2:11.
5. Jonah prayed that God would take his life as it was better to die than to live. God does not answer this type of prayer for there is a time to die and we must wait for God's timing not ours. Also, Jonah had yet to accomplish the work God sent him to do. Jonah 4:3.
6. King Zedekiah prayed for help in defeating Nebuchadnezzar. God's answered that He would not help because of the many sins of Israel. Jeremiah 21:2.

7. The disciples James and John with their mother requested the highest rank in the kingdom Jesus was to establish. Jesus' answer was that this position was not His to give. But, they first were to be servants of one another before greatness would be given them. Mark 10:34-45.
8. Jesus prayed, "May this cup be taken from me." He also prayed, "Your will be done." It was the Father's will that Jesus drink the cup of suffering for the sins of the world. Matthew 26:36-46; Philippians 2:5-8; Hebrews 2:9; 12:2,3; 13:12,13.
9. Paul prayed that his "thorn in the flesh" be removed. Paul's thorn was not removed, so that Christ would be glorified, not himself, and to keep him from becoming proud. 2 Corinthians 12:7-10.

God denies prayer requests of those who:

1. Ask amiss. Jas 4:3.
2. Regard iniquity in the heart. Ps 66:18.
3. Live in sin. Isa 59:2; Joh 9:31.
4. Offer unworthy service to God. Mal 1:7-9.
5. Forsake God. Jer 14:10,12.
6. Reject the call of God. Pr 1:24,25,28.
7. Hear not the law. Pr 28:9; Zec 7:11-13.
8. Are deaf to the cry of the poor. Pr 21:13.
9. Are blood shedders. Isa 1:15; 59:3.
10. Are idolaters. Jer 11:11-14; Eze 8:15-18.
11. Are wavering. Jas 1:6,7.
12. Are hypocrites. Job 27:8,9.
13. Are proud. Job 35:12,13.
14. Are self-righteous. Lu 18:11,12,14.
15. Are the enemies of saints. Ps 18:40,41.
16. Cruelly oppress saints. Mic. 3:2-4
17. Moses wants to go into the promise land. Deut. 3:23-29

URL: <http://www.abetterhope.com/prayer/unanswered.html> September 1999

Torrey, R. (1995, c1897). *The new topical text book : A scriptural text book for the use of ministers, teachers, and all Christian workers*. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos research Systems, Inc.