



WHY DOESN'T PRAYER WORK?

When we request something of God and do not get it, we may feel that our prayer did not work. Those of us who live in a consumer culture tend to view prayer as a transaction, a way to place an order or purchase a blessing. We then measure its impact by our level of customer satisfaction.

Jesus's relationship with His Father was marked by different types of prayer, setting a perfect yet practical example of what a life of prayer looks like. Jesus dedicated Himself, often hours at a time, to prayer. When we look to

the relationship between God and Jesus as our example, we see that prayer is vital to our relationship with Him.

Yet instead of imitating Jesus, we can fall into the habit of treating God like a genie in a bottle, thinking of our prayers like the magic words that force the genie to fulfill our wish. Then, when we don't get the answer we want, we feel confused, upset, or angry, declaring that prayer does not work and is a waste of time and energy.

But before we judge whether prayer works, we need to understand what prayer is supposed to be and how we should approach it.

WHAT IS PRAYER?

Prayer is a spiritual practice of the presence of God. It is a way we become aware of and experience God's presence and character, allowing us to become aware of our desperate need for Him. It is also a means to express that need; through prayer, we meet and connect with God.

Philip Yancey once said, "If prayer stands as the place where God and human beings meet, then I must learn about prayer. Most of my struggles in the Christian life circle around the same two themes: why God doesn't act the way we want God to, and why I don't act the way God wants me to. Prayer is the precise point where those themes converge."

Maybe the reason our prayers don't always work is that, at the heart of it, prayer isn't about fixing things; it's about a relationship. Prayer is the avenue of communication between us and God, and we need to approach it with the respect, intentionality, and commitment that He deserves. In Jesus, we find the perfect example of what it means to invest in an active, intimate relationship with God. In order for us to imitate His example, we need to understand why prayer doesn't work the way we want it to, but rather the way God designed it to work.



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In the following pages, we'll dive into what the Bible says about prayer and consider how prayer can be a rich experience of our relationship with a loving and holy God. But remember, reading and talking about prayer is a waste of time if we have no intention of actually praying. G. K. Chesterton once said, "The difference between talking about prayer and praying is the same as the difference between blowing a kiss and kissing." So let's not just talk about praying; let's do it.