God Always Answers Prayer but Not As We Think

For most of us, the most pressing concern of prayer is the anticipated answer. Hindered by limited wisdom yet unhindered by boundless emotion and hope, we often want God to answer our prayers quickly and according to our perspective. God, however, initially responds to prayer requests in one of two ways. His answer is either yes or no, and both answers can be conditioned by not now.

God answers prayer in a greater dimension than anyone can comprehend (Ephesians 3:20-21). In His loving sovereignty, God’s answer brings Him glory and is given with consideration to the request, to the person voicing the request, to the people who are the focus of the request, and to others affected by the request.

Sometimes, God’s answer of “yes” or “no” to a prayer request is readily known. There are times, however, when God answers “yes” but tangible results are not immediately forthcoming. Thus, from a human perspective, God’s unseen “yes” answer can be perceived as a “not now” response. There are also times when God answers “no,” but indications of that answer are not observable. As a result, God’s unrecognizable “no” answer is thought to be “not now” as well. In every request that we may make, God’s answer has a wider perspective in mind. While our timeline for an answer is often short, God’s timeline is perfect as He coordinates other variables in order for the eventual answer to be in accordance with His will.

How should a follower of Christ respond when God’s “yes” or “no” to a prayer request is not readily observable? A believer has at least eight inter-related responses to pursue.

- Be certain that personal sins have been confessed to the Lord (1 John 1:9), since God does not listen to someone who harbors sin (Psalm 66:18).
- Study the Bible to see if the prayer request corresponds to biblical truth. God only answers prayer in accordance with His will (1 John 5:14-15).
- Ask in faith for God to grant wisdom to those involved in the situation and do not doubt His ability to do so (James 1:5-8).
- Determine that the prayer request is not selfishly oriented toward mere physical or emotional gratification (James 4:3).
- Continue to trust God instead of one’s own understanding (Proverbs 3:5) and maintain faith in God (Matthew 21:22).
- Rejoice and give thanks in the current situation (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).
- Stay persistent in prayer (Colossians 4:2, John 15:7, Matthew 7:7-8).
- Consistently give praise to the Lord for Who He is (Psalm 34:1, Hebrews 13:15).

God is faithful to answer prayer. His answer may not be readily seen, but His answer will eventually be revealed. God has never failed and never will.