

Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

At first response, maybe this verse is just simple enough. It acknowledges the challenge for Christians to have strong enough faith to believe that God will answer whatever prayer we pray. Really? On the surface, yes really. As a Christian, okay challenge accepted. No strings attached? No, just a faithful trusting relationship with God. Still sounds easy enough right? Challenge still accepted? Faithful ok, trusting ok.. *fully trusting*...maybe?

Does it mean no strings attached in the sense of thinking we are entitled to ask God for whatever we want? Entitled no, allowed to yes. Psalms 37:4 tells us, "Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart". The beginning of that verse helps us understand when we pray in the context of our relationship with God. Oh yes, the fully trusting part. God answers our prayer when we delight in him, fully trusting.

And this means our faith allows us to hope not expect that God will answer our prayers. Because we trust him. Much discussion has already acknowledged that the struggle with that is patience for God's timing. I would acknowledge other struggles with this also though.

This includes the idea that we can go to God about anything. Frivolous things? Yep. Insignificant? Yep. Selfish? Yep. Except that these prayers would not reflect the true desires of our heart if we are in a faithful and trusting relationship with God. We could argue that anything in our lives could be considered frivolous to God after all. But we know he doesn't think that based on loving us even with all of our human flaws. **Within our faith and trusting relationship with God**, he allows us to petition him for anything our heart desires. The faith and trust should weed out the frivolous, the selfish, the insignificant.

Maybe Jesus' prayer for us is actually that we ask for the desires of God's heart for us. There would be nothing frivolous, insignificant, or selfish about that. After everything he did, David was even called a man after God's own heart!

And here's the other struggle with that. What if our hearts aren't open and forgiving when we go to prayer? Maybe this is where God starts, meaning when we are trying to be patient for God's time, there is work to be done in our own hearts before he can answer our prayer. Uh oh, Mark 11:25, the very next verse reads, "And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins". There is more of that challenge there. My heart's desire-just the part I hope God sees, not what's in the dark corner over there right? Not that part. I'm not praying from that part...I'm thinking my whole heart's desire should be what is reflected in the desire of God's heart for us.

What about praying for others or why bad things happen to good people? Why was this person sick? Why did God not heal this person? Why did my dad die? The list of difficult questions for our human hearts could be endless. Those things are not frivolous, selfish, or

40 Days in Pursuit of Jesus

insignificant. There is another discussion to be had about God's loving us enough to give us free will as part of that answer. But for this discussion, please Lord, give my heart peace that passes all understanding. Humans need to find understanding, it helps us make sense of those things. Does understanding something awful help us to live with it? I'm not sure. But peace does.

In youth, we often write prayers to God, in a simple format that reads:

Dear God,
Thank you for _____ (fill in the blank).
Please help me with _____ (fill in the blank).
I'm sorry for _____ (fill in the blank).

This format opens up prayer in a simple language for anyone that says I don't know where to start or how to talk to God.

Dear God, Thank you for loving me. Please help me with finding peace when I don't understand. I'm sorry for my sins against others.

I pray we petition from open and forgiving hearts. I pray our heart's desires reflect God's heart's desires for us. Amen

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