

BIBLICAL PRAYER (39)

When it comes to the subject of prayer the critical issue pertaining to our faith is not quantity, but quality (Matt. 17:20). In other words, a very little of the right kind of faith can accomplish powerful things in prayer. The size of faith is not the criteria; the kind of faith is the criteria.

When it comes to developing the right kind or quality of faith, there are four main Biblical observations we need to understand concerning the right type of faith:

(Biblical Faith Observation #1) - Praying with the right type of faith is not determined by our circumstances .

A good Biblical illustration of this principle is found in **I Kings 18:41-45**. James tells us that Elijah prayed rain both into and out of the area (**James 5:17-18**). When we turn to Elijah's prayer for rain, there is nothing in the circumstances that would appear that rain is near. In fact, the initial response to Elijah's prayer for rain was "nothing" (**I Kings 18:43**). The text implies that six times the prayer was made and the circumstances suggested that it wasn't going to rain, but on the seventh time, the rain came. Had Elijah based his prayer on the circumstances he could see, he would not have kept praying. But he based his prayer on his faith in God.

Truth is, often when circumstances are the worst, a believing faith that prays is at its highest and strongest level. When circumstances have reached a level in which all the believer can do is simply turn to God and rely on Him, prayer becomes a powerful potential because the faith is aimed at precisely the One capable of changing the circumstances – Almighty God. God delights in impossible circumstances because it enables Him to demonstrate His glory and His power for His people.

J. Oswald Sanders writes: "Faith does not require external confirmation, but believes in spite of appearances." Perhaps one of the best times to pray for something is when circumstances appear to be totally against the logic of the prayer, for it is precisely at these times when faith is properly aimed only at God.

(Biblical Faith Observation #2) - Praying with the right type of faith is not determined by requiring or asking God for some sign .

The Bible makes it very clear that a lack of faith that asks God for signs is not a type of faith that pleases Him (**Hebrews 11:1, 6**). In fact, Jesus Christ equated a sign-seeking faith with being a wicked thing (**Luke 11:29**). Jesus Christ also made it perfectly clear that a believing faith is much more blessed than a seeing faith (**John 20:29**).

In the famous "fleece" request of Gideon, it is clear that God did graciously grant him a sign, but it is also equally clear that Gideon sensed he could truly anger God by asking for signs (**Judges 6:36-40 / verse 39***).

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Faith that will see God do many powerful things through prayer will not be a sign-oriented faith. It will not require or demand some sign as proof or evidence of anything. Truth is, when God does answer prayer, there is the proof of the care and power of God. God wants us stable in our faith, not fickle and people who are constantly asking for signs are fickle in their faith.

Let us say that you must make a decision concerning some matter and you have carefully followed Biblical principles as best you know how:

- 1) You prayed and asked God for wisdom. **James 1:5**
- 2) You sought out counsel from those wise and skilled in the things of God. **Proverbs 15:22**
- 3) You sought the prayer support of others in your behalf that you might have God's discerning wisdom. **Philippians 1:9-10**
- 4) You carefully and prayerfully sifted this matter through all relevant Scriptural principles. **Psalms 119:1-2, 14-15, 33-36; II Timothy 3:16-17**

If all of these steps have been followed, one does not need, nor should ask for a sign. One needs to wait on the Lord and trust that God will in fact direct his path (**Proverbs 3:5-6**). There does come a point in which it is pleasing to God to launch out in faith, believing that God is leading, guiding and protecting. It delights God to see one trust Him in new dimensions.

When one is obedient to the Word and will of God and is praying concerning the will of God, it is pleasing to God when one, by faith, responds and accomplishes something for the glory of God. Signs are not necessary; faith is necessary. **Signs do not please God, faith does.**

(Biblical Faith Observation #3) - Praying with the right type of faith is not determined by nor based on our feelings.

The Biblical truth is, a true faith that pleases God often trusts God in spite of a contradiction of our feelings. We may be certain that Daniel's faith and prayer ministry was not based on his feelings (**Daniel 6:10-17**). Had Daniel gone by his feelings, he would have been afraid of the lion's den and stopped praying like the rest of the world did. Daniel's faith was rooted in Biblical realities and facts about God, not his emotional status.

Perhaps the greatest Biblical example of this principle comes from the life of our Lord. Jesus Christ specifically prayed in accordance with God's Word and will, in spite of how He emotionally felt (**Luke 22:39-43**). Any person's emotions would tend to shy away from an assignment that featured abandonment by God, mockery, persecution and execution. **No one in his right mind would ever feel like experiencing these things.** However, Jesus Christ knew the will of God and the program of God and prayed for it. Had He followed the normal path of human emotions, He would have either removed Himself from this terrible cup of suffering or asked the Father to remove Him. But He did not follow His feelings, but the Word of God.