

Question: "Does God answer prayers?"

Answer: The short answer to this question is, "Yes!" God has promised that, when we ask for things that are in accordance with His will for our lives, He will give us what we ask for (1 John 5:14–15). However, there is one caveat to add to this: we may not always like the answer.

We pray for a lot of things—some good, some bad, some really pointless. But God listens to all of our prayers, regardless of what we ask (Matthew 7:7). He does not ignore His children (Luke 18:1–8). When we talk to Him, He has promised to listen and respond (Matthew 6:6; Romans 8:26–27). His answer may be some variation of "yes" or "no" or "wait, not now."

Keep in mind that prayer is not our way of getting God to do what we want. Our prayers should be focused on things that honor and glorify God and reflect what the Bible clearly reveals God's will to be (Luke 11:2). If we pray for something that dishonors God or is not His will for us, He is unlikely to give what we ask for. God's wisdom far exceeds our own, and we must trust that His answers to our prayers are the best possible solutions.

Does God answer prayers? – When God says "yes."

In the first two chapters of 1 Samuel, Hannah prays and asks God to give her a baby. She had been unable to conceive which, in biblical times, was considered a mark of shame for a woman. Hannah prayed fervently—so fervently that a priest who saw her praying thought she was drunk. But God heard Hannah, and He allowed her to give birth to a child.

Jesus said, "Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (John 14:13). If you have prayed specifically for something and God has granted it to you, then you can be assured that it is His will. Nothing happens without God allowing it to happen (Romans 8:28).

Does God answer prayers? – When God says "no."

In John 11, Mary and Martha wanted Jesus to heal their dying brother, yet Jesus allowed Lazarus to die. Why did He say "no" to these grieving women who loved Him so much? Because He had greater things planned for Lazarus, things that no one could possibly have imagined.

"No" is one of the hardest answers we can receive. But, once again, it is important to remember that God is all-knowing and is aware of the entire timeline of history. He knows every possible outcome of every possible choice in every possible situation; we do not. He sees the "big picture"; we see a partial brushstroke. Proverbs 3:5 says to "trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding." When we get a "no" answer, we must trust that whatever we asked for was not God's will.

Does God answer prayers? – When God says "wait, not now."

Sometimes hearing "wait" is even harder than hearing "no" because it means we have to be patient (Romans 8:25). While waiting is difficult, we can be thankful God is in control and trust that His timing will be perfect (Romans 12:12; Psalm 37:7–9).

God wants the best for your life. He does not want you to suffer needlessly. Jeremiah 29:11 says, "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope." Be patient and know that He is your loving Father (Psalm 46:10).

Abide by Philippians 4:6 as you make your requests to God: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." Then, when God responds, be prepared to accept His wisdom—whether or not you agree with His answer.