



Believe and Achieve



If you believe, you
will receive
whatever you ask
for in prayer.
Matthew 21:22



Matthew 21:22 (theologically explained)...

Jesus' statement to the disciples is a powerful promise, and it fits with what He has often said when healing the sick and afflicted and casting out demons.

God cares deeply that His people trust Him and Him alone to do what they ask. God's power, of course, is limitless. Anything is possible for Him. Jesus has made it clear, though, that those who want God to use His power in a specific way must have deep confidence of His ability to do what they ask.

Jesus said something similar to the twelve earlier in Matthew, making it clear that this power was available to them only in and through Jesus Himself: "If two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them."

This promise from Jesus to the disciples can be misunderstood or misused. He is not saying to them or to the believers to follow in the coming generations that we can demand whatever we want from God in whatever form or fashion we want it and He is required to give it to us. He is still God, and we remain His creatures and children through faith in Jesus.

Christ specifically tells the disciples they will receive anything they ask - but only if they have faith. This means trust in God and His power to do what He wants to do. It also means an alignment with the will of God - it does not mean using the Creator as a vending machine. It's noteworthy that these men, who heard Jesus make these promises did not attempt grandiose, unnecessary miracles as part of their future ministry.

Part of asking "in faith" is trusting God to do what is most fitting with His purpose for us and the world. We can always be confident of God's power as well as His goodness to do what is best. The promise and the condition both need to be understood, and both still stand. Receiving powerful things from God starts with believing He is able, making the request, and being convinced that His response will be both capable and loving.

Well-meaning Christians may read verses like Matthew 21:22 and think it means God is their personal genie, ready to grant their every wish so long as they have enough faith.

Verses such as 1 John 5:14 help clarify Matthew 21:22 with an important distinction: "And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us."

This verse shows us that in order to have what we are asking for, it must first be a part of God's will. That certainly changes things, doesn't it? We must remember that prayer isn't simply a means of asking for things, but rather, an opportunity to fellowship with our Father. Can you imagine the type of relationship you'd have with your earthly parent or spouse if the only time you talked to them was to ask them for a gift or blessing, or request them to take a particular action? It wouldn't be a very close-knit relationship, and it would probably feel very empty and one-sided.

The goal of prayer is to talk to God, and for Him to respond through His Word and the Holy Spirit. We submit our desires and supplications, our thanksgiving and praise to God, and He moulds our hearts to more definitely reflect His. That's how our wills match up.

Consider James 4:3 - "You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions." This is the difference between having success & having significance.

Too often, we pray with the wrong motive. God knows best - we do not. Our flesh and pride and sin get in the way and taint even our best efforts or purest attempts. Isaiah 64:6 tells us, "We are all infected and impure with sin. When we display our righteous deeds, they are nothing but filthy rags. Like autumn leaves, we wither and fall, and our sins sweep us away like the wind."

Prayer isn't about begging God to change His mind to come around to our side of thinking—it's about God changing our hearts and minds to come around to His. Then our desires and requests are part of His will.

To pray with faith, pray sincerely. Pray from a heart eager to please God. Pray with a surrendered mind-set that He knows best. Pray for God's will to be done and for your desires to match His. Pray without ceasing. Pray fervently. Then watch God work. It might not look the way you wanted—in fact, it often does not. Because thankfully, God isn't a genie - He's so much more.