

chapter five

Can Prayer Change the Mind of God?

In prayer you align yourselves to the purpose and power of God and He is able to do things through you that He couldn't do otherwise. For God has left certain things open to prayer-things which will never be done except as we pray.

- E. Stanley Jones

Chapter Five- Can Prayer Change the Mind of God?

Through prayer, we have the ability to change the mind of God.

Notes

One of the strangest sentences in the Bible says, “*Yahweh was sorry that he had made man on the earth*” (Genesis 6:6 WEB).

The Hebrew word *naham* is used to define Yahweh’s response to His actions of creating man. *Naham* means “to relent, repent, change one’s mind; be grieved.”¹⁴

What if through prayer, our God is inviting us to interact with Him to relent, repent, or change His mind?

When Abraham was told about Yahweh’s plan to destroy the city where his nephew lived, he began to intercede, and Yahweh relented.

When Yahweh told Moses He was going to destroy all the Israelites and start over, Moses interceded, and Yahweh relented.

The revealed will of God is the inspired Word of God which has been passed onto us by our forefathers.

The 66 books of the Bible are revealed to us to keep us connected to the pattern of living and beliefs every child of our God should embrace.

The unrevealed will of God concerns those things that are specific to our life, but not written in the Scriptures.

We must first follow the revealed Word of God before we can expect to understand the unrevealed will of God. Pursuing His revealed will afford us the strength to accomplish the unrevealed will of God.

1. Ground yourself in Scripture, even asking God to give you a rhema word.

A rhema word is a portion of Scripture that comes alive to you for a specific moment.

2. Include godly people in the process.

The Bible tells us that, “*Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed*” (Proverbs 15:22).

¹⁴ Zodhiates, Spiros, and John R. Kohlenberger. *The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible: New International Version*. Chattanooga, TN: AMG Pub., 1996. 1533.

We should look to those people in our lives who God has placed us under their authority.

3. List reasons for your choices and make decisions from your heart.

Feel out each reason and then discern whether or not you have peace. Paul wrote, ***“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts”*** (Colossians 3:15).

Peace is the umpire that rules in our hearts so be sure to always be at peace before moving forward.

Never make big decisions in a rush. Satan is the author of confusion, and peace is a weapon against him.

4. Give God time to redirect you.

A word of wisdom is doing the right thing at the right time.

If you do the right thing at the wrong time, you have done the wrong thing!

Having an excellent system to apply to your decision-making process is wisdom.

“Grow daily or die gradually.”

The Bible is not a rule book; it is a book teaching you how to be a ruler.

Romans 10:17 says, ***“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”***

The LORD is mysterious in His goodness and not in some weird, twisted evil way.

I have heard people quote the book of Job when a tragedy occurs. ***“He performs wonders that cannot be fathomed, miracles that cannot be counted”*** (Job 9:10 NIV).

To the one who is suffering tragedy, someone alludes to a God who does mysterious things that we just can't fathom. I usually chose to identify with their pain and otherwise be silent in such situations.

Bill Johnson, the Senior Leader of Bethel Church in Redding, uses the following four core values in response to every situation in life:

1. **God is in a good mood**
2. **Nothing is impossible**
3. **Christ won total victory on the cross**
4. **God made me to be significant**

Core values allow us to hope and fight off negativity even in the darkest of circumstances.

When life is hard, that is just life. We must redefine hard as good not bad. Hard will bring growth to our lives, and our core values must remain intact regardless of the pain we are feeling.

We can complain that rose bushes have thorns or rejoice that thorn bushes have roses.

Most churches teach that God is in control. If God is in control, then all things, both good and bad are decided by God Himself. Every rape, premature death, and natural disaster is planned by God and stamped with His blessing.

Any deep thought about this idea seems to make God a bit unapproachable.

The Bible teaches us that God is in charge but not in control.

God has released His authority to man to govern the earth under the rule of His Son Jesus Christ.

The church must be equally concerned about getting others to heaven as they are about bringing heaven to earth.

Modern theology describes God as all-powerful (*omnipotent*), all-knowing (*omniscient*) and existing everywhere (*omnipresent*).

Consider the story found in Genesis 18 where Yahweh meets with Abraham. Here we will find the three concepts (*omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence*) found in modern theology put into question.

Then the Lord said, "The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know" (Genesis 18:20-21).

If God Himself is everywhere (*omnipresent*), why does He need to go down to Sodom and Gomorrah? If He knows all (*omniscient*), why does He *not* know what is going on in Sodom and Gomorrah?

A God who controls all things will not change His mind.

Abraham believed He could change the mind of God and because of his bold intercession, Yahweh modified His plan.

The men turned away and went toward Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before the Lord. Then Abraham approached Him and said: "Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it? Far be it from You to do such a thing—to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from You! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

(Genesis 18:23-25)

God may tell us what He is about to do so that we can intercede before Him to change the outcome.

He reveals His plans of destruction in hopes of finding someone with the heart of an intercessor to stand in the gap.

In the Greek language, the concepts of the will of God are transliterated into English as *thelema* and *boulema*.¹⁵ These two words are translated into English Bibles many times as the word "will, wish or desire."

The meanings of these words are inferred in Luke's account of Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Father, if it is Your will (thelema: unalterable purpose) take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will (boulema: desire), but Yours, be done. (Luke 22:42)

Thelema represents in this verse the unalterable will of the Father. Heaven has determined that certain events will happen in the future. Jesus submits Himself to the will of Heaven because He wants what is best for the most.

¹⁵Craig Hill's book *If God is in Control, Then Why?* has been a great resource to better understand the working of God on planet earth.

Boulema is inferred in this verse as the *desirable will* of Jesus. He is expressing His desire to have this cup pass from Him, if possible.

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing (*boulema*) that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. (2 Peter 3:9 ESV)

Our God's desires are consistent with His nature and character, but we observe that these things do not always happen as God wills.

If we accept the wrong things as the will of God, our prayers will be ineffective.

Faith believes in something that is not yet seen. Knowing the heart of God in prayer allows us to persevere in our intercession.

Determination arises in our hearts to pursue justice, and we win a favorable settlement before the judge.

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he Lord works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed. He made known his ways to Moses, His acts to the people of Israel
(Psalm 103:6-7).

Moses was a great intercessor because He knew the ways of His God.

Below are just a few examples of the wish or desires (*boulema*) of God to help us know how to pray and how to act:

- 1. It is God's will that none should perish (2 Peter 3:9).**
- 2. It is God's will to heal every disease (Psalm 103:3).**
- 3. It is God's will that your entire household serve the LORD (Joshua 24:15).**
- 4. It is God's will that you prosper financially (Deuteronomy 30:9).**

When we come into alignment with the wishes of God, His power flows into our lives.

When two electrical lines are placed parallel to one another, electricity can flow from one to another.

When lines cross each other, no power is channeled. When our belief system is parallel to Jesus' belief system, energy flows from His wire to our wire.

The Greek word for *thelema* seems to lean toward the idea of the unalterable purposes of our God.

Something unalterable is something that will not change, no matter how much we pray or do.

Like a sandcastle crumbling under the onslaught of the high tide, there are things determined by the unalterable will of God that we must not resist.

Below are three examples of the unalterable will of God.

- 1. Jesus Christ will return physically to the earth and will rule and reign here for one thousand years.**
- 2. The Word of God will never pass away, and those who love it will prosper.**
- 3. Everyone is destined to die and face judgment.**

When we come into the place of prayer, we can understand the difference between the alterable will of God and the unalterable will of God. Discerning the alterable and unalterable will of God will help you keep focus in your prayer time