

“How to **get what you
want...**”

INTRODUCTION

This is a book on prayer. I say that so you won't feel cheated if you decide to read on. But I also say this because I believe we don't see prayer the way God sees it. If we did, you'd already know what the title was talking about. This book is an exercise in seeing it God's way...

Chapter 1

The Main Question

The question at the center of every world view and philosophy is: **“How do you get what you want?”** Every culture has a slightly different answer to this question.

In a **money**-centered culture, the way you get what you want is through money.

Sure “money can’t buy love” but it can give you the chance to find it, and the means to enjoy it. Money can even get you more money. Whatever your heart desires comes through this object at the center of universe: money.

In a **work**-culture, the way you get what you want is through hard work.

Hard work can get you money, but also happiness, and love (marriage takes hard work don't you know?). In this view hard-work is more central than money.

Although many of the claims of money's power may still be true, people with this mindset would say hard-work goes *beyond* it and gets you things that wealth by itself cannot.

In a **talent or beauty** centered culture, the way you get what you want is through...talent and/or beauty.

You don't necessarily need to work hard, or have lots of money, your talent can get you the money as well as replicate the effects of hard work...

In an **intelligence or technology**-centered culture, the way you get what you want is through intellect or smart planning, or technology, or better laws...

Better science, more intelligent management will get us what we want.

Each view doesn't necessarily negate the other views, a science-centered world-view doesn't negate the power of money or beauty or hard work, and yet what's at the center (whether it's money or talent or work or beauty) trumps them all...

Now you probably subscribe to one of these in some form. You too have a particular answer to the QUESTION: **“how do you get what you want?”**

So what's God's perspective on this?

The way God sees it, **money** does a lot in the human world, and talent does a lot, so does beauty and intellect and technology...

These views are NOT *completely* wrong, but they're wrong in placing anything other than God as an ultimate...

As a result they make money or work or talent or intellect into gods...

In a God created universe, **God is at the center of it all.**

In a God centered world, God is the source of all wealth and power and beauty and truth and talent and everything. He's more central.

So how do you get what you want...in a God centered world?

Here's how: through **passionate, persistent, believing-prayer.**

There is a Gospel logic to this:

IF you're saved by what you DO,
then you must **work work
work** to get what you want... *No
time to pray...*

IF you're saved by what
you HAVE (money,
power or beauty) then
you must **get and work
to get these things...**
No time to pray...

But **IF you're saved by what Jesus does:** His perfect life
and perfect death in your place, and you are now living in His place
as God's "sons" then the way you get what you want is **you ask
for it.**

Chapter 2

The Parable

In Luke 18 :1-8, Jesus tells a story about a widow who complains to a judge about some legal matter. The judge doesn't care about her situation, and refuses to do anything at first. But because she keeps coming back persistently demanding justice he finally gives her what she wants...

Jesus contrasts the judge in the story, who doesn't care about the woman, to God who does care about His people. And says, "and won't God give justice to his elect who cry to him night and day?"

The two **keys** to the kind of prayer...the kind of prayer that gets what you want is...it's **passionate** (crying out for justice) and **persistent** (crying out day and night...)

Elsewhere Jesus said, “**Ask** and it will be given, **seek** and you shall find, **knock** and the door will be opened for you.”
(Matthew 7:7)

Some scholars point out the **present progressive** tense of the verb. Jesus is saying ask and keep asking (*present progressive*), seek and keep seeking (*present progressive*), knock and keep knocking (you get the idea).

But you don't have to be a Greek scholar to know that when you knock on a door you don't just hit the door once.

Knock.

You hit the door...repeatedly. That's what knocking is. And Jesus is saying, that's what **passionate, persistent believing prayer** is like.

What this means is that **you will be tempted to give up on prayer...** The widow in the story had nothing going for her, except that she was persistent!

Perhaps you will pray for something, and you won't see any results... The judge had no reason and no inclination to help her...and yet he did because of her **persistence!**

But God wants to give you every good thing. So you have an even greater reason to be persistent.

So here's what you need to do: **Pray, and don't give up.** No matter what. Cry out to God day and night for justice...for what is right, for what you need, for what you want.

Objection: “Wait a minute!” someone says. “God doesn’t need me to tell Him how to do His job... He will do what He does whether I ask Him or not...”

Answer: Of course God does not *NEED* you to tell Him what to do... But there are lots of things God does that He doesn’t *NEED* to do.

But God, (who calls you His “Son”) (and whom you call “Father”) insists on treating us as Sons – training us up for the family business.

One older Christian said: **“God only acts in response to believing prayer”** (paraphrase of John Wesley).

Just the way God insisted on working through Moses even though Moses was over 80 years old, and didn't want the job... And just the way God insisted on working through the prayers of people like Elijah and Elisha... **God now insists on working through your prayers.**

This is why Martin Luther said he's too busy not-to-pray:

“If I fail to spend two hours in prayer each morning, the devil gets the victory through the day. I have so much business I cannot get on without spending three hours daily in prayer.” Martin Luther

*As is the business of tailors
to make clothes and
cobblers to make shoes, so
it is the business of
Christians to pray."
Martin Luther*

*Prayer is my
chief work, and
it is by means
of it that I carry
on the rest."
Thomas Hooker*

Jesus ends the parable with a question. He says the question is not whether God will answer the prayers of His people...He will. The question is **“when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?”**

In other words, **will you join God in His work?**

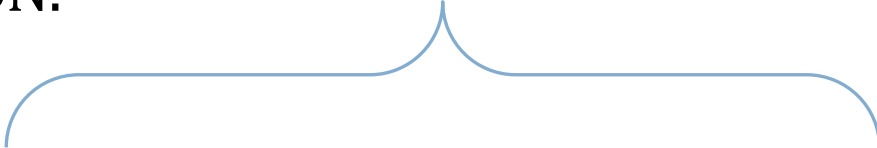
So here are your work orders: Pray **passionately**, pray **persistently**... and keep praying.

About everything that is important to you.


And whatever you do. Don't give up.

Chapter 3

QUESTION:



If God wants to give us
what we want, *then* why do
we need to pray for the
same things over and over?
Why does He make us
wait? Why do we have to
persist in prayer?



Jesus' parable tells us THAT we'll need to be persistent, but he doesn't tell us *WHY*. Why should God's people cry "day and night?" You know what we call that today? **Poor customer service...**

This is true, except God is not a vending machine. And there are reasons why some prayers require a great deal of persistence...

C.S. Lewis suggests that one effect of having to pray for the same thing over and over again is that it increases our desire for the thing...

So it's one thing to want something to be better, it's another thing to "hunger and thirst for righteousness." And so God waits **until our desire is big enough** to take in what He wants to give us.

In other cases, it's not so much that our desire is enlarged as clarified...

An angry prayer crying out against a racist *person*, through passionate persistence can grow into a prayer crying out against **racist systems**, and **racism** itself.

A lonely prayer crying out for God to give us the affections of one particular *person* can grow into a prayer for God to bring us **the RIGHT person** of His choosing, or the right people with whom to walk through life together.

Or **sometimes** the delay might not have anything to do with us. But there are other factors in bringing it at the perfect time. Nevertheless we can pray and enlarge and clarify our desire...knowing that God will bring it about.

But knowing all this stuff about “what prayer could do” doesn’t do anything... You need to pray. And as you do, you can find these things out for yourself.

This is what we do. This is how we work. This is how God is planning to save the world. Through you, and mainly through your prayers... Your prayers do the real work (as God responds to them), and what we DO with our lives simply reaps the harvest of our prayers.

Will you join me in the work of prayer?

Prayer isn't really work. It's relying on God to do the work. And for people who are saved not by our works but His, this is how we work... We'll do things too. And the stuff we DO is important. But prayer will be the main thing we do!

Just as a general "fights" a war by commanding his troops... Just as a race car driver steers his machine, or a CEO works by managing the work of other people – your main work is passionate persistent believing prayer.

Chapter 4

Before you get started...

There's something you need to know. We get so focused on getting things done that we miss it unless we remind each other...

What does all this prayer stuff teach us about God? What does Jesus want us to know about Him? Something that should be at the foundation of every prayer?

Behold...a **God who loves you intently.**

In the parable, Jesus calls God's people His "elect."

The word "elect" has a lot of deep philosophical and theological connotations. But all you need to know right now is this: this same word is often translated "choice" or "best" or "favorite."

In other words, God thinks of you as His favorites!

Why should God care to answer my prayers? How can I be so bold as to press my will upon His day and night?

Consider this from St. Paul's letter to the Romans:

So, what do you think? With God on our side like this, how can we lose? If God didn't hesitate to put everything on the line for us, embracing our condition and exposing himself to the worst by sending his own Son, is there anything else he wouldn't gladly and freely do for us? (Eugene Peterson's paraphrase of Romans 8:32)

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The light hearted 80's movie, *The Princess Bride* starts off with Buttercup and the farm boy Westley:

Nothing gave Buttercup as much pleasure as ordering Westley around... "Farm Boy, polish my horse's saddle. I want to see my face shining in it by morning."

“...As you wish.” As you wish was all he ever said to her.

“Farm boy, fill these with water...please.”

“...As you wish.”

One... day she was amazed to discover that when he was saying 'As you wish', what he meant was, 'I love you.' And even more amazing was the day she realized she truly loved him back.”

Is that too schmaltzy for you?

At the heart of real passionate persistent believing prayer is a deep awareness of a God who loves sinners. This is the real secret behind prayer. In the end those who get this will continue praying – and those who miss it will give up.

I pray you would get it and join me in dedicating yourself to this work.

FOLLOW UP:

If you get anything good out of reading this e-book, please pass it on and talk to someone about **how they can get what they want.**