

532 How Does God Work in Our Lives?

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God's Answers to Life's Questions

For many people, God is up in heaven far removed from their everyday lives. They don't always know what to make of Him. I met a young lady at a restaurant the other day who believes in God, prays to Him occasionally, and sometimes reads her Bible. She lives a good moral life, but she rarely goes to church. She isn't involved in any church activity. God is on the fringes of her life. But God would love to be far more in her life, to make a difference in her. But God only acts in our lives when we let Him into our lives. Today we want to discuss how God can make a difference!

Having a close, personal relationship with God can make a big difference in our lives. God is a good Father and a good Friend. He can lift you up when you're down; He can give you hope when life gets bleak; He can give you peace when the world is troubling you; and He can give you joy in times of sadness. Nothing you will ever do will bring you more good in life than a personal relationship with God. The Lord God can meet our deepest spiritual needs and bless our lives with unspeakable joy. But we must be willing to invest our time and ourselves in that relationship.

Jeremiah wrote, "Thus says the Lord: 'Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord'" (Jer. 9:23-24). God wants people to understand and know Him. He wants them to know His character, His love, His justice and His righteousness on the earth. God wants to have you in His life and to bless your life.

Hanani the seer told Asa the King a truth about God that we all need to know. He said in 2 Chronicles 16:9, "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is completely His." The ASV speaks of those whose heart is "perfect toward him." God is looking for people who really love Him with all their heart, all their soul, and all their might. God strengthens these people, helps them through every struggle, and gives them what they need when they need it. We are so blessed to have such a God!

So then it is no wonder that David said in Psalm 42:1-2, "As the deer pants for the water brooks, So my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; When shall I come and appear before God?" My friend, do you long for God? Do you really want to be close to Him, to love Him and have a perfect heart toward Him? You might have that longing in your heart, but is it noticeable in your life? Do the people around you know that God is the center of your heart and life, that you know and understand Him and serve Him? We all want God, but are we there for God when He needs us?

God works best in our lives when we give Him a place to work. Jesus, you remember, is knocking on our door. He said in Revelation 3:20, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me." A relationship with the Lord begins when people open their hearts and give their time and attention to Him. The only way to get to know and understand someone is to take the time to be with that person. Jesus is ready to be with you, if you will take the time to open your life and be with Him.

Here are some of the things God can do in your life if you let Him. **First, God can make a difference in your life through the gospel.** The word "gospel" means "good news." Paul helps us understand the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15:1-3, where he writes: "Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you

believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve." The good news is really the story of Jesus and what He did for you and me. He came to this world to save people from sin. He lived a wonderful life of love and service, but wicked men crucified Him out of jealousy and fear that they would lose their place with the Romans. Jesus died for our sins, shed His blood to wash away our sins, that we might be forgiven and be able to live with Him in heaven for an eternity. The gospel also teaches that Jesus was raised from the dead.

His resurrection gives us hope that we too can live beyond this life with Him in heaven. The gospel message is indeed good news that can make a big difference in our lives. The gospel gives us peace. When we hear and obey the gospel, we have the promise of forgiveness. Forgiveness is something we all badly need. We look into our past and see all the things where we have erred and wish we could change. We can't change the past, but we can be forgiven. God no longer holds our past against us, which opens the door to a reconciliation and a relationship with Him. Can you imagine...being a friend to God?

The Bible, God's message to us, is more than just "good news." It does far more. Paul said about the Scriptures in 2 Tim. 3:16-17, "All Scripture is breathed out (inspired) by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work." The word of God is indeed profitable! It will teach you when you need, reprove or rebuke you when you need it, correct you when you need it, and equip you for every good work when you need it. The word of God is complete, all-sufficient and able to work in your life.

Paul said to the Thessalonians, "And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers" (1 Thess. 2:13). God's word can do so many good things in your life. It can open your heart; it can humble you; it can give you light and wisdom and joy; and it alone can give you the wisdom that leads to eternal life (2 Tim. 3:15). If you want God to work in your life, study the Bible closely and practice the things it teaches. You will see a difference!

Jesus said, "If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority" (John 7:17). The best way to know if the Bible is the real Word of God is to put it into practice, and you will know! You will see that every word of every verse of every chapter of every book has a true and utterly trustworthy message. Solomon advised us, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths" (Prov. 3:5-6). Trust God's word and follow it!

Second, pray in faith. God wants you to listen to Him when you read His word, and God wants to listen to you when you pray. Paul reminds us in Ephesians 3:20-21, "Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen." God can do things beyond our thinking and beyond our asking. We sometimes think too small and ask too little. I believe in prayer, because I believe in God and in His power to answer prayer.

James observed, “The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit” (James 5:16-18). Let’s not doubt when we pray. Elijah was a human just like us, and God listened to him. God will also listen to us when we pray humbly and live according to His will. Pray fervently. God is listening closely and giving us His attention. He wants to bless your life.

Some folks pray and expect God to hear, but they are not willing to change their lives and give up their sin. They wonder why God is not listening. The Bible says, “If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear” (Psalm 66:18). The word “regard” in another version is translated as “cherish.” If I cherish sin and will not repent, God will not hear my prayers. If I want God to work in my life, I must be willing to give up the things that are offensive to Him. This is the way it is in any family. If I want to have my wife’s approval, I need to live in such a way that I am not offensive to her. Jesus said, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

Third, we should use the natural gifts that God has given us. The apostle Peter wrote in 1 Peter 4:10-11, “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” God gives all of us gifts, but He expects us to use those gifts.

Fourth, God allows events of our lives to help us grow in faith and love. Some of these events are not pleasant, but they for our good later in life. Paul said in Rom. 8:28, “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” Not everything that happens to us is good; some are deeply painful and leave lasting scars. But God is able to take the suffering and evil that comes to our lives and use that pain for our good and for the good of others. He is able to help us to overcome our pain and troubles and to lift us up to a life that can bless all.

God can even help us in times of temptation to overcome. Paul gave this promise from the faithfulness of God in 1 Corinthians 10:13, “No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.” God will either limit the temptation to your ability to endure or will somehow make a way for you to escape that temptation, so that you may remain free from sin and in total fellowship with Him. What a great God we have.

Another promise Paul recognizes comes from Romans 8:32, “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?” God works in our lives by not only giving us Jesus who died for our sins but also by

providing for our needs each day as we live. God is always with us. He knows what we need even before we know it and even before we ask for it. God makes possible for us things that we cannot do for ourselves. God’s plan for us in this life and in the life to come includes “all” things that are beneficial to us. What a blessing to be a Christian.

That’s why we encourage every person to be a Christian. The blessings of God are “in Christ,” that is, for Christians. When people live rebellious, sinful lives, God cannot and will not work in their lives. This is why our first task with God is to humble ourselves and submit to His will in everything. We must believe in Him, repent of our sins, confess His name, and be baptized (immersed) in the name of Christ, to receive the forgiveness of our sins. We encourage you to do that today!

God’s Promises

We all ought to take the promises of God seriously, because we can be sure that God keeps His promises. God as our Father and friend wants to be part of our lives. He loves us deeply and only wants the best for us. As a loving Father and as a powerful God, He can make a great difference in our lives. But God is not willing to force you to be close to Him. He doesn’t twist arms. What he does is invite you, opening His heart and His arms to you, hoping you will come to Him and embrace Him in obedience to the gospel. He doesn’t want a slave; He wants a loving child.

Jesus said in Matthew 11: 28-30, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” The Lord can do great things in our lives if we are willing to take up his yoke and walk with Him. His yoke is a bearable yoke and a light burden. We can live the Christian life and go to heaven. We can find great love in Christ and in God the Father who will go through life with us. My friend, take his yoke, love Him and follow Him to the end.

Don’t ever let anyone or anything come between you and the Lord. Be willing to do His will and find out (as John 7:17 says) that the word and promises really do come from God. Trust the Lord to work in your life to give you all the joy and peace He has promised in Christ. You can overcome sin, you can resist temptation, you can find spiritual healing, and you can live a victorious and abundant life in Jesus Christ. Don’t let another day go by without Christ in your life.

We do not ask for money on this program, because all the expenses are paid by your friends at Concord Road Church of Christ in Brentwood, Tennessee. If you are in our area, worship with us some Sunday at 9 am or 6 pm. You are always welcome and wanted. If you cannot visit us, there is a wonderful congregation of the churches of Christ near you. We’d love to hear from you. Until next week, we remind you to look to God for all your answers. God bless you and we love you from Concord Road.

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