

Help from “So That” Prayers

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One of the problems that most of us have with praying is that we instinctively know that prayer isn't about getting what I want from God. It's about God's will being accomplished. Yet, there are things we want God to do that are very important to us. How do we reconcile these things?

The Bible demonstrates for us a fascinating way to pray that brings together our needs and the purposes of God. I call it “so that” praying. In many places throughout Scripture you will find someone making a request of the Lord for something that is very important to him or her. Then that person closes out his or her prayer by including a “so that” addition. Almost without exception, the “so that” portion takes the prayer and focuses it on God and His purposes. It often has to do with bringing additional honor and glory to God and expanding His kingdom.

Though there are many examples, one of my favorite ones is found in Hezekiah's great prayer in Isaiah 37. Surrounded by the Assyrian army, Hezekiah asks the Lord to deliver them. It is in verse 20 that we find the “so that” portion. “Now, Lord, our God, deliver us from his hand, so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, Lord, are the only God” (Isaiah 37:20). That powerful addition turns this prayer from being merely about Hezekiah and his people, to being about God's honor and glory. It makes it a God-focused prayer!

We can use this clearly biblical prayer style in many of our prayers. One of the most common prayer requests I receive has to do with physical healing. I always am delighted to pray for those who are sick and in need of the healing touch of the Lord. But it takes it to a whole new level when I include a “so that” prayer. It might go like this:

“Lord, I pray for Bill that You would bring healing to him. But I ask You to do this Lord so that You would receive honor and glory. Would you touch Bill's family and the doctors and nurses and help them to see how you have stepped in and done a powerful thing in Bill's life. Lord, draw people near to You as You answer this prayer for healing.”

Whether you are praying for healing, or salvation, or for a family situation, or for our nation, you can turn the attention off of human needs and make it a God-focused prayer. This is not a “trick” to get things from God, but a heart-felt desire to see God move in such a way that His Kingdom is advanced. This is a biblical way to take human needs and submit them to the Lord in prayer with a desire to see God honored and worshiped.

Ultimately, all prayer should be about “Your Kingdom coming and Your will being done” and the “so that” prayers of scripture are a clear way for this to be done.

Action Step: Choose one situation from your prayer list and add a “so that” prayer to it. Pray that for a week and see what God does.

Extra Help: A great resource to help you better understand the “so that” method is the short devotional book, *Praying Like Paul*, by Jonathan Graf. The Apostle Paul used so that praying in almost all of his prayers in Scripture.

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