

THE HARVESTER

"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest" (Luke 10:2)

July 2022

No. 439

YES, AND...

In modern times we have become used to the immediate gratification of being told "yes." Unfortunately, many allow seeds of doubt in God and His plan to be planted when we become dissatisfied because we were not given that desired "yes" to our prayers. As many of us know and have heard for years, sometimes God's answers to our prayers are simply "no," because it is not what we need (i.e., not part of God's plan). Sometimes God's answers to our prayers are "yes," but there is much more to this response. We may need to wait, or our request may be granted yet with modifications, for instance. So,

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a single “yes” is often confusing and far simpler than what the Lord has in store for us and our requests. Instead, we find that when God sees fit to grant our requests, it’s often “yes, and...” What must we do on our part in such instances?

Meet Hannah. In the opening of 1st Samuel before Samuel’s birth, we find his mother Hannah in such a time as many of us have encountered: She desperately wants something, she has wanted this for a long time, she hasn’t gotten her “yes,” and she is depressed. In Hannah’s case what she desperately wants is a child with her husband Elkanah as we see in 1 Samuel 1:

And he had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah: and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. And this man went up out of his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice unto the LORD of hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the LORD, were there. And when the time was that Elkanah offered, he gave to Peninnah his wife, and to all her sons and her daughters, portions: But unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion; for he loved Hannah: but the LORD had shut up her womb. And her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the LORD had shut up her womb. And as he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of the LORD, so she provoked her; therefore she wept, and did not eat. Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? am not I better to thee than ten sons? (1 Sam. 1:2-8)

We can see why Hannah would be depressed. Not only has she not yet been granted what she so desperately wants, but also Elkanah’s other wife, who has children, is essentially throwing this reminder in Hannah’s face. It also doesn’t take an expert in marital relationships to notice that Elkanah saying “why are you upset with not having children when you’ve got me?” isn’t going to make Hannah feel any better. Now that we can sym-

pathize with Hannah's mindset, let's pick the story back up at verse 13 after Eli, who is sitting at the temple, has seen Hannah weeping while praying for this child and how the child will be dedicated to the Lord:

Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken. And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee. And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD. Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto. Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him. And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad. And they rose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the LORD, and returned, and came to their house to Ramah: and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife; and the LORD remembered her. Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the LORD. (1 Sam. 1:13-20)

Perhaps the most striking detail of Hannah's ordeal was the fact she went through the ungranted request, mockery by Elkanah's other wife, and ensuing depression year by year, over and over (v. 7). However, we finally see Hannah's request granted, but it was not simply a "yes." Instead, Hannah received "yes, and wait" or "yes, and in due time." We have much to learn from Hannah in this, because so many of our prayers have this same answer. First, Hannah did not harbor any anger or doubt towards God; she did not give up and assume God had simply ignored or abandoned her. Too much of the

modern world has lost their way, because based solely on not getting what they wanted when they wanted it, they create a faulty assumption that there must be no God. Yet, here is Hannah year after year doing what is often more than many are willing to do: Wait and keep praying. Secondly, we see that Hannah obtained peace, a respite from her depression. Notably, Hannah's peace did not come when she got her request granted. Her peace came after Eli essentially told her the matter was in God's hand. Similarly, our peace should come from understanding that we've done what we can on our part and the rest is in God's control. It comes from understanding that His will be done rather than assuming we find peace and satisfaction when we get our way.

Of course, there are many times we fail to do our part in our prayers and requests. Sometimes, God requires us to take some action, as we see with Hezekiah in 2 Kings 20:

In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live. Then he turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the LORD, saying, I beseech thee, O LORD, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore. And it came to pass, afore Isaiah was gone out into the middle court, that the word of the LORD came to him, saying, Turn again, and tell Hezekiah the captain of my people, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy fa-

THE HARVESTER is a monthly publication intended to encourage all men everywhere to become laborers into God's harvest (Luke 10:2). This paper is mailed free of charge to anyone who wishes to receive it. Please submit name, address, address changes and all correspondence to:

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ther, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee: on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the LORD. And I will add unto thy days fifteen years; and I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake. And Isaiah said, Take a lump of figs. And they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered. (2 Kings 20:1-7)

We know God could have instantly cured Hezekiah. However, His plan involved Hezekiah having to put in a little footwork in the process of granting Hezekiah's request. Although the exact actions in this example aren't the crux of this lesson learned, the fact that Hezekiah was not passive is the important key. Too often we treat not only our prayers but also our encompassing Christianity very passively, as if we're owed and waiting for everything to be poured on us while we passively and idly sit. I was reminded by a dear sister in Christ of a joke that perfectly illustrates this:

A massive hurricane is approaching a town and flood waters are rising. While everyone is frantically evacuating, one man is standing on his porch doing nothing as the water is waist deep. A boat arrives with rescue personnel who tell the man to get in the boat and they'll take him to safety. He tells them he's prayed about it so he'll be fine, so he tells the boat to go on. The flood waters rise higher, and the man has had to head upstairs in his house. Another boat with rescue personnel come along and implore the man to get in the boat before the two story high waters carry him away. Once again, he tells them he's prayed about it and will be fine, so he tells the boat to go on. The flood waters rise higher yet. Now the man is on his roof. A helicopter comes along and rescue personnel drop a rope ladder down to him, pleading for him to climb up so they can fly him to safety before the flood waters carry him to peril. Once again, he tells them he's prayed and all will be fine;

go on. The man drowns in the flood waters. After this life, he speaks with God and asks “Why didn’t you rescue me? I prayed.” God replies, “I sent you two boats and a helicopter.”

God gives us the resources and opportunities for many things. While we pray for a finished product, sometimes God gives us the tools to make it. As in Hezekiah’s example when we’re not given “yes,” we need to be active when the answer is “yes, and do your part.”

Oftentimes, begrudgingly, we need assistance from others. Peter found himself in need of help when he was imprisoned in Acts 12:5, “*Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.*” Later, we see that Peter is rescued and escapes this imprisonment. Two things are made evident here: 1) the power of praying one for another from our brothers and sisters in Christ, and 2) as with Hannah, not giving up. We tend to be reluctant to share our problems and ask for help, even just for prayers. Perhaps as often as we are too passive with our prayers and Christianity, we’re too passive in asking for help, including asking for prayers. We can get so consumed in trying to solve problems ourselves, we neglect to go to God in prayer and ask for prayers on our behalf. As we see, sometimes when we want “yes,” God gives us “yes, and not alone; get some help.”

When we reflect on the many blessings granted to us from our prayers, very rarely have we gotten such a simple “yes.” We can recount many “yes, and wait,” “yes, and do your part,” and “yes, and not alone” answers to our prayers. Of course, as we should well be aware, sometimes we do get “no” in response to our request - often because we’re praying for the wrong thing (Jas. 4:1-3). Regardless, how do we accept “no” for an answer?

IF YOU WISH TO KNOW GOD
YOU MUST KNOW HIS WORD

Jesus gave us a perfect example in the garden of Gethsemane. Knowing the pain and physical suffering ahead of Him, Jesus prayed for the burden to pass from him, but he added an important consideration that we should include in all of our requests:

And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.
(Mat. 26:39)

We must recognize God owes us nothing. We have already been blessed with far more than we deserve as sinners (Rom. 6:23). As much as we want the simple “yes,” we shouldn’t expect it. Instead, we need to pray for the right things, and do so without ceasing. It may require us to wait, it may require us to put in some legwork on our part, and it may require asking for help and prayers from others. Most of all it requires us to understand that it is about God’s will, and as Christians, that is the ultimate desire.

BEN

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. Who was instructed by God to leave his home and family to travel to a country he did not know?
2. Which of his wives did Jacob love the most?
3. Aaron turned his rod into a serpent before Pharaoh, and Pharaoh’s magicians did likewise, but what happened to their serpents?
4. When Jesus asked “whom say ye that I am?” what did Peter reply?
5. Which garden did Jesus go to, to pray in before his arrest?

...ANSWERS NEXT MONTH

GOSPEL MEETINGS

DATES	PLACE	SPEAKER
July 17 - 22	Oak Grove Woodland, AL	Dana Chandler (Wedowee, AL)
July 22 - 24	Willow Oak Russell Springs, KY	Timothy Lewis (Eubank, KY)
July 24 - 29	Napoleon Woodland, AL	Various Speakers

FROM THE SCRIPTURES: ABOUT CHILDREN

Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate. (Psa. 127:3-5)

Children's children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers. (Pro. 17:6)

Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right. (Pro. 20:11)

Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old. (Pro. 23:22)

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; (Ecc. 12:1)

But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven. (Mat. 19:14)

Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. (Eph. 6:1-3)