

# Hanging Out With Jesus: What Are The Prayers That God Will Answer?

Unedited Transcript

*John 14:12-14*

Good morning, men! Welcome to Man in the Mirror's Men's Bible Study, where we always have room for one more guy! So I went in for a routine colonoscopy this week. You know, that is a very important profession. A little strange, but very important. I feel like they deserve hazardous duty pay or something like that. So I'm lying there and the doctor comes in to verify that he's got the right patient to do the right thing. He says what's your date of birth, what's your name, why are you here, what are you here for, etc. So I say to get a colonoscopy and he says are you allergic to anything. I said colonoscopies, and like six people in there started laughing. I can't believe they never heard that one before, it seems like it would be a pretty obvious one!

We're going to do a shout out today and it goes to a new group that's starting. It's called the D Group, D for Discipleship. They're from Point Fortin Church of the Nazarene in Point Fortin, Trinidad and Tobago. I looked it up on the map, and that's like the first island in that little chain off the Northeast coast of Venezuela. The leader is Dexter Daly. Five guys meeting on Tuesdays using the Video Bible Study, so would you join me in welcoming the D Group to Man in the Mirror's Bible Study? One, two, three, hoorah! Good to have you men with us! God bless!

The series is called Hanging Out With Jesus. We're looking into the messages that Jesus gave to the disciples in the upper room, and today we're going to answer the question: What are the prayers that God will answer? Every one of us has had something we prayed for in the name of Jesus that was very important to us that did not get answered. Maybe something very precious, perhaps something we were even desperate for to happen. Jesus says in the text we're getting ready to look at, if you ask for anything in my name, I will do it. So today we need to figure out, did Jesus make a mistake? Is the veracity of the scriptures called into question? Do we need to hedge when we talk to other people about Jesus? How do we explain this experience that we've had with unanswered prayer? Let's go to the text first, John 14. We'll look at verses 12-14.

<sup>12</sup> Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. <sup>13</sup> And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup> You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

## **What Does "In My Name" Mean?**

First, let's talk about what does it mean to pray in my name? What does in my name mean? First of all, what it does not mean. It's not some magic, it's not some incantation we say over a prayer that if we use this magic word, it guarantees the success of the prayer. It's not about having to say the right words in the right order, like if you get it out of order in your name instead of in my name; it's not if you don't say

the exact right words in the exact right order, you miss out. It's not some secret password only available to a certain few. In fact, we're already all insiders. So that's what it's not about.

What is it, then? Rather, to ask in the name of another, means to ask as a representative or envoy of that person. So when the Secretary of State travels abroad, and he speaks in the name of the President, he speaks on behalf of the President, he speaks with the authority of the President, so long as he's speaking what the President would have him speak. Or if you are in business and you go out and represent your company, you're an envoy for your company. When you speak, if you're doing what your company is doing, then you are speaking on behalf of your company, and you have the full authority, the full power, you have jurisdiction, you have authority to speak on behalf of your company. So when we talk about speaking in the name or praying in the name of Jesus, we are really praying on his behalf. A representative then doesn't ask for what he wants to do, he asks for what the person who sent him wants to do. Did you get that? When we do something in the name of another person, we're not doing what we want to do but what our company wants us to do. When we ask in the name of Jesus, we're not asking for what we want to do, we're asking for what he wants to do. This is not a small point! If you don't get this point, you're going to look at this scripture and you're going to say I'm going to believe in spite of the fact that this scripture is true. This scripture *is* true, but you have to understand *how* it is true. Otherwise, you're going to have to hedge, you'll have to say this doesn't make sense to me but I'm going to believe in Jesus anyway. No, this can make sense to you *because* you believe in Jesus.

Here's the Big Idea for today. I want you to look at verse 12 again, because verses 12-14 are different elements of a single thought. Jesus said I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. The Big Idea for today is this: **It's 100% that Jesus will give you what you ask when it's to do what He wants done.** If you have faith in me, you will do what I am doing, you see? Then he goes on and says, if you have faith in me, you will do what I have been doing and I will do whatever you ask for in my name. I will do whatever you ask for in my name so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. Notice he says it twice! You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it. He says this twice to bring emphasis to this. You see this in scripture, things twice repeated for emphasis. What's repeated twice? Pray in my name, pray for whatever you want, pray for anything you want. Pray and I will do it, and twice he says if you ask. So that's what it means to pray in his name, and that's the Big Idea.

### **What Is The "Whatever" And "Anything" We Can Ask For?**

So what is the whatever and anything that you can pray for? It's anything that Jesus is doing, anything that Jesus wants done. What has Jesus been doing and not doing for three and half years with the disciples? What are the things that Jesus has been doing? What are the things he has not been doing? These are the things that we can pray for with 100% certainty that we will get what we asked for, so we should probably talk about what this whatever and anything we can ask for is. What was Jesus about for these three and half years? He was about making disciples. He was about the business of soul making, redeeming people to himself. He was inaugurating his kingdom in such a way and with such a strategy that would forcefully advance in the future. What was the strategy? It was making disciples who would in turn make more disciples who would also make disciples themselves. We've been saying here recently you're not making disciples until your disciples are making disciples.

What else was Jesus doing? He was working on eternal things, but simultaneously he was working on horizontal things. He was meeting temporal needs. He gave us this command that we would love one another as he's loved us. One of the things Jesus was doing was neighbor loving everybody. He was neighbor loving everybody with omnipotence. We're not going to be neighbor loving everybody with

omnipotence, but the Bible says that this command that we love one another sums up all of the law. So when we pray that we can help someone become a Christian, we're praying for something that Jesus wants done. There's a mystery, because in the sovereignty of God, some believe and some don't. You can't make someone believe. However, when we do pray that we would make disciples, we can pray with confidence that our efforts would be rewarded. Now, they may not be rewarded in exactly the way that we think they will, but I have people that I've been praying for for forty years, since I've been a Christian! I have people that I have been praying for salvation for for forty years. Now I will confess, after praying for one person for nineteen years, I stopped believing. Then at the twentieth year, I realized that was tactical mistake on my part to believe that God did not have the power any longer to do this. That just because he hadn't answered the prayer in nineteen years, he couldn't do it all, but that puts into the dispute the concept of Bible time, that God is looking at time altogether differently than we look at it, and we'll talk more about that in the application. We can pray for anything that's making disciples, anything that's neighbor love, and know with 100% certainty that God will do it because it's something he wants done.

What else? The Lord's prayer. Give us this day our daily bread. You can pray for your daily bread. This is something that Jesus was doing and wants to do. We need to know also in addition to whatever and anything is, it's not more than daily bread. If you are running a business and you need to on this day close a sale that will provide revenue source for the next eighteen months; it may be eighteen months but it's still this daily bread, you see? It's not just day to day to day, there is room for planning and forethought but it's this day's bread he promises to give us if we ask in his name. Also in the Lord's prayer, protection from evil, deliverance from temptation. And elsewhere, the promise of the Holy Spirit. We'll talk about that in the next message, the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Since this is a fairly difficult topic to get your mind around and to grasp, much less believe, that whatever I ask for in the name of Jesus I will receive; anything that I ask for in the name of Jesus I will receive. Since it's a fairly difficult concept to actually believe that, and since I was going to be teaching that this morning, the Lord graciously allowed me to have a dispute with my wife yesterday. Just to test out these concepts! So I would love to setup the scenario of what was going on, but to tell you the truth I still don't really know what was going on! All I know is that I did something wrong and nothing I could do seemed to fix it. However, I was preparing for this message and so I decided to pray that God would help me resolve this dispute in the name of Jesus. And it's very interesting! I was asking for a resolution, that was the whatever and anything I was asking for, and I was asking for Lord would you, in your name, help me to resolve this? Well, guess what? Instantly my attention went off why my wife was being so stupid... Why my wife was having this particular train of thought, and it came back on me. I realized that even though I was right, I was being defensive. Maybe I wasn't right! But I became aware that I was being defensive, and I was acting out. My pride was hurt, I was feeling disrespected by her, and all of my part in the dispute really was defending my honor, you see? The Big Idea, **It's 100% that Jesus will give you what you ask when it's to do what He wants done.** So I began to say what is it Jesus that, as your representative, you want done in this situation? I realized that it was to humble myself, that I was making a mountain out of a mole hill. In the grand scheme of things, there are those stars out there a hundred million miles away and the sun is rising and setting at the command of God and the tides are ebbing and flowing under the jurisdiction of our gracious Lord who gives us these things. The oxygen is flowing in, the colon's okay, so is this really that big of a deal? And I was able to put it down, and the prayer was answered, because I asked the question what is it that Jesus wants done in this situation?

Some other things that we really can't ask for, that are not part of this whatever and everything, your prosperity, your health, your wealth; these are not the kind of things that are being covered in this

particular text. Now, there are other kinds of prayers that you can pray, but in terms of this particular prayer, that's not it. So the question for you to ask when you want to pray in Jesus name and get whatever you ask, the question to ask is what I'm praying what Jesus wants done? If you're praying for what Jesus wants done, then as the Big Idea says, it's 100% that Jesus will give you what you ask for when it's to do what He wants done. Those who have faith in me will do what I've been doing.

### **How To Pray The Prayers That God Will Answer**

Finally, how to pray the prayers that God will answer. Practically speaking, how do you pray the prayers God will answer? Seven ideas for you. Number one, get quiet. The Bible says in Luke 5:16 that Jesus often went to solitary places to do what? To pray. Luke 6:12-13 it says that he prayed all night and then as a result of those prayers, he appointed the twelve. Because of the magnitude, the importance of that, he prayed. So number one is to get quiet.

Number two is to clarify or affirm who you represent. Clarify or affirm who you represent when you are praying. Are you representing yourself? Or are you representing your master? Are you praying for what I want or for what He wants? When I was in the Army, Sergeant Perry was the Master Sergeant, and you could make E-5, Sergeant, in eighteen months. That was the shortest amount of time that you could make E-5. He had been promoting me all along, and so about month sixteen or seventeen I started bugging him almost every day about putting in orders for me to be an E-5, just as an ego thing. I wanted to make E-5 in the shortest amount of time. So month eighteen came and went. Month twenty and twenty four, and I kept bugging him. Finally, he said to me you need to get control of your ambition. In other words, I didn't want what was best for the unit, I didn't want what was best for those I represented. I was a soldier, I was a man under authority, but I didn't want what was best for those whose work I was doing, I wanted what was best for me. So the second point here is to clarify or affirm who exactly is it that I represent. Am I representing myself in these prayers, or am I representing Jesus?

Then, number three, clarify or affirm what you have been sent to do. A representative is somebody that's sent to represent the person who's doing the sending. Clarify exactly what it is you have been sent to do. So if you have been sent to be a businessman, and you have that firmly in your mind and you know what your calling and gifting is, and you know the mission of the business, then God has sent you to do that, you're doing what he wants you to be doing. So when you pray for the needs of that business, you can appeal to this text. You can appeal to this text in the work that you do, if it's your calling.

Number four, be bold in asking. James 4, turn there. Verse 2. So it was Michael Jordan who famously said you will miss 100% of the shots that you don't take. You will have unanswered 100% of the answers that you don't pray for, so be bold! Instead of saying, well you know my experience with this text is that it really doesn't work, so why bother? No! Be bold, because if you're doing what He needs to be done, you can be 100% certain that he will answer the prayer. So James 4:2, last sentence:

You do not have because you do not ask God.

We have not because we ask not! So be bold! Ask God, take the shot, make the prayer!

Number five, submit the fallibility of your prayers to the will of God. When you pray, and you are pretty sure that you're doing what He wants done, the one whose jurisdiction you're under, the one who has given you the authority to do the asking in the first place, and you are going in his name and doing the

asking, you still are finite. You still are human, you still are subject to the noetic influence of sin. In other words, the noose, the mind. Sin does influence the mind, so there is the possibility that even though you think you are completely pure, you're not! That happens! So Jesus, divine, fully God and fully man, Jesus in the garden says Father, take away this cup of suffering. Please! Please, take this away! Yet, not as I will but you will. Your will be done! Our Father in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Thy will be done. So we take all of this and we understand that we are fallible human beings, and so we are humbled with these prayers, and we bring them to the foot of the cross and we say Lord, this is what we're asking for in your name. I believe that I am doing what you want to be done, and yet I also realize that I am a fallible human being.

Number six, rest in the sovereignty of God. Everything we know about God is that he is good! That he loves you! That he has adopted us as his own children! He is a loving father. He has relentlessly pursued us, and he is all powerful, and he's good. Isaiah 45:7, I've seen good times and bad times. I, the Lord, am the one who does these things. In this world you will have trouble, but take heart! I have overcome the world. Philippians 4:6-7 be anxious for nothing, but in everything with prayer and supplication. With thanksgiving, let these requests be made known to God and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will keep your heart and your mind in Christ Jesus. Romans 8:26-27 in the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We don't even know what we have to pray for! But the Spirit intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express, and he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, who lives to intercede for the saints in accordance with the will of God.

Finally, give it time. Bible time. I'm a type A task oriented guy who has trained myself over the years to (most of the time) start with a relationship, but when we started the Area Director initiative a few years ago now, I was all jacked up and ready to go. I had been waiting for a decade, we had had this idea for a decade, and finally we're getting ready to pull the trigger, in the name of Jesus. David Delk, our president says I think this is also what God wants us to do, but I also think we should take three weeks and just have the staff pray. Of course, at that point I felt about that tall, but we did that. We took three weeks, and we just prayed. Some of our staff fasted during that period, and we just prayed. At the end of those three weeks, we had the firm understanding that we were doing what Jesus wants done, making disciples. But we also had this calm peace of God that transcends all understanding that this is what he wants us to do. It's important to have that belief, because no matter what you do, once you start on the mission God has given you, you are going to have heartaches. You are going to have disappointments, you are going to have setbacks, you are going to have it appear that the prayer is not being answered, but you can look back with assurance and say no, I know that when I was asked the question is what I want to do what Jesus wants done, that the answer was yes. So I know that I can count on the fact that it is 100% that Jesus will give you what you ask when it's to do what He wants done. That is what this text means, that is the word of God and this is your life. Go and get it! Let's pray!

### **Closing Prayer**

Lord Jesus, we come in your name to do what you want done, because we are men of faith and we will be doing what you are doing because that's who we are. We pray for the whatevers and the anythings that you want us to go in your name to represent you, and we put our full confidence in the truth of your scripture that you will do it. You said anything that we ask in your name that you will do it, and we believe that you will do it, in your good time. We also, Lord, humbly, give the fallibility to you of our own thinking, and yet the truth of this text remains. Our job is to explain the scripture, not to explain it away. In Jesus' name, amen!