

It Works!

Joe Slater

God's word makes it clear that He views success quite differently than we do. We set a goal, plan a strategy, and carry out the plan. If it works, we claim success. Someone asks, "What is the problem with this?" Simply put, God's will has been left out of the equation!

During King Asa's reign over Judah, King Baasha of Israel invaded. Asa paid the Syrians to attack Israel's homeland, forcing Baasha to go back home to defend his own land. Asa then re-captured the territory Baasha had taken (see 1 Kings 15:16-21).

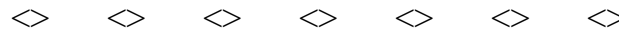
Pretty good strategy, wouldn't you say? And it definitely worked! God, however, sent His prophet, Hanani, to rebuke Asa (2 Chronicles 16:7-9). The king had put his trust in his pagan neighbors rather than in the Lord. Yes, it "worked," but it dishonored God.

Moses also "succeeded" in a task, but sinned in the process. God told him to provide water for Israel by speaking to a rock (Numbers 20:8). Instead of obeying, Moses, being furious with his people, gave the rock a double-whack with his rod (20:9-11). Water miraculously gushed forth in great abundance. It worked! But Moses and Aaron forfeited the blessing of going across Jordan into the promised land (20:12).

Worldly philosophy says that the end justifies the means. Since Asa gained relief from his enemies, his method doesn't matter. Since Moses acquired water for his people, it makes no difference how he did it. The Bible, on the other hand, teaches that people offend God by reaching the right goals using the wrong means.

Church growth, for example, is an eminently Scriptural goal. God wants His church to grow; if you

don't want the church to grow, you need to repent! And God's church will grow when Christians are serving as they ought. Some, however, in misguided zeal, seek to produce church growth by using methods that are outside of God's will. Watering down the gospel, exchanging worship for entertainment, and otherwise appealing to people's carnal side, might attract large crowds; but it doesn't glorify God!



How Vast Is God's Universe?

If the earth were a marble, then in proportion:

- ☐ The sun would be a bowling ball, and would be two football fields away.
- ☐ Jupiter would be a baseball about a mile down the road.
- ☐ The nearest star (Proxima Centauri) would be a softball and would be 30,000 miles away.
- ☐ The Milky Way would be 60 billion miles wide. (And the universe is filled with billions of galaxies.)

Putting it another way: If we possessed an atlas of our Milky Way galaxy, with a single page devoted to each star system (so our sun and all its planets were crammed onto one page), that atlas would require more than ten million volumes with ten thousand pages each! It would take a library the size of Harvard's just to house that atlas. Merely flipping through it at the rate of one page per second would require over ten thousand years. And there are a hundred million more galaxies!

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky shows his handiwork (Psalm 19:1).

By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth (Psalm 33:6).

via House-to-House/Heart-to-Heart (adapted)

What Do Our Prayers Tell Us About Ourselves?

"To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power" (2 Thessalonians 1:11 NASU).

One of the greatest blessings a child of God has is the privilege of prayer. God promises to hear His children. We are urged to "pray without ceasing," (1 Thess. 5:17). If we ask anything according to God's will, He will hear us and give us what we ask (1 John 5:15). Jesus was a man of prayer. We find Him praying for others, and praying before making major decisions, such as choosing His apostles. He even prayed for Himself (Hebrews 5:7).

In the model prayer, Jesus gave us instructions to pray for spiritual as well as material needs (Matthew 6:9-13). We are also urged to pray for the sick (James 5:14-15). Actually, there is very little we are not taught to pray for. We certainly cannot pray for someone to be saved who refuses to obey the gospel, or that God will forgive someone who refuses to repent. We must ask according to God's will.

Have you ever pondered following your prayers and considered what you have been praying for? What are the dominant requests? So often I hear prayers that focus upon the physical and material needs rather than the spiritual needs of others. There is little real confession of sin. Seldom do I hear prayers that show heavy hearts for the lost. I've noticed that I find myself caught up asking about the physical rather than the spiritual needs as well.

Although it is perfectly allowed for us to pray for physical needs, we must realize that the spiritual needs outweigh the other. We must grieve over the lost and ask God to give us opportunities to reach others with the Gospel. We must never forget that every lost soul is a mission field, and every Christian is a missionary.

--Rob Redden (Arroyo Grande, CA)