



# WHERE'S GOD?

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21 LEADERS RESPOND  
TO THE AGONY OF  
UNANSWERED PRAYER

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FRANK VIOLA

# **WHERE'S GOD?**

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## WHEN GOD DOESN'T HAVE YOUR BACK

One of the things I've thought a lot about over the last decade is the mystery of prayer.

Particularly, the mystery -- and agony -- of unanswered prayer.

I use the word "mystery" because of texts like these, all of which seem clear and simple.

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

~ Matthew 7:7-8

And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.

~ Matthew 21:22

If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.

~ John 14:14

For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things He says will be done, he will have whatever He says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive *them*, and you will have *them*.

~ Mark 11:23-24

And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.

~ John 16:23-24

In light of Scriptures like the above, why is it that so many of our prayers don't materialize?

Why is it that so many of our prayers for people's healing, deliverance, and changes in dire situations go unanswered?

The atheists, agnostics, and deists point to such things and say, "Aha, your personal God doesn't exist! That's the reason."

My answer: The Lord isn't who we think He is.

He doesn't operate like we do.

And we may need to rethink our understanding of "faith" the way the Scriptures use it.

It seems to me that we've made many assumptions about these texts and the way our God interacts in the world, and even our lives.

As many of you know, I've covered some of this in my book, [Jesus Now](#) (Chapter 7), where I ask and answer the question, "*If Jesus really is the Lord of the world, why is there still so much crime, violence, and senseless suffering?*"

In addition, I asked 20 of the brightest Christian leaders from different theological backgrounds and persuasions to weigh in on this specific question:

*Why is it that God doesn't often answer the desperate prayers of His people for deliverance, protection, healing, etc.?*

Note that this is a DIFFERENT question from, "Why does God allow evil in the world?"

The question I asked them specifically has to do with why God doesn't always fulfill the promises in the texts I quoted when those prayers are offered by *His own* people.

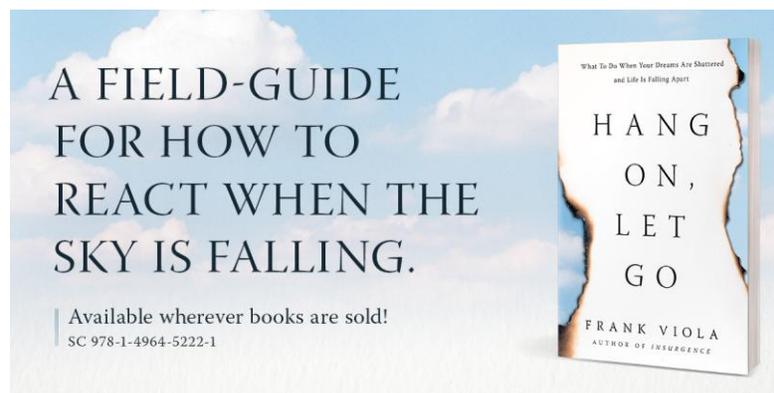
What follows are their answers, including my own lengthy chapter.

Note that each author does not necessarily agree with everyone else's answers. But I felt it was important to include each voice in order to enrich the conversation.

I hope that through the diversity of voices and perspectives, you will find the Lord in the agony of unanswered prayer.

Frank Viola

P.S. If you or someone you know is going through a crisis – whether a relational crisis, a health crisis, and/or a financial crisis, I have a fuller supplement to this eBook called [HANG ON, LET GO: What to Do When Your Dreams Are Shattered and Life Is Falling Apart](#) (Tyndale, 2021).



## YOU HAVE HEARD MY PRAYERS

by Jon Zens



In the big picture, all of our prayers are answered. The answer may not come in the form we wished, but we are in relationship with a God whose “ways are past finding out.” Paul could leave one person very ill in one city, and see someone else healed in the next place he stopped.

Why do the wicked seem to prosper? Why does so much evil seem to go unpunished? Why do our prayers for the health and restoration of others sometimes seem to be denied? We must remember that there are deep mysteries in this life, and we will have no answers for why many things take place.

But, in the midst of all our unanswered questions, there is an anchor for our souls that was uttered by Abraham to the Lord – “Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?” (Genesis 18:25). We can be sure, however, the Lord directs the affairs of this world. He will do what is right, and all of His purposes will prosper in Jesus Christ.

In the 1950’s Jim Elliot and four others were murdered by some from the Auca tribe in Ecuador. They had been preparing for months to reach these people with the Gospel. No doubt, many believers were praying for the safety and success of this outreach effort. Why did God allow this seemingly terrible outcome? Well, again, there is an anchor for our hearts in the words Joseph spoke to his trembling brothers – “You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good” (Genesis 50:20). The passing years since the 1956 deaths have seen the Aucas come to Jesus Christ, and many other fruits of life and reconciliation.

As William Cowper said long ago, “God moves in mysterious ways, His wonders to perform . . . . The bud may have a bitter taste, but sweet will be the flower.”

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## **GOD IS A PARENT**

by Mary DeMuth



God wants holiness in the lives of His children, which means He often delays gratification so we will learn obedience as we suffer and wait. None of us point back to times of ease and say, “Oh, that’s the time I grew the most in Christ.” No, it’s the mundane and spectacular trials that, if we bear up under them, grow us deep into the soil of God’s love.

I remember a time in high school as a brand new Christian. My prayer request? I wanted a boyfriend. There are pages and pages of my angst written out in my journals of that time. “Oh God. You must not love me! Why won’t you send me a boyfriend? Why does she have one and I don’t?”

So much lamenting! In retrospect I realized God didn’t answer my plea, because having a boyfriend at that time of my life would’ve resulted in sin (going too far, possibly) or idolatry (he

would become more important to me than God). How grateful I am that God did not answer that prayer. As a parent, I now understand even more.

I don't grant everything my children want because they would become spoiled. I don't rush to rescue them because they need to grow in maturity and learn to face their own challenges. It doesn't mean I love them less, but actually that I choose to postpone my answer or say no for their own good.

At the center of this is God's beautiful sovereignty. He alone knows the cosmic human plan. He alone weaves the stories. He alone helps us grow. So part of our obedience is to love Him whether He answers our prayers or not.

*Mary DeMuth is the author of over 20 books including: The Day I Met Jesus with Frank Viola (Baker, 2015). She speaks around the world about living an uncaged, freedom infused life. She makes her home in Texas where she writes full-time and makes awesome dinners.*

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## MANAGING OUR EXPECTATIONS

by Phil Cooke



My work is focused on how Christians should be engaging in today's distracted, digital culture, so I generally look at questions from that unique perspective. As a result, I've observed two things:

1. In an online, social media culture we've come to expect instant gratification in everything. We don't wait for "snail mail" letters anymore and forget searching an actual library for information.

Plus, getting feedback on every thought, statement, or social media post is *instant*. So this generation, perhaps more than any other in history struggles with any answer that isn't *immediate*.

Whether it's from our best friend, business associate, or God, we want answers and we want them now! As a result, it doesn't matter how quickly God answers our prayers – it's never quick enough.

2. Thanks to technology, it's become increasingly difficult to accept a "No" answer. In today's world, few things are impossible and we rarely accept that something can't be done. We carry a device in our pocket the size of a cigarette pack that allows us to make global telephone calls, share digital information with millions, search an immense information database, purchase nearly anything, and more.

So the idea of "No" or "I can't have it" is growing more and more difficult to take.

That's why it's not so much a question of "evil," or "God not answering prayers." It's more about managing our ever inflated expectations. In a TED Talk, one participant asked, "Has science made us gods even before we've become worthy of being men?"

In the movie "Terminator," the artificial intelligence driven satellite network suddenly became "self-aware" and from that point, Hell broke loose. Every day, technology moves us further and further way from the kind of *authentic* self-awareness that would help us understand that receiving answers is God's choice, not ours.

*Phil Cooke and his creative team at Cooke Pictures in Burbank, California, has helped some of the largest churches and nonprofit organizations in the world navigate a culture of dramatic disruption and change. His book: One Big Thing: Discovering What You Were Born to Do helps you find the great purpose and calling for your life – and was named by the Washington Post as one of the Top Five Business Books for 2012. Phil blogs for The Huffington Post, and is a contributor to Fast Company, Forbes.com, and FoxNews.com. PhilCooke.com*

# MAYBE FAITH ISN'T WHAT WE THOUGHT IT WAS

by Frank Viola



So you're facing a monumental crisis. Either in your own life or in someone else's.

The situation is dire and you need God to intervene.

Consequently, you pray. You take God at His Word. You even fast. You remind God of His promise that if we ask anything in faith -- *anything* -- He will do it (Matthew 7:7-8; 21:22; Mark 11:23-24; John 14:14; 16:23-24).

So you expect the Lord to work because you truly believe that you have faith in what you've prayed.

But several days later, Lazarus dies.

Four days later, His body stinks.

*But there's no resurrection.*

The Lord hasn't answered your prayer. Even though you stood on His Word, and to the best of your ability, you believed He would answer.

Now could it be that faith is more than we commonly think?

For example:

James says we don't receive from God because of two reasons:

- We are double-minded and have doubts that He will give us what we ask (James 1:5-8).
- We ask with wrong motives (James 4:3)

John adds a third reason:

- We didn't ask according to God's will (1 John 5:14).

If you add these texts to those where Jesus promised He would answer any prayer offered in faith, we have to conclude that we can only have genuine faith in that which is true, well-motivated, and according to God's will.

### **The Evidence of Things Not Seen**

According to the Bible, faith isn't mental assent. Nor is it human hope. It's the *evidence* of things we cannot see, the *reality* of what we expect (Hebrews 11:1).

Faith is the absolute assurance that God will act. In this regard, faith transcends the realm of the senses. So it's more like an internal "knowing" than an outward "hoping."

That said, according to the biblical use of the word "faith," we cannot have biblical faith in something that's false. Nor can we exercise faith in something that's not according to God's will.

Also, if we have improper motives concerning what we are asking, faith will be hindered.

Now here's the rub. We may *think* we believe, but if what we're asking for isn't according to God's will, isn't well motivated, or is untrue, it's not biblical faith.

Think about it. If this isn't the case, Jesus was lying when He said multiple times that if we ask for something in faith, He will do it.

So this brings us to a critical question:

*What is God's will in the situation? And what are my motives in relation to it?*

Those are questions we should spend some time seeking the Lord about before we pray.

I grew up in a movement that taught that it is always God's will to heal everyone who is sick. That movement also taught that it is God's will to always deliver His people from all negative situations.

But my experience and observation caused me to question this theology and revise my own thoughts on the subject.

There's no question that God still heals the sick. I've witnessed it myself. In fact, I've prayed for people and watched God instantly heal them. Or He healed them later. There have been times when God has even healed me. Sometimes those healings were supernatural. Other times the Lord used natural means.

But other times, God didn't heal the sick person. And what appeared on the surface to be "faith-filled" prayers went unanswered.

Using biblical grounds, I'd like to challenge the idea that it's always God's will to heal people in this life.

- In John 5, Jesus was around many sick people at the pool of Bethesda. But He only healed one person there, leaving the others sick.
- In other texts, we're told that Jesus healed *many*. Many means not all.
- Paul of Tarsus, who prayed for people and saw them healed, left Trophimus sick in Miletus (2 Timothy 4:20).
- In the book of Acts, an angel delivered Peter out of prison supernaturally. But there was no angel to unlock the prison doors for James. James was executed.

Now, there are times when it *is* God's will to heal or deliver a person, but He doesn't do so because there is a lack of faith.

Matthew 17:14-20 is a classic example of this. A demon-possessed boy was brought to Jesus' disciples. But they couldn't deliver the boy.

When they asked Jesus why they failed, He replied saying, "Because you have so little faith." He then indicated that their faith would increase by "prayer and fasting" (Matthew 17:21).

Lack of faith can be attributed to many things.

Some examples are unforgiveness (Mark 11:25), harboring sin in one's heart (Psalm 66:18), failure to love the brethren (1 John 3:21-23), and discord between a husband and wife (1 Peter 3:7).

But as I've already pointed out, it doesn't appear to be the Lord's will to heal or deliver every person in every situation. Not in this life anyway. (The ultimate healing, of course, is when the Lord takes one of His own to be with Him. And very often, this is the way that God ends the sufferings of His children.)

People can pray with fasting, and muster up all the faith they have, even "standing on God's Word." But despite all of that, there is no assurance -- there's no "knowing" -- that the sick person will be healed. In other words, faith is not available in such cases.

Jesus left His cousin, John (the Baptist), in prison where he was eventually beheaded. Why didn't God deliver John during his darkest hour?

In like manner, Paul prayed three times for the Lord to remove his "thorn in the flesh." But God didn't answer that prayer. Instead, He delivered Paul *through* the problem (2 Corinthians 12:1-10).

The thorn remained ([which I don't believe was a sickness, but another form of torment](#)). But by God's grace, Paul triumphed over it.

## What We Cannot See

I wrote the following on this subject elsewhere,

In our suffering, we want an explanation. But Jesus wants to give us a revelation ... of Himself. Every crisis in our lives is an opportunity to broaden, deepen, and heighten our revelation of Christ.

Isaiah says that God's ways are higher than ours. The Lord works on levels that we cannot fathom. But He works all things for our good.

“Why hasn't God answered this prayer? Why didn't He fulfill this promise? Why did He let this happen to me? Why did He let this happen to him or her? Why is God silent when I need to hear Him most?”

These are the questions that plague the mind of the serious believer.

If you've not yet met the God who refuses to meet all your expectations, you will. And how you react in that day will reveal whether you are worshipping Jesus Christ or Santa Claus.

It will show whether or not you love God more than His promises (or your *interpretation* of those promises). Job said, “Should we accept only good things from the hand of God and never anything bad?”

Would you still serve the Lord if it sent you to hell?

Recall the three Hebrew children. They lived lives loyal to their God. And the pagan king gave them an ultimatum:

“Worship the golden image or else you're going to die in my fiery furnace.”

Their answer is telling: “We're not going to serve your gods or worship the image. The Lord is able to deliver us from your furnace and *He will deliver us*. But even if He doesn't, we still will not bow the knee to your gods.”

What attitude. What posture. What faith.

“God will deliver us. But even if *He* doesn't, we will *still* follow Him.”

Those words contain thunder and lightning for every child of God.

If I can use an illustration, we mortals are living on pages 300 to 400 of a 2,000-page book. Only God can see the whole book—the entire story. And He has given us the ability to see only pages 300 to 400.

We have no capacity to understand what's on pages 1 to 299 or pages 401 to 2,000. We can only speculate and assume what's in them. Hence we create all sorts of intricate theological systems to explain mysteries we don't understand.

The Lord doesn't show us all His plot twists. So life comes down to trusting in the Lord rather than trying to figure out His ways through our finite, limited understanding. Yet with one another, we can better discover and understand what's in pages 300 to 400 and thereby learn to live more effectively within them.

Mary of Bethany didn't understand why Jesus didn't come to heal Lazarus. But she trusted Him nonetheless.

Let us learn how to trust a God we don't fully understand.

*(The above was taken from my most important book, [God's Favorite Place on Earth.](#))*

The big point is that God is infinite, and we mortals are not.

This was universally understood until the mid-18th century, when God's existence was rendered impossible because of the existence of evil. (The earthquake in Lisbon in 1755 is usually the point of reference for historians for this new kind of thinking.)

Secularism developed around that time and humans exalted themselves as having both the wisdom and answers to solve all of their problems. The Enlightenment rendered God to be a myth that reflected primitive thinking.

But if God is beyond our comprehension, as my 2,000 page book analogy illustrates, then tragedy, evil, and suffering are inexplicable to us. But they aren't to God.

We are like pawns who are able to move ourselves, but the chessboard is so big that we can't see the edges.

So we have a choice to either trust in the Lord's wisdom or trust in our limited, pathetic understanding.

Christians have contended from the beginning that human reason is limited (see 1 Corinthians 1-2), and I believe it certainly is.

## **The Kingdom is Already-But-Not-Yet Factor**

When Jesus was on earth, He was the embodiment of the Kingdom of God. He ushered in the Kingdom while He was here in the flesh. Consequently, throughout His ministry, healings, deliverance, miracles, etc. were common and frequent.

This is because Jesus was showing forth the signs of the Kingdom wherein death, sickness, torment, and pain will be eradicated fully on the earth when the Kingdom comes in its fullness.

*But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. ~ Matthew 12:28*

Today, we live in a spiritual tension where the Kingdom of God is already, but not yet. This means that the Kingdom of God is here, but not in its fullness. It's here "in part" (see 1 Corinthians 13).

For this reason, Jesus told His disciples to pray to the Father, "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

Since Jesus ascended, He sent forth His Spirit to continue His work through His body. But until Jesus returns to the earth again and "the restoration of all things" takes place (Acts 3), the Kingdom of God is here in part.

Historically, there are seasons when God invades earth with the power of His Kingdom. During such times, masses of people are saved, healed, and delivered. But then that season passes and such things don't happen as frequently.

The book of Acts is a highly compressed narrative and there were such seasons of refreshment in that account as well.

The bottom line to all of this is that Romans 8:28 is still in the Bible!

*And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose.*

The "purpose" Paul is referring to in Romans 8 is God's Eternal Purpose, which the grand narrative of the entire Bible.

So don't lose heart.

Suffering is part of the life in the Kingdom. Paul told the new converts in Galatia when he left them on their own, "we must endure many hardships to enter the Kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22).

Make no mistake. We will eventually encounter a God who doesn't meet our expectations and who seemingly doesn't fulfill His own promises.

And when that happens, we have two choices: *Depart or Dig In*. In other words, we either leave the Lord or we go on with Him even more.

You see, in every painful experience we go through in this life, the Holy Spirit is seeking to show us a new lesson about Jesus Christ. In fact, the Spirit is seeking to write the history and experience of Christ in our own lives. And much of that experience was suffering.

Our experiences, then, are to lead us on to know the Lord better.

So in every negative experience, our prayer should be: *"What can I learn about Christ through this?"*

The Spirit is seeking to write the life of Jesus Christ within you and within me. He desires to shape the image of Jesus into your character, and that simply cannot happen without suffering.

In addition, the Lord has a ministry of life for all of His children. But we cannot minister life to others unless we ourselves have experienced pain, suffering, tragedy, and adversity (see 2 Corinthians Chapters 1 and 4).

As T. Austin-Sparks once said,

*A preacher or a teacher who has never suffered will never minister Life. Well, this may not seem a very pleasant outlook, but it is true. The best doctors and nurses are those who know something about suffering themselves. Some are just professional, treating you as a case – you are just case number blank. But, ah! there are others who treat you as a person, a human being, who care for you. If you ask why, you may find that they have a background of suffering themselves. They know just a little of what you are going through.*

All told, I believe the cross of Jesus Christ gives us a peek into how God looks at human suffering. When Jesus died, everyone who followed Him — along with His enemies — regarded it as a defeat.

But in the ineffable counsels of the Godhead, it was a victory. If God can turn great good out of the slaying and suffering of the innocent Son of God, then He can do the same in our suffering.

Sometimes we come to understand the “greater good” in this life. Other times it is hidden from us.

*I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world. ~ John 16:33*

So take heart.

*Frank Viola has helped thousands of people around the world to deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ and enter into a more vibrant and authentic experience of church. His mission is to help serious followers of Jesus know their Lord more deeply so they can experience real transformation and make a lasting impact. Viola has written many books on these themes, including God's Favorite Place on Earth, From Eternity to Here, and Jesus Speaks (with Leonard Sweet). [frankviola.org](http://frankviola.org)*

## THROUGH THE CROSS

by Craig Keener



Genuine Christians will suffer in this life.

My wife, for example, spent a year and a half as a war refugee, and afterward we experienced a series of miscarriages. Many others suffer yet deeper anguish.

A short answer is that God does answer His people’s prayers—just not always as quickly as we want. He is working out the course of history, and for believers, the *most* important matter—eternal blessing in His presence—is already settled by Jesus’ victory. In the meantime, however, suffering continues, sometimes shaping us, testing us, and increasing our appreciation for His blessings.

During Jesus’ ministry He transformed lives by healing, delivering, and comforting the broken, in such ways demonstrating God’s kingdom, or reign. Our Lord continues to do these works today, but as we all know, suffering and death still remain a part of this world. Throughout history, Jesus’ followers have still died and we still await the resurrection of our bodies. Although the King has already come, He is yet to come to consummate His kingdom.

Healing and other signs of the kingdom offer us a foretaste of a world when there will be no more suffering and God will wipe every tear from our eyes. That world is not consummated yet, but every foretaste that He gives to any of us is a gift to all of us, because it is a promise of a perfect future. The signs of the kingdom are only a foretaste, but they confirm His promise.

Yet, God provided something even deeper than these signs. In the cross, we see God embracing our suffering, suffering for our sake. In the cross, we learn that even in the midst of suffering and injustice, God is still at work to bring about His promised plan for us.

*Craig S. Keener (PhD, Duke University) is F. M. and Ada Professor of Biblical Studies at Asbury Theological Seminary. He is author of seventeen books, four of which have won major awards, more than seventy academic articles, several booklets, and more than one hundred fifty popular-level articles. One of his books, The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament, now in a second edition, has sold more than half a million copies. craigkeener.com*

## THE SECRET THINGS

by Frederick Price



If God is a God of order, does that mean there's an order to prayer? Is it possible that prayer is governed by spiritual/kingdom laws which, if either cooperated with or violated, will produce results or the lack thereof?

1 John 5:14-15 comes to mind where the apostle John is emphatic about answered prayer. He says, "This is the confidence that we have in Him that if we ask anything according to His will He hears us, and if we know that He hears us then we know we have the petitions that we've asked of Him."

How beautiful an assembly of words, and yet within it lies the one caveat that will prevent us from having our requests granted. My friends, it is all contingent on knowing His will. How can I know His will, one might ask? I can know the will of God by knowing the Word of God. The Bible is the known or revealed will of God.

Properly constructed prayer prayed according to the Word produces results. Improperly prayed prayer can be a hindrance to one desperately hoping to have their needs answered by a God who unconditionally loves them.

However, this is not always the case to God's silence, or should I say *perceived* silence. Deuteronomy 29:29 speaks of the secret things belonging to Him but the revealed things belonging to us.

When I don't know the will of God on something, or better yet, if there's no way I can know the will of God, then I should pray like Jesus in Gethsemane, "Not My will, but Your will be done."

*Frederick Price is founder of Matrix of Truth, minister of the gospel, and soon author of two books on angels and cultural engagement. He is married to, Angel Chavon Price, his wife of 13 years and together they produced three beautiful children. [matrixoftruth.com](http://matrixoftruth.com)*

## JOINING OUR HUMANITY

by Steve McVey



With all the evil in the world, why is it that God so often doesn't answer the desperate prayers of His people?

The attempt to reconcile the eternal love of God to the temporal and often dire circumstances we each face in certain moments has brought us all to the place of great frustration at times. Perhaps no satisfactory answer can be delivered inside the question of "Why?" It rather can be better understood when connected to the question of "Who?"

The Incarnation of Jesus doesn't serve as divine pixie dust, relieving us from the horrors of life. What His joining Himself to us in our humanity has done is to demonstrate His willingness to stand in solidarity with us in every dark moment.

Even if our hearts have cried to the Father, asking Him why He has forsaken us, we still reside inside the experience of Jesus. He knows that feeling and has prayed that prayer too. In our

darkest moments, He stands, holding us in His loving embrace and whispering, “It’s okay. I understand, and I am with you.”

A theodicy that insists we reconcile our pain with the love of the Father can never be solved in the mind. The question can only be adequately embraced as we function from the spirit level and stare into the face of the One who promised to never leave us nor forsake us.

Any attempt to harmonize agony and agape is doomed to fail, apart from the realization that Love transcends our momentary pain and swallows us up into the Eternal Circle of Love that is the Father, Son and Spirit. There we are secure, despite all superficial evidence to the contrary. It is that world that is our true home, and it is there that we must choose to live in desperate times.

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## ALL WE NEED

by Tricia Goyer



We live in a broken world. Pain, loss, and evil litter our lives. As a young Christian I couldn't understand why God allowed children to die, mothers to suffer, and the helpless to be abused. Wouldn't a *loving* God be quick to ease the pain of those who turn to Him in prayer?

Yet, if it wasn't for pain, loss, and evil we wouldn't need Jesus. I need God because I can't face the pain alone. I turn to Him when I don't have anywhere else to go, and He is there waiting.

In Hosea 2:6-7, the Nation of Israel turned from God. God described their misdeeds through the example of a harlot:

*Therefore, behold, I will hedge up her way with thorns, and I will build a wall against her so that she cannot find her paths. "She will pursue her lovers, but she will not overtake them; And she will seek them, but will not find them. Then she will say, 'I will go back to my first husband, for it was better for me than now!'"*

This world offers false love and an easy path -- things our hearts are drawn to. Pain and brokenness are thorns that cause us to bleed. We would not turn to our first love, Jesus, if every prayer—even the desperate ones—were answered. The answers would provide comfort enough.

While on this earth evil and pain will overwhelm us, and in our own brokenness we'll turn back to the only place where we can find hope and peace. That place is the Lord. And when we find Jesus, we'll discover all we need for today and for eternity.

An eternity with God is the answer to the most desperate prayer of our hearts, and it's provided by a loving God who draws us to Him.

*Tricia Goyer is a USA Today best-selling author who has authored over 48 books, including the three-book Seven Brides for Seven Bachelors series. She has written over 500 articles for national publications and blogs. Tricia and her husband, John, live in Little Rock, Arkansas. They have six children.*

## THE UNANSWERABLE WHY

by Greg Boyd



Two very ill children are prayed for. The first is miraculously healed while the second tragically dies. We understandably want to know why.

Many would claim that this is because God, for some mysterious reason, willed the first to be healed and the second to die. Others would claim that God willed both children to be healed, but the people praying for the second child lacked the faith to receive it. I would contend that both

options run into biblical problems, and I know from experience, as do many others, that both sometimes have catastrophic practical consequences.

But are these the only two options?

In Daniel 10, we find God immediately responding to a prayer of Daniel by dispatching an angel to deliver a message. Yet, it took twenty-one days for the message to be delivered (v.13).

Now, suppose we knew nothing more about this episode and asked the question of why it took twenty-one days for God to answer Daniel's prayer.

Some would answer that God, for some mysterious reason, simply willed His answer to take this long to reach Daniel. Others would answer that Daniel must have lacked sufficient faith to receive the answer until the twenty-first day.

*Both would be wrong.* The reason for the delay had nothing to do either with God's will or the strength of Daniel's faith. The angel rather, explained to Daniel that a principality and power over Persia resisted him for this period of time, and it wasn't until Michael the archangel got freed up to help him get God's message through (v.13).

From this episode (and a host of other Scriptures), I believe we should learn that God's will and our faith are not the only two variables that affect the outcome of prayer. The world is far more complex than that!

God decided to populate this world with human and angelic free agents, and as the "Prince of Persia" demonstrated in Daniel 10, this gives us a degree of "say so" to affect what comes to pass – even at times, to the point of interfering with God's will.

In fact, every decision free agents make to some degree affects what comes to pass in the present and future, including sometimes, the "if," "how" and "when" a prayer gets answered.

So think about this. This means that, to understand why *any* event unfolded the exact way it did, we would have to know *every single human and/or angelic decision* ever made that influenced the event unfolding the precise way it did. And this applies as much to the question of why God's response to our prayer unfolded the way it did as it does to why any other event unfolded the way it did.

Since we obviously can't begin to know the innumerable past free decisions that lead up to any given present event, we must accept that. Unless God reveals it to us, we simply cannot ever answer the question of why.

Yet, it's vitally important we realize that the reason the why question is unanswerable is not because God's will and character are mysterious, for these are clearly revealed in Jesus Christ. Rather, "why" questions are unanswerable because the world is infinitely more complex than our little brains can handle.

When faced with the question of why prayer saved one child but not another, I encourage you to not blame God or the victims by assigning the child's death either to God's will or to someone's lack of faith.

Let's rather openly acknowledge that we simply do not know. But in acknowledging our ignorance, let's celebrate the one thing we *do* know: namely, that God is as good and beautiful as He is revealed to be in Christ.

*Greg Boyd is a prolific author and the senior pastor of Woodland Hills Church in St. Paul, Minnesota. [Reknew.org](http://Reknew.org).*

## **AN OVERLOOKED ELEMENT**

by Level Fleming III



I believe that God certainly responds to the prayers of His people, but we may not always share His perspective of the situation we're praying about.

And sometimes we aren't patient enough to receive His full answer.

Let me give an example of what I mean.

Let's say that I want to be healed from high blood pressure. I want someone to lay hands on me so that I may receive instant healing, and watch my blood pressure move to normal levels.

Daily, however, the Holy Spirit may be promoting me to eat in a more healthy way and to exercise.

I may get impatient or frustrated because I don't see God answering my prayer. But the element I'm overlooking is that He wants me to do my part in bringing about my own healing.

God doesn't just want me healed; He wants me to exercise self-control. He wants me to take care of my body. He wants me to be faithful in the areas of diet and exercise.

The Lord's way is most always, change us from the inside out.

And sometimes we miss this element when we ask God to heal us.

Very often, we have a part and a role to play in it. And He may be trying to get our attention on that rather than to simply offer a quick fix.

*Level Fleming III is the pastor of New Image Church.*

## **A DEAL WITH GOD**

by Adrian Warnock



Many view their faith as a kind of "deal" with God. They would never actually express this, but they secretly feel, "If I follow you, I expect you to meet your end of the bargain and look out for me."

The book of Job begins on precisely this premise. Satan taunts God that Job only worships Him because of what He has given him. After God allows Satan to remove these blessings, multiple chapters explore the complex question of why God sometimes seems silent in suffering.

We learn that such unanswered prayer does *not* mean the victim is a worse sinner than anyone else, nor that God is displeased with him or her. A faithful follower of Jesus will still experience the brokenness that comes from living in a fallen world.

Presumably, somebody prayed that the life of each of the apostles would be spared, and those prayers were not answered. Even the holiest of saints will eventually die, to the heartbreak and mystery of those who prayed for them.

God allowed Job to directly ask Him his questions, and there is no shame in us doing the same. But His answer was essentially, “I am God and you are not, so trust me.”

The New Testament encourages us that stilling our troubled hearts, and hoping for the eventual bright future God has promised us will itself transform us:

*So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. ~ 2 Corinthians 4:16, ESV*

Until the return of Jesus, Christians will wrestle with unanswered prayer and grieve at suffering.

But we grieve in a different way from those who have no hope, looking forward to the day when God will be with us and will wipe away every tear from our eyes.

*Adrian Warnock is the author of Hope Reborn and Raised With Christ. [adrianwarnock.com](http://adrianwarnock.com)*

## REDEFINING HEALING

by Kathy Escobar



Every single day in the life of my faith community, The Refuge, I intersect with a friend who struggles with mental illness, chronic pain, or suburban poverty in some shape or form.

I watch them struggle, suffer, despair, try, hope, work, show up, and keep pressing forward, despite the brutal obstacles to freedom and healing. They cry out to God, "Please, please, in Jesus name, heal me." Many cry out to God on their behalf, "Please, God, heal our friends."

But it appears that most often their prayers are unanswered in the way many of Jesus' words in the gospels suggest.

It can feel extremely hopeless, and that's tough when we believe in a God of hope, restoration, and healing.

Many question their faith or wonder why God's turned His back on them, or why they deserve such torment.

*It's made me wonder the same thing.*

Reality doesn't make sense in light of the many simple passages in Scripture that suggest that belief will equal healing.

However, it's safe to say that after 20 years of ministry with people in pain, I have almost never seen healing from some of these issues come in the way we desperately want.

It's never come in a rush.

It's never come through only "asking in Jesus' name."

**However, it has come.**

I have seen healing break forth from the darkest despair.

I have seen hope buoy people when despair was doing its best to pull them under.

I have seen peace anchor people, if even for a short while.

Like most Kingdom things, it has never just dropped out of the sky.

Instead, healing has primarily come through people -- through the incarnation of Christ in the life of community -- through tangible presence, through verbal reminders of dignity and value, through experiencing love and compassion instead of rejection or judgment.

I wonder if one of the biggest misses we have related to asking God and then expecting a certain outcome is that we often associate healing with something clear, precise and disconnected from community -- a complete removal of the pain, erasing our memories, sickness completely gone, never struggling in that area again, or waking up completely whole.

This binary, all-or-none thinking pervades a lot of our spiritual frameworks, probably more than we even realize. It is wrought with shame about worthiness and value and faithfulness.

I can't make Jesus' words understandable in the context I live in with this sort of simple *if-then* thinking.

It will only lead to more despair.

But I do know this: The more I view healing and transformation as an ongoing work of small simple in-breakings of God that somehow bring hope, peace, relief, and beauty in the midst of struggle and pain, I'm not afraid to ask Jesus to help me -- and the people around me -- notice more of it.

*Kathy Escobar co-pastors The Refuge, a mission center and Christian community in North Denver. She's author of several books, including Faith Shift: Finding Your Way Forward When Everything You Believe is Coming Apart. [kathyesobar.com](http://kathyesobar.com)*

## NEVER ALONE

by Brian Zahnd



Two years before his death, Saint Francis of Assisi retreated to the secluded hermitage at La Verna in the mountains of Tuscany for a protracted season of prayer.

While there, he experienced a mystical vision resulting in his stigmata—the reproduction of the wounds of Christ in his own body.

Francis bore those painful wounds until his death in 1226. Admittedly, this is a mysterious phenomenon, but I am willing to view it as Francis' final and dramatic testament to how the church is to be present in the world.

Along with being a prophetic witness against the principalities and powers, along with bearing joyful witness to the pardon of God, the church is called to participate in the sufferings of Christ. The only Christian theodicy, which I find credible, is the confession that God does not exempt Himself from the horror of human suffering, but is fully baptized into it.

Where was God at Auschwitz and Hiroshima? God was in Christ hanging on a tree. Because of Golgotha, God knows what it is to feel forsaken, suffer, and die. God in Christ joins us in a solidarity of suffering and somehow by His wounds we are healed. This is a great and holy mystery. Christ saves us from sin and death only by hurling Himself into the abyss.

The ultimate imitation of Christ is to patiently absorb sin and offer pardon in the name of love. Suffering is part of Christlikeness. The promise we have in Christ is not an exemption from suffering, but a promise that we are never alone in our suffering. If suffering is the price of authentic freedom, then God's solidarity in our suffering is the promise of love. This, and this alone, makes our suffering bearable.

*Brian Zahnd is the founder and lead pastor of Word of Life Church in St. Joseph, Missouri. His most recent book is A Farewell To Mars.*

## THE LORD'S RESPONSE

by Samuel Genus



We are encouraged to pray to God (Luke 18:1) and make our requests known to Him (Philippians 4:6). We are taught the importance and benefits of praying fervently with a righteous heart (James 5:14-18).

Yes, in all of our ways we should acknowledge the Lord and He will direct our paths (Proverbs 3:6). If we lack wisdom, the apostle instructs us to ask God in faith (James 1:5). Therefore, it is my understanding that Yehovah God will always answer our prayer.

When I say *answer*, I mean He will respond to our request. He may say "yes" or He may say "no." He may also say "not now." He may respond with instructions, "Do this and your request will be granted."

It is possible that there might be silence for a few minutes, a few hours, and even a few days or longer; but He will respond. The response of the Lord is the gift promised to His people, "When you call I will answer."

There are many reasons why a person doesn't receive what they asked for. The answer is in the response of the Lord.

Some of the reasons can be:

- Because of habitual bad decisions on the part of the one praying. Praying to be healed and delivered but yet making decisions that make one sick or bound by problems.
- Lack of faith.

- God's judgment can be upon a person and God doesn't want to remove that judgment.
- God's perfect will for their life.

However, it is through the response of the Lord that we can really know *why* as it relates to our situation.

This is why listening to God in prayer and after prayer is vital. God's ways are not always our ways and His thoughts are not always our thoughts. Therefore, His response is necessary so that His children can have clarity and closure concerning the challenges they face in this life.

If God is not going to heal me, then I think it's reasonable that He responds by saying "no" so that I can have closure.

If we seek after Him and listen, we can hear Him responding. If we don't hear a response, then we should keep on praying until there is a response.

This requires patience and diligence.

Therefore, the believer should be diligent in prayer but also be sensitive to hear and see God responding. If we are communicating, then we need to talk and then patiently listen and observe.

*Samuel Genus is a devoted husband and father of 4 children. He is the author of Is Your Pastor Wrong About Tithing? Samuel serves as pastor of Jesus Church in Charlotte, NC.*

## A COMMENTARY ON GOD'S LOVE

by Bob Christopher



Prayer is not a gauge to determine the measure of God's love. One person prays and God answers. Another person prays and God seems silent. Does God love the first person more than the second?

We know the answer. Circumstances are not and never will be a commentary on God's love. He is for us no matter what. And He is with us, living inside us, no matter what. Nothing changes these enduring truths.

As a child of God, you are always and forever in His grace. As Paul wrote, nothing can separate you from His love.

Yet, unanswered prayers can cause you to doubt.

"God, why didn't you answer my prayer like you did for that other person? Why did you let my loved one die and let that other person's loved one live? Do you really love me? Do you really care?"

These are the questions that can shake your faith.

God has already demonstrated His love toward you. He forgave your sins, declared you righteous, and gave you His Spirit. On this foundation you can see the real purpose of prayer.

James wrote this: "Is any among you suffering? Let him pray." Paul said it this way, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God."

Prayer isn't a magic wand that makes your suffering disappear. It's what faith looks like in the midst of trouble. When trouble comes, cast your cares on Jesus. Speak to Jesus from the heart.

Let Him know your deepest concerns. Ask Him to intervene. Why? Because above all things, you need Him.

Jesus is God's answer to your prayers. He is the One who calms your heart and fears. He is the One who gives you peace. He is the One who works all things together for good.

Jesus knows what you are going through. He understands. Talk to Him.

*Bob Christopher is the president of Basic Gospel and host of the Basic Gospel daily radio broadcast. He is the author of Love Is and Simple Gospel, Simply Grace. [basicgospel.net](http://basicgospel.net)*

## THE FAITHFUL GOD

by Sarah Heath



Why doesn't God answer the prayers of the faithful? This is one of the toughest questions pastors have to answer. Not just for others, but for ourselves.

Even after seminary training and years of full-time ministry, I still don't think I can fully answer the why.

When we look at Scripture, it is easy to take, "Ask and it shall be given unto you" (Matthew 7: 7-8) and "If you ask anything in My name I will do it" (John 14:14) as a promise that if you earnestly ask for something, it will come true.

It can appear as though the faithful God is some sort of cosmic Santa Claus. But I, myself, have experienced praying for something and not come to fruition, at least not in the way I was hoping for it to.

Some would argue that when we pray and it isn't met with a hoped-for outcome, the person has to be asking for something outside of the will of God or they didn't have the right motives.

This may be true in some cases, but not in all. For example, when you are standing with a woman who is watching her husband fade away from Alzheimer's disease and all she is praying for is for him to be able to leave this earth and no longer suffer -- having already lost the dignity he once had -- I don't think she has the wrong motives in her prayer.

And does her prayer for her husband's healing sound outside the will of God? I don't think so.

So there must be something more to this prayer thing.

Prayer is about relationship, not a transaction. Life continues to be life. Things happen that are less than ideal. Sometimes they are devastating. But even in those situations, prayer changes something.

I tend to have a Wesleyan (the theological construct put forth by United Methodist founder John Wesley) view of life and that includes the Quadrilateral.

The Quadrilateral suggests that we must look at Scripture as primary, but not alone. We must weigh it with and against tradition, experience, and reason.

So when I look at prayer, I look at what is happening -- not just within Scripture -- but I also weigh the other three parts of the Quadrilateral.

What I know from reason is that through scientific study we are observing that prayer actually changes our brain make-up and makes us more aware and present to the goodness around us.

It also opens up parts of our brain that weren't being enacted before.

Through tradition, I see that for thousands of years, people have been engaged in prayer and believed that prayer has changed circumstances, but also the people who prayed.

Through experience, I have experienced both the joy of answered prayer and the grief of prayers unanswered.

If I weigh all of this together, I conclude that prayer is doing something even when it seems like it is not. I also know that because I cannot see the fullness of time, I do not know how God's will is bringing about the Kingdom of God. I simply hope to participate in it through prayer.

*Sarah Heath is an ordained elder for the California Pacific Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church (UMC). She has been appointed to First Costa Mesa UMC to help with a new start and revitalization project. Hearing the call to ministry, Sarah attended Duke Divinity School where she earned her Master of Divinity degree in 2005. She is a contributor to the forthcoming book, Disquiet Time: Rants and Reflections on the Good Book by the Skeptical, the*

Faithful, and a Few Scoundrels *edited by Jennifer Grant and Cathleen Falsani (Jericho Books/Hachette, Oct. 2014).*

## NAVIGATING THE IMPOSSIBLE

by Bill Johnson



Unanswered prayers are common in our lives, but non-existent in the life of Jesus. Real faith doesn't deny a problem's existence. It denies it a place of influence.

Jesus Christ is perfect theology, and He is the example we follow. Jesus didn't teach on unanswered prayers—He didn't have any.

He went beyond that in giving us promises. He promised that we could ask for anything and it would be done for us.

Yet, when James and John wanted to call down fire on the Samaritans Jesus said *no*.

Did God trick them or lie? Of course not. God is God, and He reserves the right to not answer any prayer that undermines His purpose.

Yet the covenantal promise of fulfilled dreams and desires remains, and it must be fully discovered for God's nature to be seen in the earth through His people. His will is clear—*on earth as it is in Heaven*.

To discover this realm, we must be willing to find out why we didn't get the answer we prayed for. If we create a theology around the disappointment, we'll give it a power it doesn't deserve.

The challenge we face is to navigate the process without blaming God, nor moving into guilt or shame. Both reactions are deadly and will cost us in the long run.

I can only find one time when the disciples didn't get what they expected. In Mark 9, a father brought them his tormented son for deliverance. When they failed, the father took the child to Jesus, who brought deliverance.

Instead of accepting their unanswered prayer, they asked Jesus why they couldn't deliver him, even though they had done it before. They had to find out why! In their case, it was an issue of lacking faith, solved with prayer and fasting.

The lack is never on God's end of the equation. And an unanswered prayer is never punishment. It is an invitation to relationally navigate our entrance into the impossible so that His nature and purpose become manifest through us to the world around us.

*Bill Johnson is a best-selling author and the pastor of Bethel Church in Redding, California.*

## **WE HAVEN'T GOT A PRAYER**

by Ben Witherington



There is something mysterious about prayer, and many Christians have made the mistake of approaching the matter as if it were like rubbing the lamp of a genie who appears and offers to fulfill one's deepest longings and wishes.

"Why does God sometimes not answer our prayers in the affirmative when we seem to have prayed about the right things in the right way?" There are a variety of answers to this question.

First, let us remember that God is all knowing. We might think we know what is best in this or that situation, and then pray about it accordingly. But our knowledge is limited and our understanding of how the universe works is even less substantial. Only God really knows what is best for us in a given situation, and God has promised to work all things together for good for those who love Him (Rom. 8.28).

Take for instance the case of a loved one who dies prematurely, or at least, it seems to us it is premature. This in fact has happened to my family as our daughter, Christy, died suddenly at age 32 of a pulmonary embolism several years ago.

Now, I could have been angry with God, and yelled and screamed that this was unfair and so on. But I knew that was entirely the wrong response. I knew that a certain quantity of life is not owed to any of us, so it wasn't a matter of fairness. Life is a gift, not a right.

So instead my wife and I thanked God for the wonderful years we had with Christy. Of course we grieved deeply, but we also trusted that God knows far better than us what the future holds, including what the future held for Christy.

A Christian believes there is also the gift of everlasting life, and what really matters is not how long we live in this mortal frame, but whether we have received the gift of everlasting life in Christ before we die -- a life which begins now and continues on in heaven. That life also continues in the resurrection body when Christ returns "to raise the quick and the dead." Life is not too short when it's everlasting.

In short, if we have God's perspective on life and on prayer. We realize the reason why God sometimes answers "no" to our prayers, even if we prayed sincerely. What appears to be good and right to us is sometimes the enemy of the best, and God is working all things together for what is best for those who love Him.

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## ALWAYS LOVED

by Kristin D. Longenecker



Sometimes we think that just because we asked for something, that is why God answered. We find stories of God in the Bible where God will answer all our needs, all we need to do is follow.

Our voices soar as we sing, "Great is Thy Faithfulness" and swell as we praise God.

The God of Jabez stands to increase our territory if we are faithful. The God of the harvest increases our numbers, as if abundance is all there is with God.

The results are the proof of faith.

But what about when our marriage fails? What about the baby with cancer? Where is the abundance in the couple who longs to have children? What is the increase in mounting debt and looming foreclosure?

This is when reading the whole story of God makes a difference. There is the God of Job too. The story of one who follows God closely and loses it all. Later he gets it all back again. But his prayer was clearly not answered. At least not in the way he might have hoped for.

If I were in his story, I would seriously doubt someone who told me to just "Ask and it will be given." We hear Ecclesiastes calling "vanity of vanities!" Somehow the bad people seem to get ahead and the good fall behind. So why be good? Why pray at all if it doesn't work?

We live in a fallen world. The best of plans fall apart. If I clean my house, it will naturally need to be cleaned again. While we humans strive to order everything, creation naturally randomizes.

Tree roots grow through pavement, rain erodes mighty structures, and wind blows the earth into chaos. All of our work, all our lives, laying in waste and want. Yes, God can answer prayer, and He does.

We hear the stories. Yes, time may be running out as we plead and beg for help. And yes, prayer isn't answered in a timely fashion and even goes completely unanswered. But perhaps the outcome isn't all that prayer is about.

Just because God hears us and answers our prayers, doesn't mean that it is just like pressing the buttons on a vending machine. We pray again and again in our churches the prayer Jesus taught us.

In one voice we say, "Thy will be done." But do we mean it? Whether it is the God of Jabez or the God of Job, it is still God. And in anything that happens, you can be assured, you are loved by God, no matter what. You are enough as you are.

But God doesn't leave you there either. God is with you. God has a vision for you, for all of us. He has a hope, a future, beyond anything we can understand.

This vision uses your gifts and abilities to incarnate Christ uniquely in the world in a way that only you can do. And perhaps that is the best and most constant answer to our prayers. The still small voice of God is with you in all things, always. You are not alone in the doctor's office. You are not alone crying. You are not alone in the dark. You are not alone in the terror. You are not alone.

God loves you. Always. No matter what.

*Kristin D. Longenecker is an aggregator of faith in Christ, hand holder in dark nights of the soul, proverbial holder of the baby when the bathwater is thrown out, and a mom. She is a pastor in Phoenix, Arizona.*

## YOUR DECISION

by Jose Bosque



First, I want to qualify my answers by saying I have been on both sides of these answers from a human vantage point. I have seen the Lord miraculously provide the finances to purchase valuable properties without any logical means.

Millionaires who never heard me preach stepped up and made large unexplainable donations in my favor. I have also watched the Lord dismantle an entire church and ministry with assets and buildings of over \$8 million dollars down to the last screw and a zero bank balance.

I have traveled to 60 nations of the world and seen healing miracles such as the Lord opening blind eyes, curing AIDS instantly, and many other supernatural answers to prayer. I have also been in the hospital praying and fasting for five months only to see the eyes of my 2-year-old granddaughter close to Leukemia.

From a theological point of view, I am not sure if all those verses quoted by Jesus, about Him doing whatever we ask, are New Testament verses for a New Covenant believer. Our Lord had not yet shed His blood on the cross so the Testator had not died to usher in a New Testament dispensation.

From a human vantage point, I have no answer. Without the Spirit of God, all I see is a fickle God who does what He wants when He wants to. This gives me the impression as a human being that He is disconnected and uncaring.

From down deep in my Spirit, however, I have faith. Faith to trust His decisions when He answers as I wish and when it appears He is silent.

I am His. He created me and bought me. Who am I to argue and debate with the Creator of the universe? He says ALL things work together for good.

Do I really believe I can understand His answer when it doesn't go my way? If I could, I would be God.

So I only have two choices as a child of God: Curse Him and leave behind an example of unbelief for my legacy, or praise Him in the midst of humanly unexplainable circumstances. I have made my decision.

What is yours?

*Jose L Bosque is a writer and speaker. "Go my son because I AM with you" are the words that have taken Jose to over 60 nations to train Government Leaders, Christian Business Leaders and Church / Ministry Leaders. His focus now is to use the Internet for the advancement of His Kingdom. Jose oversees several websites, Social Media networks, and conducts several online classes to equip and disciple His Body, the Body of King Jesus worldwide. [godsleader.com](http://godsleader.com)*

## DIVINE LIMITATIONS

by Roger Olson



God limits Himself in relation to human free will. In every truly tragic situation where people pray, God does all God can do to respond and relieve innocent suffering.

However, were God always to "step in" to stop suffering, this would be an entirely different kind of world than it is. The world is presently the way it is due to the human rejection of God.

The present state of the world reveals God's desire for us to feel our dependence upon and need of Him, as well as our freedom to do great good and great harm to ourselves and others.

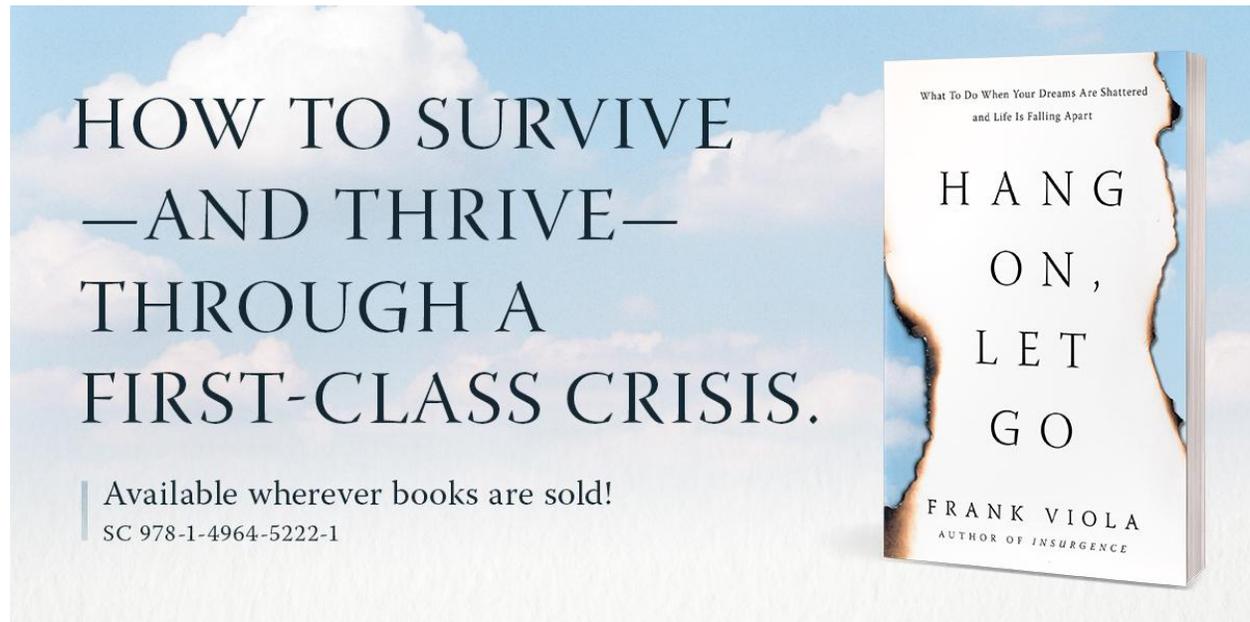
Risk and suffering are part of the world as a result of the fall. Only God knows how often and when He can interfere in the natural order of events in response to prayer (or unilaterally).

But apparently (we can reverently speculate), God abides by rules He Himself has set that govern this matter.

*Roger E. Olson (PhD, Rice University) is professor of theology at George W. Truett Theological Seminary of Baylor University in Waco, Texas. He is the author of numerous books, including The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition & Reform, The Mosaic of Christian Belief: Twenty Centuries of Unity & Diversity and The Westminster Handbook to Evangelical Theology.*

## GOING DEEPER

If you or someone you know is going through a crisis – whether a relational crisis, a health crisis, and/or a financial crisis, check out Frank’s book [HANG ON, LET GO: What to Do When Your Dreams Are Shattered and Life Is Falling Apart](#) (Tyndale, 2021).



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