

SHOULD A MAN REASON WITH GOD
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Someone once asked me if it is possible to reason with God. Job thought so. He declared in verse 3 of Chapter 13 that he would speak and reason with God. God declares His willingness to reason with us in Isaiah 1:18-20. He does go on to suggest in the same passage that it is more reasonable to enjoy the rewards of obedience to Him than the consequences of sin. These passages leave us with no doubt it is possible to negotiate with God. The question is whether we should. The Bible speaks of several who successfully talked God out of His plans for their lives.

King Hezekiah decided in 2 Kings, Chapter 20 to bargain with God for his very life. This righteous king was sick, the prophet of God came to tell him to get ready to die, and he started negotiating. He wept bitterly to God, asking for extra time as a reward for all the service he had rendered to God. Amazingly, God sent the prophet back to tell him, "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." Hezekiah got his wish. He received extra time because he was righteous. Too bad the story does not end there. Six verses later, the king shows well wishers from a different nation, Babylon, all the very fine things in his house and in his kingdom. He wanted them to know how God had blessed him. He wanted to impress them. He made them envious instead. Afterwards, the word of God came again to Hezekiah through the prophet. This time the message was not positive. It foretold the results of the king's display of grandeur, the subsequent Babylonian destruction of Judah and the slavery of the king's children. In that extra time he had been given, Hezekiah managed to set up the loss of his kingdom and his family.

Abraham also decided he would reason with God in the eighteenth chapter of Genesis. When God informed Abraham He planned to destroy Sodom, where Abraham's nephew lived with his family, the patriarch sought to outwit God. He started by persuading God to spare the city for the sake of fifty righteous souls. He then progressively refined the number of souls till God agreed to spare the city for the sake of ten righteous people. Abraham stopped negotiating because he thought he had saved Lot and his family, along with the city. If you count how many there were in Lot's family, I think you will find there are ten. (Lot and wife (2), sons in law, along with their wives (4), sons (2), and virgin daughters (2)). Abraham got cute in an effort to outwit God. Since only four came out of the city, and Lot's wife died en route, that successful bargaining cost Lot 7 out of 10 from his family. How much better would it have been had Abraham just asked God to spare Lot's family, but let God go ahead with His plans to destroy the city?

In Psalms 16:7, David indicated his belief that God knew him, had a purpose planned for his life, and would even direct him in the right path (with reins) when David himself could not see which way to go. Psalms 139:12-17 speaks of God's intimate knowledge of him from the moment of David's conception. God's plans for David's life were written in God's book, even down to all the pieces of his body. He spoke of the advantage of being directed and guided by a God who can see when we cannot find our own way. He wound up claiming God's thoughts toward him were precious. David had it pretty much right.

God does know a little better than we do which path is best for us to take. Isaiah 55:8-9 says, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. That might be why David said in Psalms 37:23, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way."

So why do we always want to negotiate with God over aspects of our life? We do not need to bargain with God for our needs. Matthew 6:31-34 assures us we need not concern ourselves with food, drink or clothing. Those who do not follow God worry about such things, but our Father already knows what we need. We are to seek the things of God and let God take care of providing the things we need. We are not to worry about tomorrow because we have more than enough to worry about each day. We not need to even bargain with Him for our wants. Psalms 37:4 promises if we find our delight in the Lord, He will give us the

desires of our heart. That is, unless we ask for the wrong things. James 4:3 indicates when we ask, but do not receive; it is because our requests are wrong and probably based upon our lusts.

When we do not get what we request, we should trust that a good and loving God, who sees ahead in time, had a good reason not to answer that prayer. God always hears our petitions. It is just that sometimes the answer is "No!" If we ask and a God, who promised to supply all our needs according to His riches in glory, does not grant our request, maybe He does not agree that what we want is a need.

Does God know what He is doing in our lives? He said in Jeremiah 29:11, "I know the thoughts I think toward you, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." Since He can see ahead in time, and His plans for us are good, maybe we should stop reasoning with God to get our way over His. We might weary Him to the point where He lets us have our way. Our plans for our lives don't usually turn out as well as God's plans.