

Doctrine Schmocktrin

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Doctrine—a particular principle, position, or policy taught or advocated by a religion, especially when established by precedent.

The doctrines of the Christian church vary from congregation to congregation, and, from person to person. Every tribe or nation flavors the belief stew a certain way. Some like it hot, while others prefer quite mild, even cold works for some—or so they say. The tremendous variations around the globe are most likely not what God originally desired. The differences, though variations on a theme, are not always healthy progressions. Nor do they exhibit spiritual splendor sliced and diced for different tastes. The spread is like unpleasant fouling of the air born out of isolating dividedness, compounded by adamant certainty.

Take this example. A churchgoing woman is married to an abusive alcoholic husband for 25 years. He never sets foot in a church, reads the Bible or prays. The wife prays for him faithfully everyday and believes that one day he'll get religion. She also thinks divorce is wrong. She trusts God to do what is right. 25 years and one day later, the husband finds God and is amazingly changed. His wife credits her 9,125 prayers as the reason. God was faithful, and finally, in His timing, answered her faithful praying.

Take this other example. A churchgoing woman is married to an abusive alcoholic husband for 25 years. He never sets foot in a church, reads the Bible or prays. The wife prays for him occasionally, a little here, a little there. She thinks divorce is wrong. She trusts God to do what is right. 25 years and one day later, the husband finds God and is amazingly changed. His wife somewhat credits her approximately 146 prayers as the reason. In the end, God finally, in His timing, answered her prayers.

Take this final example. A churchgoing woman is married to an abusive alcoholic husband for 25 years. He never sets foot in a church, reads the Bible or prays. She thinks divorce is wrong. The wife doesn't pray much about anything. She simply hopes God will do the right thing. 25 years and one day later the husband finds God and is amazingly changed. She credits no particular prayers as the reason, nor is she sure how and why the change took so long.

The three women are relieved. But, their three perceptions equal three differing doctrinal approaches to prayer. Plus, let's add that all three couples have lived next door to the other for the last 25 years. The three husbands found God and were amazingly changed on the same day. The different perceptions of the three wives concerning prayer do not jive together—for each women the necessity of prayer is divided against the others. One was aggressive; one was part-time, the other passive. Which worked: nudging God by consistent pressure, occasionally reminding God, or laziness?

Rabbi Jesus taught one of the common perceptions of his day: keep knocking, asking and seeking. I don't think he *guaranteed* answers for any situation that is blanketed by prayer. He did propose faith and prayer as a means of change.

My question: does the faith of a teensy-weensy mustard seed out-weigh 25 years of daily prayer? I don't know. In example one, was each new seed planted on 9,125 mornings *required*? Or, was one seed, plus wait time, the mere requirement for change? Is prayer akin to mysterious casino slot machines? Insert

request—pull down—three factors line-up—collect—no further handle pulling needed. Or, do we steadfastly pull for 25 years or more, or possibly until we die?

What I do know is that the three different approaches desiring the same answer will happen...but not always...and we don't like it. We are left with what we should've, could've or would've done if only we knew.

My doctrine is I don't know. Schmocktrin? God understands that one too.

These Things Make Me Grumpy