

Five steps to take before the magic happens.

Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Psalm 37:4

Most outcomes in life are unpredictable. When attempting to alter the future by means of prayer and/or meditation, we need to keep in mind that we are dealing with probabilities, not certainties. Our futures, during our human existence, cannot be predetermined because the universe is governed only by probability. This is true at both the quantum and cosmic levels. Life is not fair, by design. Why? Because it is impossible to develop Godly character in a world where nothing ever goes wrong and where we always get what we want.

Prayer is helpful because it increases the probability that we will get what we want. We need to keep in mind, however, that sometimes successful prayer can do more harm than good. In other words, be careful what you pray for because you might actually get it. Faith is a powerful force for both good and evil. Hitler's faith enabled him to nearly conquer the world and resulted in his personal ruin.

The way I see it, faith has five basic components: (1) desire, (2) integration, (3) intention, (4) expectation, and (5) action.

Step 1 (desire): We all start with a basic desire. The first step is easy. We all have plenty of desires.

Step 2 (integration): The second step is not so easy. We need to bring our desires into harmony with our higher natures. We all have two natures, a lower fleshly nature, and a higher spiritual nature. Our higher nature is connected directly to God and knows what's best for it. Our lower nature only "thinks" it knows what's best for it. Before we just start asking for stuff, we need to first listen to what our higher nature is trying to tell us. Our higher nature sees things from a higher, long term perspective. It resides in the heavenlies and is aware of our major life purpose and knows specifically what we need to accomplish in this life. We were all born with spiritual amnesia. None of us knows who we really are. None of us knows exactly what our purposes were for coming to earth. For example, the avoidance of a certain hardship we are facing might prevent us from learning a very important life lesson. Perhaps we need to be humbled. On the other hand, overcoming that obstacle and avoiding the hardship might be a very important step in the process of developing self-confidence and a sense of accomplishment. So, before we go to step 3 (intention), we need to integrate our two natures and bring them into harmony with each other. A good way to do this is to meditate and listen. Meditate on God's word (the words of Jesus) and listen to what our heart (ie. our higher self) is trying to tell us. The Bible tells us that the person who does this day and night prospers in everything he or she does (Psalm 1).

Step 3 (intention): We started with a desire, or series of desires, and then bring them into harmony with the will of God for us. The next step is to decide specifically what we want to see happen. We need to think about it continually (meditate on it). We need to visualize it in our minds, and firmly resolve to make it happen. This is not something we just do once and then forget about. If we really want it to happen, it needs to consume our thoughts, and we need to be

thinking about it day and night. Write it down, recite it often to yourself, and post pictures of it on your wall at home or office.

Step 4 (expectation): According to what some call the Law of Attraction, what we expect to happen, both consciously and subconsciously, tends to happen. If we pray for something, but don't really expect it to happen, that is nothing more than just wishful thinking. Turning wants into expectations is easier said than done. To accomplish this we need to employ the power of words. Words are more powerful than most people realize. It has been scientifically demonstrated that negative words are more powerful than positive ones. It takes 10 or more positive words to overcome the damage done by a single negative spoken word. The most effective words are those that we speak to ourselves. These words have a very powerful influence on our subconscious minds, which some believe cannot distinguish between fantasy and reality. For example, it has been demonstrated that if you practice successfully making basketball free throws in your mind, this will increase your ability to successfully do in on a real basketball court. The best way to change your expectations is to change what you repeatedly say to yourself. Another way to change your expectations is by taking action, and that brings me to the next step.

Step 5 (action): Prayer works supernaturally. Real magic happens when we act in faith. When we act on our intensions and expectations, it is not just our actions that are in play. Miracles actually do come to pass. That is not to say, however, that actions do not play a role. Actions facilitate the outcomes in our lives for obvious reasons. What is the point of praying for a job, for example, and then not actually going out to look for one? But, actions help in other ways. Actions reinforce our beliefs and expectations. Actions keep these "thoughts" continually on our minds. Actions result in small advances toward our goals, which in turn reinforce our beliefs and expectations. The process is self-enhancing. The more you act, the more small results you see, and the stronger your expectations become. It can become a vicious self-enhancing cycle. The real magic happens when we completely cease to doubt.

Richard Goyette