

Understanding God's Timing in Prayer



Jim Cymbala September 7, 2019

Whenever we pray, it is vital to distinguish among four different directives from the Lord. Doing so can give us the breakthrough timing we need in order to do his will. For any given prayer or undertaking in our life, we need to discern whether the Lord is saying one of these four things:

- Never
- Always
- At certain times
- Not now

The goal of spiritual growth is simply to become like Jesus. The Bible declares that from before the creation of the world, God intended us to be “conformed to the likeness of his Son” (Romans 8:29). This is the spiritual yardstick by which we can measure our progress: Are we becoming more like Jesus? Using that measure, we begin to realize that the most Christlike person is not necessarily the one who has memorized the most Scriptures or the one most visible in leadership.

Anyone who studies the life of Jesus cannot help but be impressed with his unruffled peace and perfect spiritual poise. No matter the situation, the Lord knew what to say and when to say it. He knew when to be silent and he always did the right thing. He also knew when to withdraw from the crowds for a time of rest or prayer. Jesus' sense of what the moment required was flawless.

This keen understanding of divine imperatives and precise spiritual timing is at the heart of what it means to be mature in Christ. Some things must *never* be done, while others must *always* be observed. At certain times a particular action is the only proper course to take; at other times even good things are inappropriate because the Lord is saying “*not now*.” Understanding God's imperatives and his timing — his *never*, *always*, *at certain times*, and *not now* — can help us avoid painful pitfalls and guide us into his perfect will.

God is always serious when he gives us his directives. Look to him for guidance as you walk in obedience to his Word and he will enable you to maintain a stable walk with him.

Jim Cymbala began the Brooklyn Tabernacle with less than twenty members in a small, rundown building in a difficult part of the city. A native of Brooklyn, he is a longtime friend of both David and Gary Wilkerson.

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