

# Reasoning With God

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Can a weak and mortal man or woman influence God? Can we change His mind? Is it wrong to reason with Him?

Contrary to many people's first reaction, God actually urges, "Come now, and let us reason together" (Isaiah 1:18). Abraham reasoned with God concerning the city of Sodom, and as a result God promised He would not destroy it if there were only ten righteous people there. Moses reasoned with God concerning the rebellious Israelites. God wanted to destroy them for their idolatry, but changed His mind because of Moses' intercession.

Reasoning with God does not mean arguing with Him or making excuses for ourselves or our actions. Nor does it mean trying to get God to change His laws. Reasoning with Him means giving Him reasons for why we ask what we do.

## Language of the Courtroom

God told Israel to reason with Him in their own defense. "Let us contend together; state your case, that you may be acquitted" (Isaiah 43:26). The Hebrew word for "contend," *shaphat*, means "to judge," for example, to pronounce a sentence for or against a defendant. It implies the result of the judgment: the vindication or punishment of the defendant. A defendant will contend, plead or reason his case before a judge.

To help us to understand how we are to reason with Him, God inspired Isaiah to use the language of the courtroom. We are to plead our case like a lawyer, plaintiff or defendant pleads his case before a judge. But no matter how strongly we state our case to God, if it is not according to His will, if giving us what we ask would be detrimental to us or others, or if it does not coincide with His master plan, then God will not give us what we ask. His decisions are based on what would be best for everyone.

Reasoning with God must be ***according to His will***. "Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us" (I John 5:14). The indication here is not just that He hears, but hears favorably. Jesus Christ said, "I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me" (John 5:30).

Effectively reasoning with Him according to His will requires us to ***understand His will***. Abraham could reason with God concerning Sodom because he was close to God and submissive to Him. Abraham understood God's plan for mankind. He felt confident in reasoning with God because he knew His will (Genesis 18:17-19). King David asked Him in Psalm 143:10, "Teach me to do Your will" (*cf.* I Corinthians 2:16).

Understanding God's will requires ***constant contact with Him***. God said of Abraham, "I have known him." God was acquainted with Abraham, to the point that God calls him His friend (James 2:23). As a familiar friend, he understood God. Christ says, "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you" (John 15:7).

Understanding God's will requires *obedience to Him* . Abraham was consistently obedient to God. Otherwise, He would not have commissioned Abraham to teach God's truth to his children and household which were the beginning of many nations. The apostle John said, "And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight" (I John 3:22).

### **A Gauge of Growth**

God wants us to reason with Him! When we give Him sound, spiritual reasons for our requests, He can gauge very accurately our growth in grace and knowledge. He can see if we are still carnal and self-centered, or if we are showing love for our brethren (Matthew 25:34-46). Isaiah 1:17-19 says, "Learn to do good; seek justice, reprove the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow. 'Come now, and let us reason together,' says the LORD. . . . 'If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land.'"

To know God's will we have to be in constant contact with Him and be consistently obedient to Him. How God answers our prayers may often be flexible, depending on how and why we make the requests we do. He wants to know our reasons for asking. He wants to know we sincerely mean it when we ask.

Reasoning with God according to His will has changed the course of history. What might it do for us and our brethren?