

# OpenTheo

## Is It Okay to Pray with a Christian Who Believes His Words Create Things?

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### #STRask - Stand to Reason

Questions about whether it's okay to pray with a Christian who believes his words create things and how to be sure we don't cross the line into performing sympathetic magic when engaging in spiritual warfare.

\* Would you have a problem praying with a Christian who believes his words create/manifest things?

\* How can we be sure we don't cross the line into basically performing sympathetic magic when engaging in spiritual warfare?

### Transcript

(upbeat music) (ding) - You're listening to Stanford reasons, #STRASH Pentecast. I'm Amy Holland with me is Greg Cocol. - Hey Amy.

- Hello Greg. This first question comes from Connie Porter, "Would you have a problem with praying with another Christian that believes their words create/manifestings?" - Well, first I wouldn't have a problem praying with anyone. In fact, part of what I've recommended when people have evangelists come to their door like LDS or Jehovah's Witnesses is that you invite them to have a prayer and then you pray.

I don't see any difficulty with that. Now if it, of course the question might be, it appears like you're making common cause with someone or maybe you're having a prayer session as brothers and sisters in Christ. And so you're praying together for some other end and it's not so much like when you have non-Christians come to your door and then you're kind of praying the session into what you're at the beginning of the session to set the stage and you're saying the prayer and whatever.

So I guess I'd have a little bit of trouble with that but I'm not sure how much, a lot depended on the degree to which the person believed this. There may be a false

understanding through the way people read text in the scripture and then come to the wrong conclusion. And so I think that the powers in the words to cause these things to happen.

That would be like if, I don't know if it would be a heresy as much as a heterodoxy but it would be a formal heterodoxy not a material one because people are just kind of misunderstanding. But then if you have, in other words, as to the letter it's not right but the people are not in a really bad place. They're just kind of has a little confusion about this.

Then you have other people who are word faith and these are people that are theologically committed to this notion that is heterodox and they understand what it is and they're practicing it and pursuing it. And in that case they're even gonna likely correct language that you might be praying because they think that you're confessing negative things that are going to come into being as a result of your negative confession. That's a material problem.

And in those circumstances I think then you have to address that and you might even say, look, we can't pray together frankly because you have a different understanding about how our prayers work. Now a person can be a real Christian there. That's why I didn't call it a heresy but heterodoxy but it leads to serious problems and because it's an occult view of language.

Meaning that occult generally we think of it like devil stuff. Well, occult in a general sense means just something hidden. Okay, in this case it's a hidden power that is invested in words.

And so when you say the words the power is released, think abracadabra or open sesame. Some people think that's the way words work. And even I Paul Crouch with TBM, he's gone now but he used to talk, even God had to use words to create as if God just says these words because the magic is in the words and he's got to use it to create.

This of course puts the words above God and God's using this external force and manipulating it to accomplish his ends. And this is a libel on God of course. And it's a misunderstanding about words.

Words have no power in the sense that people are employing them in word faith. Well, the words have the power of death or life. Yes, you can say something that your active will in the saying it can cause someone else to die.

You're saying something can really hurt somebody's feelings but it isn't because the words are causing it, it's because you're causing it with the words you're using. Notice the difference. So this is a false understanding of the words work.

It's an occult field of language. It's not a Christian view of language. If words were

powerful like the name of Jesus then every time somebody said the name of Jesus as a swear word essentially, something would happen because that's the magic word.

Obviously that's not the case. The power is not in the verbalizing the name of Jesus. The power is in the person of Jesus whose power we invoke when we use his name in particular ways.

So you can see how somebody deeply committed to this notion is going to have a hard time with a Christian who understands this is the wrong way to view language. Have a hard time with that Christian in prayer. So it just depends Connie on I guess the level of commitment.

If a person is just confused, it might be a good idea to share the thoughts that I just shared. If they're not merely confused, they're just committed to a wrong teaching that I think may be enough to say, we just have to pray separately. It doesn't mean that the person is not a Christian but they do have a heterodox view that is going to hurt their Christianity, their relationship with God eventually as all heterodox views do.

heterodox means it's false, but it's not heretical. It's like a, it's not a felony, it's a misdemeanor, theologically speaking. - Yeah, I think I'd agree with you Greg.

If someone wanted to pray with me one-on-one and that was their view of prayer, I think I would have a conversation with them and say, "Hey, you know what? "We just have a really different understanding of prayer "and I'm just gonna explain to you that difference right now. "I'm praying to God to work in my life "and you are trying to create things with your words "and it's you. "These are two different things.

"I don't even know why you need God in that situation. "Why are you even praying?" And so maybe you can just put it in terms of, this is my way of meeting with God and requesting things of him and submitting to his will and being confident that he's hearing me and he will do what's right and sometimes that's what I say, sometimes that isn't what I say because he knows better than I do. And what you're doing feels to me like manipulation of God.

Or I mean, I guess that's at best. At worst, it has nothing to do with God and it's just you trying to create things with your words. But either way, it's not honoring to God and it's not what I'm doing.

Like we're doing two different things here. So I think if I were in a situation where there was one person in a group, I don't think I'd walk out. But if I don't think I would do one on one.

- Think of David in Psalm 13, "How long, O Lord, will you desert me forever? "How long will you hide your face from me? "How long will my enemies be victorious over me?" I mean, talk about negative confessions, right? So plus what happens when two Christians

are praying and the other Christian finishes praying and you're done. You say, "Amen?" Which means I agree, I so be it. So how can we even say the amen to a prayer like that that someone else is praying because we don't agree and we're not affirming.

So be it, we can't even give the amen a participation there. So if you can't give the amen to a prayer, don't. And if you're praying with another person for the purpose of having a productive prayer life and you can't amen their prayer, then there's no sense praying with another person.

Again, if you're in a group and this kind of happens, you're not in control. Okay, just sit there quietly and don't say amen. - And of course, we have given the explanation rather bluntly, but you don't have to approach it the way we just said it.

You can just start by asking them, "Hey, I'm really curious. You're saying these certain things in your prayers. What do you mean by that? Why do you do it this way? What's your understanding of God?" You can ask a lot of questions to draw them out rather than just going after them.

- Sure, you don't have to be as direct and insensitive as we're being, so. But no, the Amy's point is really correct though. How you navigate a conversation is based on the information that you want to communicate, but it also is based that style of navigation, and we talk about this in tactics a lot, has to do with the individual.

So you know how to respond to each person. That's Colossians chapter four, verse six. So what we do is give you the information and then you take the information and you build it into your response in a way that's appropriate.

- Well, Greg, this next question, this is kind of funny because in the last episode, you brought up sympathetic magic and I actually have a question that's kind of related to that. Already ready to go for this one. So here's a question from Ethan A. How can we be sure in spiritual warfare that we don't cross the line into basically performing sympathetic magic? - Well, sympathetic magic is when you are doing something to mimic what you want to accomplish.

And I use the illustration of cave paintings where you have archers that are shooting bison. And the idea is if you set this up just in the right way, then you will, by doing the painting, you will create the reality magically because of the painting. And this is what was going on with the ashtrith and the crops and all of that.

- I don't know what parallel there would be in Christian prayer because in Christian prayer, we are invoking God's help to accomplish an end where God personally has the choice of responding to a request or not. - Well, he says in spiritual warfare specifically. So he didn't explain what practices he was talking about, but maybe you could address that.

- Yeah, and well, right, I recall that, but I can't imagine, well, maybe I can, let me just think. When I think of spiritual warfare, there are maybe two aspects. One is directly confronting a demonic power like casting out a demon, for example.

And that's a power encounter where we're trusting God's power to work for us as an agent of Jesus in whose name we exercise the power. And when I say in whose name, I don't mean saying the name. That's not what it means to do something in the name of Jesus.

It means to be acting in his authority, okay? So like, I never see this in cartoons, well, in TV or anything now, but it used to be like in cartoons, you'd have a policeman put up his hand to say, "Stop in the name of the law, "stop in the name of the law," or something. And maybe have variations of that now. "Police, police, stop," whatever.

What they're doing is they're invoking their authority as a particular role, as an appropriate role, as a policeman or as a representative of the law. They're acting in the name of the law. And when we have these power encounters, that's what we're doing.

We are acting by the authority. We have vested in us in Jesus to speak some power against this demonic force. But there's another, I think the majority of real spiritual warfare, Paul talks about in Corinthians 10, the first few verses.

And that's a truth encounter. And that would make sense given that Satan is the father of lies and he holds the world captive to do his will by blinding their eyes to the truth, okay? So a lot of what we do at standard reason is spiritual warfare because we are proclaiming the truth in a persuasive fashion against the lies of the devil in their various forms, okay? Those are the two things. I can't imagine in the second case proclaiming the truth as falling in a category of some kind of sympathetic magic.

In the first case though, I'm just trying to divide it out here. If we're having a power encounter, how would what we are saying against the devil come out of him or binding him? I'm not entirely convinced that the binding of the devil is a legitimate Christian function. I know Jesus says, you've got to bind the strong man, but I think he did.

And when Jesus tells us how to pray, he says, he uses these words, deliver us from the evil. Lead us not into temptation, protect us from sin and deliver us from the evil. There's a definite article there.

No, some say deliver us from evil and translations. Some translate say deliver us from the evil one. When I pray it, I pray both directions to cover all the basis, but it's interesting that we are not directed to pray against the devil directly to speak against demonic forces.

There's no, I don't see any example of that in scripture. I see rather praying to the father to deliver us from the evil. And I think Jesus says something similar to this in John 17, the

high priestly prayer, keep them in the world, but deliver them from the evil one or something to that effect.

In any event, what I'm still trying to figure out is even in the spiritual battle area, what might be construed as sympathetic magic, acting out certain things and in the acting out these behaviors, they result in the consequence and reality of the behaviors. - I think Greg, there might be people practicing things out there that you're not aware of. And so - - That's true.

- If that's the case, I mean, Ethan might be seeing people doing certain rituals or things where maybe they're binding or they're losing or they're doing something in the world that's supposed to represent what they're doing at the devil. I'm just guessing here. - Sure, well, I'm not getting down on people who pray that way, okay? But I'm just saying I don't see the justification for it in the New Testament, okay? However, and Paul talks about praying in the end of the section in Ephesians 6, pray for me also, blah, blah, blah, on the section on spiritual warfare.

So prayer is an important part that's built in. But I just don't see how it's sympathetic magic unless what you're saying, you're praying that they be bound and then they're bound. But that's not sympathetic magic.

That's a request or a command that is given. Sympathetic magic would be, I'm binding my arms so that the demons would be bound, okay? When Agabist did this in the book of Acts, he was just using this as a picture of what would happen to Paul. He wasn't making it happen by binding his hands.

He said, just like I'm bound, you're gonna be bound, okay? It was a picture and the Old Testament prophets do the same thing. - Yeah, I just wrote that down. I was just gonna think of it.

- Yeah, and so they exemplified what God was going to do in a picture kind of form. But they didn't cause it to happen. I just realized, you know, what is that? Voodoo, when Voodoo, when you take a doll and you stick it with pins, that sympathetic magic, the doll represents the person, you stick it with pins.

And hopefully some bad thing happens to the person who the doll represents. That's another example of sympathetic magic. I don't see that character on it, pardon me, characterize it all in anything that I'm aware of that people are doing regarding spiritual warfare.

- I guess that would be the distinction. So if you are trying to evaluate what's how you're doing spiritual warfare, are you saying in this way God will remove you as the prophets did and Agabus did? Or are you saying, I am removing you by doing this thing in the world that's going to cause you to leave? - Yes. - Yeah, so-- - That's a good distinction.

- So I guess you could just look at it that way and see which of these things is happening in your situation. And basically remember, it's God who is doing the casting out or he's the one who's acting-- - Always. - You're requesting him to do it.

You are not manipulating spirits or manipulating God. And this is why Jesus said, this one doesn't come out except by prayer. We have to pray, we pray because God is the one who has the power to do this.

So I guess just maybe keep those things in mind and evaluate what you're seeing. - You know, Amy, I had another thought. I don't remember this broadcast to the earlier one, but we talked about the power of words.

And think about the book of Acts where the Jewish sons of the Sceva who are casting out, trying to cast out the demon, and they invoke Jesus' name and it doesn't work. Because what they said, I adore you, speaking to the demon by Jesus whom Paul preaches. And the demon said, I recognize Jesus and I know about Paul, but who are you? They're nobody because they weren't representing Christ, even though they were uttering his name.

And he beat them up and threw them out. I think there were seven of them. One demon possessed man beat up seven guys and threw them out naked and bleeding.

It's what the text said. So there's no magic in the word. There is only power in the person whose name we represent.

- Well, thank you, Connie and Ethan. We appreciate hearing from you. If you would like to give us a question, just go to Twitter and send us a tweet.

Just use the hashtag #STRask and I'll see it for sure. Don't worry, I promise you I'll see it. (laughing) Or you can go to our website.

So our website's at str.org, just go to our podcast page. We'll look for the hashtag #STRaskpodcast and you'll find a link there. Just click on that link and it'll take you directly to where you can send us a question.

The only thing we ask is that you keep it the size of a tweet and that's just one or two sentences. Just keep it short if it's any longer. Sometimes I cut things out, but sometimes I just say, that's just too long.

So if you wanna make sure we consider it, make sure it's short. But we always appreciate hearing from you. So if you've got a question, send that on in.

Well, this is Amy Hall and Greg Cockel for Stand to Reason. Thanks for listening. (bell dings)

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