

When I was a teacher and a kid acted up in class to the point of removal, I learned that if I didn't write the office referral correctly, that kid would be right back in my classroom in 15 minutes. The principal explained that he needed to know specifics: exactly what did you see, what did you hear, who touched who, etc. It was clear that if it wasn't important enough to spend the time writing up the specifics, I wasn't going to get much of a response from the Office.

Often our prayers are like that. We just blab out a bunch of non-specific wants assuming that since God knows what we want, He'll be glad to fill in the blanks.

I was once called to the hospital to visit one of the older members of my church. She looked fine and even mentioned that she might get to go home later that day. I prayed what I thought was pretty good prayer and finished by saying, "and Lord, I want you to completely heal her, in Jesus' name." Two hours later she was dead.

Unwittingly, I had spoken a "Silver Bullet" prayer, one that tries to quickly cover everything. So, of course, the Boss and I had a little chat later.

I said, "What gives here, Lord? I asked that you heal her."

"Define healing," was His response.

"Well, free from disease and pain."

"And what disease is she suffering from right now? He asked.

"Well, none. But that's not what I meant, and You know it."

"Well then, ask for exactly what you mean. If I have to fill in all the blanks, then I get to do it any way that makes my job easier. There were other factors in taking her than just your silver bullet prayer, but you provided a handy "blank agreement form" (where 2 or 3 are gathered...) that sealed the deal."

Now when someone asks for prayer about health concerns, I only pray in specifics like, "walk again without pain, be able to physically take care of her family, return her to her place singing in the choir, hear him give glad testimony of your healing grace in church soon," etc. Specifics: what do you want to see God do? What do you want to hear from the person being prayed for? What exact changes do you want to see in the person or situation you are praying about?

Please don't think God is going to be angry because it seems like you're trying to pin Him down; it's more likely He'll be upset because you tried to slip a lazy prayer past Him. If it's worth praying for, it's worth being specific.