

## GETTING ANSWER TO MY PRAYERS

Sermon Series: Seek—Pray—Turn

Next Steps Devotional Guide

June 13, 2021

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1. When have you prayed and you feel God did not answer? Have you ever prayed for something, got it and then regretted it? if so, what and why?
2. God often delays in answering our prayers — not because He is uncaring, or impotent or lacks compassion, but because He knows the best time that prayer should be answered. Read Luke 1:11-17 from your sermon notes under point #1 under the heading, *“Five attitudes that help to get God to answer your prayers.”*
  - a. Zechariah over the years had become a skeptic about praying for a son. In fact, the Bible suggests he went through the motions of prayer but only as a formality. Are there prayers you no longer pray to God? Why?
  - b. Read Luke 1:18 from your sermon notes again. Zechariah is a priest in the Temple. What does his question say to you as a priest?
  - c. As a result of Zechariah’s response to the angel, the Bible tells us this in Luke 1:19-20, *“Then the angel said, ‘I am Gabriel! I stand in the very presence of God. It was He who sent me to bring you this good news! <sup>20</sup>But now, since you didn’t believe what I said, you will be silent and unable to speak until the child is born. For my words will certainly be fulfilled at the proper time’”* (NLT). It will be another 5 months before John the Baptizer is born as the son to Zechariah and Elizabeth. So, for the next 5 months, Zechariah has to live his life as a mute. What does this say to you about how God views us when we pray and He answers?
  - d. In Luke 1:13, The word translated as “heard” in verse 13 is the Greek New Testament word [εἰσηκούσθη, eisekousthen]. The tense of the word “heard” literally means it’s had already been answered. It happened a long time ago. The point is: prayer is instant and in God’s reality, He has already answered it even in our reality there is a delay. How patient are you in waiting for God to answer?
  - e. God uses prayer as a way to grow our character, not give us more and more comforts. Read Habakkuk 1:2 from your sermon notes under point #1 under the heading, *“Five attitudes that help to get God to answer your prayers.”* When have you felt like Habakkuk and why?
  - f. Read Jesus’ words from Mark 11:24 from your sermon notes under point #1, under the heading, *“Five attitudes that help to get God to answer your prayers.”* Do you think Jesus is giving us a blank check? If not, why?
  - g. We are to pray about something until we get the answer or we get assurance an answer is coming or we learn that what we praying is against God’s will. Obviously, the first one is easy to know — you get an answer. How would you know about the last two — keep praying until you get assurance an answer is coming and if you are praying for something that is against God’s will?
3. In Isaiah 55:8 from your sermon notes under point #2 under the heading, *“Five attitudes that help to get God to answer your prayers.”* Have you ever had God answer a prayer in a way that was different from what you expected? Explain.
4. Read Ephesians 3:20 from your sermon notes under point #2 under the heading, *“Five attitudes that help to get God to answer your prayers.”* Our problem in prayer is that we do not dream big enough. We do not pray big enough. We do not think big enough. We aim far too low and we want God to answer quickly. Take a moment and evaluate your prayer life. How BIG are your prayers?
5. Jim Elliot, who was martyred for his faith as a missionary by the Auca Indians on January 8, 1956. He said this, *“God always gives His best to those who leave the choice to Him.”*<sup>1</sup> How challenging is for you to do this in your prayer life with God?
6. Read again Luke 1:18 from your sermon notes under point #3 under the heading, *“Five attitudes that help to get God to answer your prayers.”* God loves impossible scenarios: ex. giving a son to 100-year-old Abraham and his 90-year-old wife Sarah; parting Red Seas; bringing down the wall of Jericho; slaying a giant, and raising people from the dead such as Lazarus. Why do you think God at times answers these kind of prayers?
7. Twice Abraham takes matters into his own hands when it came to having a son. In Genesis 15 he tried to adopt his servant Eliezer as a son when he is around 80-years-old and God stopped him. Then when he is around 85-years-old, he has sexual relationship with Sarah’s servant, Hagar (with Sarah’s encouragement), and he has a son he names Ishmael. Ishmael becomes the father of the Arab people and for the last 4,000 years there as been enmity between Jews (descendants of Isaac) and Ishmael. When have you become impatient waiting on God to answer and you took matters into your own hands? What were the results? What did you learn from this?
8. Read Genesis 18:10 and Romans 4:20 from your sermon notes under point #3 under the heading, *“Five attitudes that help to get God to answer your prayers.”* Why do you think Abraham stammered?
9. A lot of times we we are praying for an answer to a prayer, God allows things to get worse before they get better such as a marriage or finances. Have you experienced this? Why do you think God does this?
10. The story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead in John 11 is one of the most famous stories in the Bible.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/386936-god-always-gives-his-best-to-those-who-leave-the>.

- a. These three siblings — Lazarus, Mary and Martha — were extremely close friends to Jesus, something the two sisters remind Jesus when they send word for Jesus to come and heal their brother and “Your (Jesus) dear friend” (John 11:3). Why do you think they emphasized “Your dear friend”?
  - b. Jesus said this to His disciples in *John 15:15*, “I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn’t confide in his slaves. Now you are My friends, since I have told you everything the Father told Me” (NLT). Do you see yourself as “God’s friend?” Explain.
  - c. Proverbs 18:24 says, “There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother” (NIV). If God is our friend, why do you think He does not always answer our prayers the way we want?
  - d. Question: Which is greater: The gap between our kids understanding and yours ... or the gap between our understanding and God’s? Have you ever been mad at God for not answering your prayers they way you asked?
  - e. Read John 11:14b-15, 17 from your sermon notes under point #4 under the heading, “Five attitudes that help to get God to answer your prayers.” Jesus, who was just around the corner so to speak, intentionally delayed in coming to heal Lazarus. He intentionally waited until Lazarus had been dead 4 days. If you had a friend who was at death’s door, what would you have done? Why? What do you feel about what Jesus did? Why?
  - f. Jesus wanted God to get the glory for something bigger than just healing a sick Lazarus. When we do not allow God to get the glory — meaning — we give some rational explanation for our answered prayer or we take any, even the slightest credit for our part, it can cause three things. Below, how have you seen this happen either in your own life or the lives of others:
    - (i) Immobilizing stress —
    - (ii) Suffocating hopelessness —
    - (iii) Personalized anger —
11. Read John 11:21-24 and John 11:32 from your sermon notes under doing #4 under the heading, “Five attitudes that help to get God to answer your prayers.” Both Mary and Martha blame Jesus for the death of their brother. Have you ever been angry with God? Why do you think they did this?
  12. It is so easy to praise God when everything is great in your life, but how quick are you to praise God when He delays in answering your prayers? What are you angry with God today? What do you blame God for in your life?
    - a. Read John 11:34-39 from your sermon notes under point #4 under the heading, “Five attitudes that help to get God to answer your prayers.” Jesus’ weeping is connected to His anger. Not only are Mary and Martha angry with Jesus, Jesus is angry with them and everyone else? Why?
    - b. In Jesus’ day, Jews held a belief that if someone died, if you could get a prophet or a priest to them within 3 days, it was possible for that prophet or priest to bring them back from the dead. But beginning the fourth day, it would be impossible. When Lazarus reached day four of being dead, their faith and hope died in Jesus. You know you have lost your faith and hope in God when you blame Him for what He hasn’t done for you. When you grip. When you complain. When you worry. When you get anxious. When you quit coming to church—quit reading your Bible — quit serving. You’re angry with God. You’re blaming Him for something you expected Him to have prevented. What stinks, smells bad, in your own life?
    - c. Read John 11:40-44 from your sermon notes under point #4 under the heading, “Five attitudes that help to get God to answer your prayers.” Now go back and read John 11:4 again from your sermon notes. Which gives God the most glory? Raising the dead or curing a sick person? God always does it in a way that gives Him the most glory. If you want God to answer your prayers, you must be willing to let Him get all the glory from it. You can’t take any credit for it. Have you ever taken credit for something God did? Why?
  13. God’s purpose will always be bigger than your plans. Read Mark 5:21-43 from your Bible about Jarius, a synagogue leader, his 12-year-old daughter and a woman who has been battling a health issue for 12 years.
    - a. A 12-year-old girl is sick and there is a woman who has been hemorrhaging for 12 years. In route to heal the girl, Jesus gets delayed by this woman, who attempts to get healed without interrupting Jesus by simply touching His robe. She gets healed, but Jesus stops and makes a point of what has happened. Why did Jesus draw attention to this?
    - b. Meanwhile back at the ranch the 12-year-old girl dies due to this delay. Had you been the father, how would you have felt? Why is it important that while you are waiting on God to answer your prayer, keep your eyes open to see God’s power and answered prayers in others?
    - c. Take time to read the story of Joseph in Genesis chapters 37-50. When you are waiting for an answer from God, many times things can get worse. In the case of Joseph, it this was true for 13 years starting at age 17. He will not become Prime Minister over Egypt until he is 30 years old. Why do you think God allowed this any how does this apply to your life?
  14. Read Romans 1:7, 10, 15, Romans 15:20, 24, Acts 28:16 and Philippians 1:13 from your sermon notes under point #5 under the heading, *Five attitudes that help to get God to answer your prayers.*
    - a. Paul used his imprisonment to witness and to write letters to churches. This was not his plan, but it was God’s bigger purpose. How could you use your “imprisonment” — whatever it is — that unanswered prayer as a pulpit for Jesus Christ?
    - b. Read you last fill-in which has 4 blanks you filled. Can you connect any of these 4 with any of your prayers? How? What does this reveal to you?