

wrestling with
doubt,
finding
faith

SERMON NOTES

Week 4 January 28, 2024

"When Prayers Go Unanswered"

Matthew 7:7-8, 18:19, 21:21-22; John 15:7;
2 Corinthians 12:7-10; James 2:14-17;
1 Thessalonians 5:11



I. Introduction

A. One of the most challenging questions of faith, is the question of unanswered _____.

B. What makes unanswered prayers worse is that some people tell us their prayers were answered for seemingly _____ things.

II. Jesus on Prayer

A. Jesus says things that seem to indicate that if we _____ then we will get what we want.

B. Jesus often spoke using a figure of speech called _____.

C. Throughout the scriptures, we find that people who have _____ faith ask for things and they don't get it (the psalmist, Paul, Jesus).

III. Reasons for Unanswered Prayer

A. God does not give one person an _____ advantage in our prayers.

B. Our inability to see what the _____ holds.

C. God won't violate the _____ of other people.

IV. The Practice and Purpose of Prayer

A. 'Ora et Labora' means to _____ and pray.

B. Prayer _____ and comforts.

C. Prayer puts life in proper _____.

D. Prayer is how we enhance our _____ with God.

Things I Would Like to Remember About This Message



ASBURY DAILY STUDY GUIDE *Jan. 27 – Feb. 3, 2024*

INTRODUCTION

Heartfelt prayers for getting the job of your dreams, the spouse of your dreams, the healing of a sick loved one, or the reconciliation of a broken relationship does not always get answered the way we want. Or those prayers may not get answered at all. We all have experience with unanswered prayer. This may lead you to say “why bother with prayer, what’s the point anyway?” But what if there is something we don’t understand about the purpose of prayer?

Monday: Luke 22:39-46

Jesus encouraged his disciples to pray. Note the prayer focus he suggested to them. What temptations did the disciples face (and, mostly, give in to) in the hours that followed? In what ways can prayer strengthen you for your spiritual struggles?

Tuesday: 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

Paul did not blame God for his ailment but he did ask God three times to heal him. What good “case” can you imagine Paul, who often traveled on foot, making for God to give him full health? Did his constant physical struggle mean God didn’t care about him?

Wednesday: Luke 5:16; Mark 1:35; Matthew 14:23

In Matthew 6:8, Jesus voiced the reason for not praying that some of us give: “your Father knows what you need before you ask him.” But he went on, “This, then, is how you should pray” (and taught the Lord’s Prayer). If prayer isn’t to inform God of your needs, what purpose(s) does it serve? What do we miss when we don’t pray?

Thursday: Luke 18:1-8

Often Jesus’ parables taught by similarity: “God is like this familiar activity or thing.” In this story, he taught by contrast: “God is not like this unjust judge. If even a bad judge can be persuaded, imagine how much more God wants to listen to your prayers.” The real question, he said, is not about God, but us: “Will the Son of Man find faith on the earth?” How hard is it for you to have faith?

Friday: Philippians 4:4-7

Paul was a prisoner when he wrote this letter (Philippians 1:13-14). (Many scholars think he was in Rome (see 4:22). The passage in 1:20-26 shows his uncertainty. He might be freed—or executed.) This background shows that Paul’s words weren’t just religious “happy talk.” With every reason to be anxious, he wrote about rejoicing, prayer and peace. Can you rejoice under difficult circumstances? Why or why not?

MOVING FORWARD

Philip Yancey has written that “the simplest answer to the question ‘Why pray?’ is ‘because Jesus did.’”^{*} That should be reason enough, but there is a purpose to our prayers. Prayer encourages and comforts, prayer puts life in proper perspective, and prayer is how we enhance our relationship with God. And prayer should lead us to get off our knees and go do something to help fulfill that prayer. This week spend some time in prayer.

Answers to the sermon notes: IA) prayers, B) trivial. IIA) pray, B) hyperbole, C) deep.

IIIA) unfair, B) future, C) freedom. IVA) work, B) encourages, C) perspective, D) relationship.

^{*} Philip Yancey, *Prayer: Does It Make Any Difference?*. Zondervan, 2010., p. 78