

wrestling with
doubt,
finding
faith

**SMALL GROUP
STUDY GUIDE**

Week 4 January 28, 2024

“When Prayers Go Unanswered”



OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank you for loving us and wanting a personal relationship with us. Lord, take the painful things of the past and bring good from them. Lead us and guide us each day and help us to remember that you walk with us. Open our eyes to see how we can be the answer to someone else's prayer. Hold us Lord, and don't let me go. We pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Matthew 21:21-22 (NIV)

²¹Jesus replied, “Truly I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and it will be done. ²²If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.”

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 (NIV)

⁷or because of these surpassingly great revelations. Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. ⁸Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. ⁹But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. ¹⁰That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

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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?

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.

QUESTIONS

1. Do you ever ask or think the question “Why pray?” What are some reasons you would ask that question?
2. Read Matthew 21:21-22 (on page 1). Do you believe that God will answer ALL of your prayers if you just have enough faith? What do you think Jesus meant by this statement?
3. What do you think is the purpose of prayer? What do we miss when we don’t pray?
4. Do you think you can change God’s mind or a certain outcome with your prayers? Why or why not?
5. Has your faith ever been damaged because of an unanswered prayer?

FINAL APPLICATION

Make more time for prayer this week and see if it has a positive result in your life.

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