

Unanswered Prayers?

Today we come to the end of our requested sermon streak - 13, to be exact. Of course, that doesn't mean you can't ask anymore. I've really enjoyed your questions. They've been helpful to me, and I know others have benefited from them as well.

Today we're considering why some prayers may be (or seem to be) unanswered. Or, as this one sister put it, "blocked" prayers. They're not asking for a lesson on how to pray, and they appreciate the many answered prayers. Still, there are other requests they feel have not been answered.

When we hear this question, we're reminded how God seems to respond with a "Yes," "No," or "Not right now." This isn't a shallow answer, but it deserves more time than a quick one-liner. Prayer is so essential but can be misunderstood. I don't think I always know how to think of prayer. At times, the more I learn, the more I wonder how it all works (for whatever it's worth).

Let's keep this simple. We know God teaches that . . .

- Prayer without faith isn't effective ([James 1:5-8](#))
- No prayer will definitely result in no answer ([James 4:2](#))
- Prayer centered around worldly goods is a "no" ([James 4:3](#))

This isn't today's focus or struggle. We all understand these principles. Today's struggle centers around principles in passages such as [1 John 5:13-17](#).

- What if the prayers are spiritually focused, but things don't seem to be any better?

With that in mind, let's look at clear passages because they need to be our primary guide:

- Jesus gave an example: [Luke 11:1-4](#)
 - This isn't everything there is to know about prayer. It doesn't even include all one could mention in prayer.
 - However, it does teach us to praise God and seek His will. It doesn't neglect to mention our needs, and it ends with a focus on the spiritual need for God and forgiveness.
- Jesus encouraged prayer: [Luke 18:1-8](#)
 - Justice is a weighty matter to God (along with mercy and faithfulness - [Matthew 23:23](#)). He didn't want them to lose heart.
 - Yet, Jesus wasn't treated justly. Nor were His disciples. This is made clear in Hebrews 11 as well. See, this is where it gets tricky. It is not that Jesus' teaching isn't clear. It's that our expectation needs to be well-rounded and informed. It could be that justice comes in our lifetime or after we've passed. Was the request heard! Yes. Was it answered? Yes. Though you may say no because it didn't happen in your lifetime.
- Jesus prayed for other's fortitude: [Luke 22:31-34](#)
 - Jesus prayed for Peter and the other disciples ("you" in vs. 31 is plural, but singular in vs. 32).

- Yet, while Peter turned away, he didn't totally lose his faith. Judas did feel bad and returned the money but did not ultimately return like Peter.
- Was Jesus' prayer in vain? No, it was the right thing to do. However, free will comes into play. I'll admit, this is another one that has tripped me up. I know it's right to pray for others.

- **Accountability:**

- So, we're saying this: of course, it's God's will for us to grow in our faith. However, He doesn't force us to do so. Sometimes we don't see prayers answered as we desire because others won't repent. Sometimes we don't repent. "But isn't it God's will to others to be saved?" Of course. And Paul also prayed for spiritual growth for brethren ([Ephesians 3:14-19](#)).
- But what if you won't change?
- What if you pray for patience, but you reject the instruction of [Philippians 4:4-9](#)?
- So while God wants to hear from us and will answer our prayers according to His will, we must also live according to His will. Never think that God is saying no to someone's spiritual growth. It could be that we or our loved ones need to look in the mirror. It could be we're not making the change.