

Discussion Questions

January 11, 2026



Expectant Faith - Mark 5:21-43 & Acts 12:1-19

In Week 2 of "Pressing In," we were challenged to move from spiritual hunger to Expectant Faith. It is possible to fast, pray, and be "around" Jesus yet remain spiritually passive. Using the story of the bleeding woman in Mark 5, we saw the difference between the crowd, who bumped into Jesus with casual proximity, and the woman who reached out with intentional, expectant faith. While the crowd pressed, only faith touched. The sermon also addressed the painful gap between our theology (believing God can) and our expectation (believing God wants to). We looked at the early church in Acts 12, who prayed earnestly for Peter's release but were shocked when God actually answered, proving we can have intensity without expectation. Ultimately, we were challenged to stop using "Your will be done" as a spiritual escape hatch to protect us from disappointment. Instead, we are invited to pray like laborers on a construction site - partnering with God's willingness and offering ourselves as the means by which His will is done.

1. The sermon asked a tough question: When you pray for something important (healing, a prodigal, a breakthrough), do you genuinely expect God to answer, or do you tend to "hope for the best but expect nothing"?

2. Read Mark 5:24-34. (The Woman with the Issue of Blood)

In a modern context, what does it look like to be part of the "crowd" (proximity without power) versus the woman (expectant touch)?

The sermon noted that the woman didn't just grab Jesus randomly; she reached for the "hem" (tassels), connecting to the prophecy in Malachi 4:2 about the Messiah having "healing in his wings." How does knowing she was standing on a Scriptural promise change how you view her faith?

Jesus stopped to ask, "Who touched me?" even though He was on an urgent mission. Why do you think He refused to let her be healed anonymously? What does this tell us about the relationship Jesus wants with us?

3. Read Acts 12:5-16. (Peter's Escape)

The church was praying "earnestly" for Peter, yet they didn't believe it when he showed up at the door. Have you ever prayed for something fervently but were shocked when God actually answered? Why is there often a disconnect between our prayers and our expectations?

What's encouraging about the fact that God answered their prayer anyway, despite their lack of expectation?

In this same chapter, the Apostle James is killed (v. 2) while Peter is rescued. How do we hold the tension between trusting God when He rescues and trusting Him when He sustains us through loss?

4. The Tension of Disappointment

James shared the story about praying for his father, and the story of Pete Greig's wife. How has past disappointment or unanswered prayer affected your current ability to pray with expectation?

We looked at the quote from Pete Greig: "Wrestling with the silence of unanswered prayer is not an act of unbelief but of defiant and deepening faith." How does "defiant faith" differ from "ignoring the pain"?

How does looking at Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane ("Let this cup pass" + "Not my will but yours") change how we view God's "No"?

5. The "Escape Hatch" of Surrender

In the sermon James said that we often use the phrase "Your will be done" or "if it is in your will" as a way to hedge our bets and protect ourselves from disappointment. Do you agree? How can you tell the difference between genuine surrender (like Jesus in Gethsemane) and just giving God an "out"?

6. Prayer as a Construction Site

Tyler Staton's metaphor describes prayer not as sending a wish list to Santa, but as working on a "construction site" with God. If prayer is partnership ("Your will be done through me"), how does that change the way you pray for the specific burdens you are carrying right now?

7. As the church prepares for corporate fasting, discuss how creating intentional hunger (e.g., from food, media) can foster expectation for breakthroughs like healings or prodigals returning. What "lane" of fasting feels right for you, and how will it position you to participate in God's work?

8. Identify one thing you've stopped praying for.

Is there a prayer you gave up on because it hurt too much to keep hoping? The challenge is to bring it back to the Lord - first with raw honesty, then with active surrender.

Group Action: If you are comfortable, name that thing so the group can agree with you in prayer.

9. Pray for someone else - in person.

The challenge was to stop saying "I'll pray for you" and start asking "Can I pray for you right now?" What holds you back from doing this? Fear of awkwardness? Fear nothing will happen? How can we practice this risk this week?

10. Prayer Practice: Break into pairs or small clusters. Instead of just saying "I'll pray for you this week," pray for one another right now in the room. Pray specifically for the area where they need to see God move.

Mark 5:24–29 (NLT)

24 Jesus went with him, and all the people followed, crowding around him. 25 A woman in the crowd had suffered for twelve years with constant bleeding. 26 She had suffered a great deal from many doctors, and over the years she had spent everything she had to pay them, but she had gotten no better. In fact, she had gotten worse. 27 She had heard about Jesus, so she came up behind him through the crowd and touched his robe. 28 For she thought to herself, "If I can just touch his robe, I will be healed." 29 Immediately the bleeding stopped, and she could feel in her body that she had been healed of her terrible condition.

There is often a massive gap between believing God can and believing God wants to.

Mark 5:23 (NLT)

"My little daughter is dying. Please come and lay your hands on her; heal her so she can live."

Mark 5:24 (NIV)

A large crowd followed and pressed around [Jesus].

Mark 5:25 (NLT)

A woman in the crowd had suffered for twelve years with constant bleeding.

Mark 5:26 (NLT)

She had suffered a great deal from many doctors, and over the years she had spent everything she had to pay them, but she had gotten no better. In fact, she had gotten worse.

Mark 5:27-28 (NLT)

She had heard about Jesus, so she came up behind him through the crowd and touched his robe. For she thought to herself, "If I can just touch his robe, I will be healed."

**Malachi 4:2 (NLT)**

The Sun of Righteousness will rise with healing in his wings.

Mark 5:29 (NLT)

Immediately the bleeding stopped, and she could feel in her body that she had been healed of her terrible condition.

Mark 5:30 (NLT)

Jesus realized at once that healing power had gone out from him, so he turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my robe?"

Mark 5:31 (NLT)

His disciples said to him, "Look at this crowd pressing around you. How can you ask, 'Who touched me?'"

St. Augustine (apx 415AD)

"The flesh presses, but faith touches."

"Caro premit, fides tangit."

Matthew 26:39 (NIV)

"My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me.

Luke 2:42 (CSB)

"..nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done."

Acts 12:5 (NLT)

But while Peter was in prison, the church prayed very earnestly for him.

Acts 12:15 (NLT)

"You're out of your mind!" they said. When she insisted, they decided, "It must be his angel."

Acts 12:16 (NLT)

Meanwhile, Peter continued knocking. When they finally opened the door and saw him, they were amazed

R.C. Sproul

"Here was astonishment born not of faith but of unbelief."

Pete Greig

"..wrestling with the silence of unanswered prayer is not an act of unbelief but of defiant and deepening faith."

Tyler Staton

Prayer is like a construction site. We are not sending off requests from a distance. We are laborers with God and we are partnering with him in what he is building.

Archbishop Trench (1846) - Notes on the Miracles of our Lord

"Prayer is not overcoming god's reluctance it is laying hold of his willingness."

2 Corinthians 1:20 (CSB)

For every one of God's promises is "Yes" in [Christ]

- 1. Identify one thing you've stopped praying for.**
- 2. Pray for someone else - in person.**
- 3. Prepare your heart for next week.**

