

Why Doesn't God Answer My Prayers?

Message 01 of 05 in the series: "Prayer 30"

A. Three reasons God doesn't answer our prayers:

1. We don't pray.

"You want what you don't have, so you scheme and kill to get it. You are jealous of what others have, but you can't get it, so you fight and wage war to take it away from them. Yet you don't have what you want because you don't ask God for it." James 4:2 (NLT)

Life Application: We need to pray.

"Then if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land."

2 Chronicles 7:14 (NLT)

2. We pray with wrong motives.

"And even when you ask, you don't get it because your motives are all wrong—you want only what will give you pleasure." James 4:3 (NLT)

"Two men went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, and the other was a despised tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed this prayer: 'I thank you, God, that I am not a sinner like everyone else. For I don't cheat, I don't sin, and I don't commit adultery. I'm certainly not like that tax collector! I fast twice a week, and I give you a tenth of my income.' But the tax collector stood at a distance and dared not even lift his eyes to heaven as he prayed. Instead, he beat his chest in sorrow, saying, 'O God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner.' I tell you, this sinner, not the Pharisee, returned home justified before God. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." Luke 18:10-14 (NLT)

Life Application: We need to ask God to show us our motives.

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life." Psalm 139:23-24 (NLT)

3. We give up.

"Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. You parents—if your children ask for a loaf of bread, do you give them a stone instead? Or if they ask for a fish, do you give them a snake? Of course not! So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him." Matthew 7:7-11 (NLT)

Life Application: We must trust God's timing, God's ways, and God's goodness.

"For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts, Nor *are* your ways My ways," says the LORD. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts." Isaiah 55:8-9 (NKJV)

B. Three things that will help us pray:

1. Scheduling time to pray every day

"Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: 'Everyone is looking for you!' Jesus replied, 'Let us go somewhere else--to the nearby villages--so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.'" Mark 1:35-38 (NIV)

"Listen to my voice in the morning, LORD. Each morning I bring my requests to you and wait expectantly." Psalm 5:3 (NLT)

2. Encouragement / help from others

"Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works." Hebrews 10:24 (NLT)

"Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed." Ecclesiastes 4:9 (NLT)

3. Understanding the benefits of prayer

- Prayer brings peace. “Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:6-7 (NLT)
- Prayer brings power. “So we keep on praying for you, asking our God to enable you to live a life worthy of his call. May he give you the power to accomplish all the good things your faith prompts you to do.” 2 Thessalonians 1:11 (NLT) “In the day when I cried out, You answered me, And made me bold with strength in my soul.” Psalm 138:3 (NKJV)
- Prayer brings people to Jesus. “And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ...” Colossians 4:3 (NIV) “The Spirit alone gives eternal life. Human effort accomplishes nothing.” John 6:63 (NLT)

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Connect Group Questions:

1. Who taught you how to pray?
2. How would you rate yourself on a scale of 1-10 with “1” being a person who almost never prays and “10” being someone who prays about everything? Where would you like to be?
3. Discuss James 4:2-3. What does James say about God not answering prayers? How does James’s perspective on prayer make you feel?
4. Read Matthew 7:7-11. Why do you think people often give up and quit praying when God doesn’t answer right away? Why doesn’t God send us explanations about what He’s doing?
5. Discuss the following three benefits of prayer. Which of them most encourages you? Why?
 - Prayer brings peace. (Philippians 4:6-7)
 - Prayer brings power. (Psalm 138:3, 2 Thessalonians 1:11)
 - Prayer brings people to Jesus. (Colossians 4:3, John 6:63)
6. Read Psalm 5:3 & Mark 1:35-38. In your opinion, how important is it to schedule daily times of Bible reading, prayer, and meditation? Why do you think many of us struggle to make time to pray?
7. Spend some time as a group praying for each other. What is your biggest concern/fear/obstacle?
8. Spend some time praying together for our church. Ask God to make Centerpoint a church filled with people who love to pray.

“Prayer succeeds when all else fails.” E.M. Bounds

“If the devil cannot make us bad, he will make us busy.” Corrie ten Boom