

Why God Delays in Answering our Prayers – Pt 2

Luke 18:1

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Introduction:

1. Last week: God desires to answer your prayers!
2. How many started a prayer journal? How many had answers to prayer?
3. Recite Luke 11:9-10 (Matt 7:7-8) together!
4. So, if God really wants to answer my prayers, then why are some of my prayers not being answered?
5. Jesus, who emphasized God's desire to answer our prayers, **ALSO implied** that there would be delays in receiving answers to some of our prayers!
6. **Luke 18:1 (NIV)** *Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. Why?*
7. **Delays are normal in prayer!** A 25 – year delay (Abraham & Sarah):
 - a. Abraham was 75 (Gen 12:4) and Sarah was 10 years younger or 65 (Gen 17:17) when God promised to give the land of Canaan to their descendants, though they still had no children! (Gen 12:6-7).
 - b. At age c. 80 God reiterated His covenant with Abraham, who reminded God that he and Sarah remained childless, and that Eliezer his servant would become his heir (Gen 15:2-3).
 - c. God replied that the promise wouldn't come through Eliezer but through a son born to him (Gen 15:4).
 - d. But 6 years later, Abraham (86) & Sarah (76) still hadn't received the son God promised. The promise had already been delayed 11 years!
 - e. They became impatient and took matters into their own hands.
 - f. They would fulfill God's promise in their own way.
 - g. Sarah gave her Egyptian servant, Hagar, to Abraham as a secondary wife, to produce a male heir for Abraham and Sarah (Gen 16:1-4).
 - h. Later that year, Ishmael was born (Gen 16:15-16).
 - i. 13 years later, God repeated His promise to give Abraham (99) and Sarah (89) a son, saying that nations and kings would come from him!
 - j. Abraham (Gen 17:17) & Sarah (18:11-12) laughed, because they were way past childbearing age, and **offered Ishmael instead** (Gen 17:8)!
 - k. But God said Sarah would give birth to a son, named Isaac (Gen 17:19)
 - l. Shortly thereafter, **three visitors** appeared and one (the Lord) predicted that Sarah would have a son the following year (Gen 18:10).
 - m. And just as God had promised, Abraham (100) and Sarah (90) had a son, whom they named Isaac (Gen 21:1-5).
8. **Answer delayed doesn't mean answer denied! ... unless God says, "NO!"**
9. **Tell someone near you right now! Tell yourself that right now!**
10. So then, why DOES God sometimes delay in answering our prayers?
11. I have compiled a list of **14 reasons for delay**. Because ...
 - a. God is changing our desires/motives to align with His.
 - b. God is waiting for us to listen for instructions.
 - c. God is waiting for us to forgive.
 - d. God is working out many circumstances – timing.
 - e. God is protecting us from trouble.
 - f. God is growing us in perseverance.
 - g. God is deepening our faith and trust in Him.
 - h. God is setting the stage to bring glory to Himself.
 - i. God is working out His Kingdom purposes
 - j. God is preparing your character for an important assignment.
 - k. God is waiting for us to repent of some sin (Jam 5:15-16)
 - l. There's an unseen spiritual battle taking place – Daniel.
 - m. There isn't sufficient prayer taking place – Moses.
 - n. There is sin in the camp – Achan.
12. **Usually/always there are multiple reasons why God delays in answering!**
13. We'll look at the first two today.

A. Because God is changing our desires/motives to align with His!

1. Do you recall the “in bounds prayer box” from last week (4 boundaries!)
2. **Answered prayers are inside that box! Why?**
3. **Because Jesus IS THE BOX!** If you remain in Him you get answered prayers!
4. **John 15:7 (NIV)** *IF you REMAIN IN ME and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you (answered prayers!).*
5. Why is it that if you remain in Him you always get answered prayers?
6. Because Jesus perfectly does ONLY what the Father's will is! Jesus said ...
7. **John 5:19 (NIV)** *Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do ONLY what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.*
8. So, if you remain in Him, you will ONLY do what the Son (Jesus) does, and thus ONLY pray what the Son prays or wants done.
9. How then, do we remain or abide in Him? Through an intimate relationship:
 - a. **Listening in prayer & obeying**
 - b. **Listening in His Word (meditation) & obeying**
10. There is NO relationship without being quiet before the Lord!
11. That's why the Lord says ...
12. **Psalm 46:10 (NIV)** *Be still, and know that I am God*
13. When we're quiet, the HS always reveals to us the Father's will and desires.
14. In HIM, we receive His DESIRES and His ABILITY to do His will!
15. **Philippians 2:13 (NIV)** *... it is God who works in you to will (desire) and to act (ability) in order to fulfill his good purpose.*
16. When you have His desire, ask away, and you'll receive whatever you ask!
17. **This is what happened with Hannah, the mother of Samuel:**
 - a. **Elkanah** had two wives: Hannah and Peninnah
 - b. **Peninnah** had sons and daughters (1 Sam 1:2, 4), but **Hannah** had none (1:2), because the Lord had closed up her womb (1:6).
 - c. Each year Elkanah and his two wives and children would go up to worship and sacrifice at Shiloh. Here's what happened one year.
 - d. **1 Samuel 1:10–11 (NIV)** *In her deep anguish **Hannah** prayed to the **Lord**, weeping bitterly.* ¹¹*And she made a vow, saying, “**LORD** Almighty, if you will only look on your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the **Lord** for all the days of his life*
 - e. As she prayed, Eli, the priest, thought she was drunk, but she said ...
 - f. **1 Samuel 1:16 (NIV)** *Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief.*
 - g. When Elkanah and his wives returned home, Hannah conceived!
 - h. **1 Samuel 1:19–20 (NIV)** *Elkanah made love to his wife **Hannah**, and the **Lord** remembered her.* ²⁰*So in the course of time **Hannah** became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him **Samuel**, saying, “Because I asked the **Lord** for him” (meaning of the name).*
 - i. The next year, Hannah did not go up to Shiloh with the family.
 - j. Instead, she told Elkanah that once Samuel was weaned (c. 3 yrs old) she would go up to Shiloh and present him to the Lord, where he would live and serve the Lord from that time onward. (1:21-22).
 - k. And she did exactly that!
 - l. **1 Samuel 1:24–28 (NIV)** *After he was weaned, she took the boy with her, young as he was ... and brought him to the house of the **Lord** at Shiloh.* ²⁵ ... *they brought the boy to Eli,* ²⁶ *and she said to him, “Pardon me, my lord. As surely as you live, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the **Lord**.* ²⁷ *I prayed for this child, and the **Lord** has granted me what I asked of him.* ²⁸ *So now I give him to the **Lord**. For his whole life he will be given over to the **Lord**.*”
18. Can you imagine that?! How was Hannah able to do that?!
19. In the years of delay, **Hannah agonized in prayer**. As she did, the Lord gave her the **idea**, the **DESIRE**, and then the **ability** to give Samuel back to Him!
20. And Samuel became one of the most significant figures in Israel's history!
21. When you pray, **COMMIT yourself wholly to God!** Surrender your life to Him, telling Him you'll do whatever He asks of you! That's what Hannah did.
22. Flying example:
 - a. By age 23 (1977) – I had earned a multi-engine commercial licence

- b. I had sent out 350 application letters across Canada – **twice!** There was nothing in the world I wanted to do more than to fly.
- c. I prayed, but no one would hire me, and God didn't answer!
- d. One Friday evening, we attended a presentation at our church in Calgary, by a seminary group, where the Lord convicted me to commit myself fully to Him, for whatever He wanted.
- e. After the service, Fran and I drove to the Calgary International Airport, and there I told her that flying had become my idol, and that I had given my flying to God, and that I was willing never to fly again!
- f. She was shocked, because flying had consumed me up to that point!
- g. But in the delay, I heard His voice, I surrendered to Him, and He changed my desire. I wanted to put Him first more than anything.
- h. If that meant that I would fly, GREAT! If NOT, then that was GREAT too!
- i. Just 5 DAYS later, I was coming home on the bus from my office job in downtown Calgary (oil company). As the bus got to my stop, I saw Fran running toward the bus stop. Something was up!
- j. When I got off, she excitedly told me that someone had called from Ontario asking if I still wanted to fly! TWO DAYS later we drove out of Calgary to take the job, and we never returned!

23. I know what you might be thinking: Surrender yourself, and then you'll get what you wanted. Is that what happened to Hannah? NO!!

24. She got a son, alright. But then had to give Him to the Lord only 3 yrs later!

25. **And me?** I got to fly commercially for the next 3 ½ years, and then the Lord called me to leave my career and give my life to FT vocational ministry!

26. **What desire have you placed above God? That is your IDOL!**

27. **PRAYER OF SURRENDER & COMMITMENT.**

B. Because He's waiting for us to listen and do our part

- 1. Scripture says that we are called to be co-workers with God!
- 2. **1 Corinthians 3:9 (BSB)** For we are God's fellow workers (co-workers)
- 3. **Mark 16:20 (NIV)** Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.
- 4. Why am I emphasizing this? In most cases when we pray, God has a role for us to play in receiving an answer to our prayers!
- 5. **Scripture teaches this very thing!**
- 6. **Matthew 4:1-3 (ESV)** Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³ And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread."
- 7. **The HOLY SPIRIT led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted.**
- 8. That means it was the Father's will, for Jesus taught that the Spirit only speaks what He hears from the Father (John 16:13)!
- 9. After fasting for 40 days, the **Tempter was let loose to tempt Jesus:** "If you are the Son of God, command the stones to become loaves of bread."
- 10. Why would commanding stones to become bread be called a temptation?!
- 11. Is it sinful to turn stones into bread? Is there a command written somewhere which says, "Thou shalt not turn stones into bread?" NO!!!
- 12. So, how can it be called a temptation if there is no law against it?
- 13. We'll discover the answer in Jesus' response!
- 14. **Matthew 4:4 (ESV)** It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'
- 15. **1st phrase: "every word"**
 - a. We already agreed that there is no written word or law in Scripture against turning stones into bread.
 - b. That means that there must also be a spoken Word from God that isn't necessarily written down, that we must also hear and follow!
 - c. This is the spoken Word communicated by the Spirit!
- 16. **2nd phrase: "that comes"**
 - a. It is in the present indicative – trans. "that is continually coming"
 - b. The written Word is settled in heaven once for all!

- c. But the spoken Word of the Spirit continues to be spoken to each of us
- d. Through this He guides and directs us!
- e. Jesus was saying that the Spirit, in submission to the will of the Father, leads us day by day, and we need to live by what He says to us!
- f. In this case, the Father evidently did not want Him to be eating – the Spirit had led Him to fast instead!
- g. For this reason, He couldn't turn the stones into bread!

17. Jesus chose His disciples that way

- a. Luke 6:12–13 (NIV) One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. ¹³When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles
- b. Nowhere in the OT did it tell Jesus who His disciples should be!

18. Paul's missionary journeys were led by the Spirit

- a. Acts 16:6–10 (NIV) Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. ⁷When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. ⁸So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. ⁹During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” ¹⁰After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.
- b. This event occurred on **Paul's 2nd missionary journey in c. 50 AD.**
- c. Nowhere does it say, “Thou shalt not preach the word in the province of Asia!”
- d. In fact, 3 or so years later, on his 3rd missionary journey, Paul ministered extensively in the Province of Asia!
- e. But at the time Paul came through on the 2nd missionary journey, the Spirit wanted the Gospel to go from Asia to Philippi in EUROPE!!!

19. This is a critical point that much of the Western Church has missed!

20. They always say that Jesus is saying we should be living by what the written Word says. TRUE! We should do that!

21. **But here's the thing:** the written Word tells us that we should also be living by what God is continually speaking to us personally by His Spirit.

22. And that may not be found in God's written Word – though it won't contradict it!

23. This is very practical! You're praying through your Prayer & Fasting cards

24. But you must listen to what the Spirit is saying about each one!

25. The HS wants to show you the solution or the steps you are to take to participate in your prayer request – but are you intentionally listening?

26. **Example: Empower Ministers Retreat**

- a. We launched the Set Free! Retreat in February 2005.
- b. After a Set Free! in early 2006, one of the participants asked me, “Now I'm cleaned up; what's next?”
- c. The thought came to me that we needed to fill the cleaned-up spaces with the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit. I couldn't shake it.
- d. **May 15–18, 2006** Fran & I were attending a conference in Colorado Springs. On Friday morning I got up early and drove off to pray.
- e. The Lord gave me 3 key directives for what I was to do next at SC.
- f. One, was that I was to write up a retreat on the Holy Spirit and gifts by the end of the year, so that we could launch it in the new year of 2007.
- g. I didn't have a clue where to begin, and when Fall arrived, I was so busy, that I didn't know what I was going to do.
- h. Meanwhile, I had been reading a book that a member had placed on my desk called, “The Nearly Perfect Crime,” by **Francis MacNutt**, a Ph D scholar, who believed in healing.
- i. Because Fran was going through a string of neurosurgeries at the time, I sensed we should attend one of his conferences, **Oct 8–17, 2006**.
- j. But it wasn't a conference just on healing, as we had thought.
- k. They had practicums on the resting of the Spirit, healing, and prophecy.
- l. When we returned, I had only 2 mos. left to write the retreat the Lord had instructed me to have ready for the new year.
- m. In prayer the Holy Spirit showed me that I should incorporate things I had learned at the conference!
- n. I then completed the retreat in time for the beginning of 2007, when I conducted the first Empower Ministers retreat, Jan 19–21, 2007!

27. From the time that I began to pray about what should follow the Set Free! Retreat until I had written the Empower Ministers Retreat, was 10 months!
28. There were **5+ STEP ANSWERS** that I recorded for that one prayer!
 - a. First, I had the idea in prayer that we needed something about the Holy Spirit and His gifts.
 - b. Then, I had the idea that there should be a retreat to compliment the Set Free! Retreat, and that I should write it by the end of 2006.
 - c. Next, someone placed a book by Dr. Francis MacNutt on my desk.
 - d. When I read it, I had the idea that he might have a conference.
 - e. Oct 8-17, 2006 we attended the conference, and that became a bit of a template for writing a retreat.
29. And today that retreat and Set Free! are being conducted around the world.
30. **EMPOWER MINISTERS RETREAT: Feb 6-7 (4 weeks to go!) SIGN UP!**
31. **James 1:5 (NIV)** *If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.*
32. **Two ways the HS will tell you what to do or not do:**
 - a. Listening prayer – date with Fran @ Santa Lucia this past Friday.
 - b. Couple that with watching for answers in circumstances.
33. **Example** of teen rebellion and drive from Toronto to Montreal.
34. **If you are decisive, action-oriented, controlling** – you especially need to listen to see if God wants you to refrain from taking action.
35. **If you are a non-decisive person who shies from taking action** – you especially need to listen to see if God wants you to do something!

How to get more answers to prayer (place in your prayer journal):

1. Listen in prayer for direction – When you do the part He's waiting for you to do, there will be more answers.
2. Make a longer prayer list – the more you ask for, the more you will get!
3. Record step answers to prayer
4. Record answers for wisdom – James 1: If any of you lack wisdom ...
5. Record answers to corporate prayers –
6. Sixth way – next week's sermon

Weekly Challenge (take a picture):

1. **Place the following in your Prayer Journal:**
 - a. 14 Reasons Why God Delays in Answering Our Prayers
 - b. How to get more answers to prayer (6)
2. **Listen in prayer about each of your Prayer & Fasting prayer requests.**
 - a. Ask the Lord what He wants to say to you about each request.
 - b. Cell leaders – use your cell time to do it
3. **Attend Worship Night**
 - a. Wed, Jan 14 – 7-8:30 pm
 - b. Attend & invite someone to join you
4. **Memorize:** Luke 11:13; 18:1