

Unanswered Prayer

Purpose: To encourage people in prayer by understanding the misnomers of unanswered prayer.

Proposition: God answers prayer.

A lady wrote to a theologian,
“Why doesn’t the Lord answer the prayer of the saints, people real close to Him?”

A man tried prayer and it didn’t work for him. He concluded prayer was wishful thinking.

A Jewish man named Bill was losing \$10,000 a day on Wall Street. He said:
“I was praying and begging God to stop the slide of the stock market. Prayer did nothing for me, I lost everything.”

I asked God to save my son, but he was shot down in the war.”

“I have prayed all my married life for my husband, he still isn’t saved.”

Here are some reasons why prayers are unanswered:

- I. Praying for the wrong thing.
 - A. Mother of James and John asked Jesus if her boys could sit on either side of God. He did not grant that request (Matthew 20:20-23).
 1. She asked for the wrong thing.
 2. We have no right to ask God for honor, but rather for humility.
 - B. Jesus asked a man to follow Him
 1. The man said, "I'll follow right after I bury my father" (Luke 9:59-62).
 2. Jesus saw this as a prayer of excuse.
 3. The man's dad probably wasn't dead.
 - C. Martha asked Jesus to send Mary into the kitchen to help.
 1. Jesus told her she was troubled by the non-essentials.
 2. Many had chosen the most important thing in life—to be with Jesus.
 3. Martha's prayer was refused (Luke 10:40-42).
 - D. Peter wanted to build a monument on The Mount of Transfiguration (Mark 9:5).
 1. Peter had gotten all excited and did not know what to say, so he blurted out something.

2. In the heat of life we frantically pray whatever comes to our minds.
3. God does not answer because there is no sense in it.

II. Praying outside of God's will

- A. Jesus prayed such a prayer
 1. He asked not to go through the crucifixion.
 2. God did not answer that prayer.
 3. Jesus was not wrong to ask, but it wasn't in God's plan.
 4. Had God been able to achieve man's salvation other than through Christ's death, He would have.
 5. The rest of Jesus' prayer was answered, "Nevertheless, not my will, but your will be done" (Luke 22:42).
 6. When we echo Jesus' prayer we are saying we want the pure purpose of God to be accomplished in His own way.
 7. We are saying we will not deflect His wishes by adverse human purpose.
 8. We must submit to God's way.
- B. The Gadarene demoniac asked to accompany Jesus, but Jesus denied his request.
 1. Jesus' will was to evangelize the world.
 2. The demoniac was told to return and tell what God had done for him.

3. Our temptation is the same—to be close to Jesus and to godly people.
 - a. We hate to go to work among scoffers.
 - b. We would rather live among Christians.
4. That prayer is not selfish—it's natural, but not in God's plan for us.

III. God gives us what we need, not what we ask for.

- A. God sometimes denies the specific request in order to provide His best.

(Read Paul's prayer in II Cor. 12:7-10)

- B. He received a different answer from the one he expected.
- C. Paul could have been delivered, but he learned to rely upon the Lord for grace to live with his problem.
- E. God answered Paul's prayer by giving him strength rather than deliverance.
- F. God may get more honor and we may be a stronger Christian, if we face our difficulty rather than having it disappear.

Monica prayed her son Augustine would not to go to a certain wicked city. Augustine arrived at the city and was saved. That was really what Monica sought for.

- IV. When people's choice is involved
 - A. A new element enters the picture.
 - B. Prayer for others does accomplish impossible things.
 - C. Prayer for others makes possible the maximum influence on their souls, but they still have free choice.
 - D. They may say "No" to God.
 - E. Prayer puts the Holy Spirit to work in the mind of a person.
 - 1. S/he will recall sins
 - 2. S/he will feel guilt
 - 3. S/he will long for freedom
 - 4. S/he will desire peace
 - F. Prayer invites the Holy Spirit to work in the circumstances of life.
 - 1. People testify to God's grace.
 - 2. God's work becomes obvious to sinners.
 - 3. The difficulties of life may press us to the point where we want God.
 - G. Unanswered prayer for someone's salvation does not mean God is not working.
 - H. It means someone is resisting God's overtures.

- V. God is trying to tell us something.

“Every employment interview I have ends the same way. They either say, ‘We’ll call you,’ or ‘Sorry we have someone else.’ I have prayed and tried really hard to get things to work out. I went to high school and college. What’s wrong? I believe in God. Why doesn’t He answer my prayers and help me get a job?”

A. God tries to teach us about ourselves.

1. Are you trying for a job where you wouldn’t succeed?
2. God could be trying to tell you something about yourself.
3. He may want you to change your appearance, your conduct, your habits, your attitudes.

One place where prayer fails is in expecting God to do things for us which He can only do through us.

B. God wants us to change spiritually.

1. James 5:16, “The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”
2. The fervent prayer of the unrighteous accomplishes little.
 - a. A swearing people ask favors of God.
 - b. Lying people want God to help.
 - c. People who despise other people pray for God’s mercy.

#This is like hitting a fellow in the mouth and then asking to borrow \$10.00.

Conclusion:

1. Time delay
 - a. God doesn't give us what we want right away.
 - b. He wants to see if we love Him for His own sake or merely for things He gives us.
 - c. He is waiting for things to work out best, e.g. there may be two Christians involved. He has to take care of both of them.
2. God answers "No"

A little girl prayed for rain to stop so she could go out and play. Her brother teased her later, "See, God did not answer." "Yes He did, He said 'No'."

3. Continue to hold on in prayer
4. Release the object of your prayers to the Lord.
5. Express to Him your trust and confidence.
6. Pray with the footnote, "According to your will."

This I Know

I know not by what methods rare,
But this I know—God answers prayer.
I know that He has given His Word,

Which tells me prayer is always heard,
And will be answered, soon or late,
And so I pray and calmly wait.

I know not if the blessing sought
Will come in just the way I thought,
But leave my prayers with Him alone,
Whose will is wiser than my own—
Assured that He will grant my quest,
Or send some answer far more blest.