

I want to believe, but...
Why won't God answer my prayers?
Sermon Notes May 12th, 2019

Mark 11:23-24

²² "Have faith in God," Jesus answered. ²³ "Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them. ²⁴ Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

Mark 11:12-21

¹² The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. ¹³ Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. ¹⁴ Then he said to the tree, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard him say it.

¹⁵ On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple courts and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, ¹⁶ and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. ¹⁷ And as he taught them, he said, "Is it not written: 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it 'a den of robbers.'"

¹⁸ The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.

¹⁹ When evening came, Jesus and his disciples went out of the city.

²⁰ In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. ²¹ Peter remembered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!"

Fig Tree = Symbol of Israel's faith and fruitfulness

Micah 4:4, 7:1

Hosea 9:10

Isaiah 36:16

John 14:12-14

¹² Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

I don't know all the reasons why God didn't answer your prayer(s).

Why does God not answer some prayers?

1) Some prayers are self-serving.

Matthew 20:22

²² "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said to them. "Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?" "We can," they answered.

2) Sin

Isaiah 1:14-17

¹⁴ Your New Moon feasts and your appointed festivals I hate with all my being. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them.

¹⁵ When you spread out your hands in prayer, I hide my eyes from you; even when you offer many prayers, I am not listening.

Your hands are full of blood! ¹⁶ Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight; stop doing wrong.

¹⁷ Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed.

Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.

3) Contradictory prayers.

"Lincoln viewed the nation's trauma as a time to reflect on and confess sins, rather than to rouse his side to a haughty self righteousness. He said, "I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go." -Philip Yancey

4) Some prayers are unanswered and that is a blessing.

Bruce Almighty movie clip

What do we do with unanswered prayer?

1) We wait

Lamentations 3:25 ESV

²⁵ The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him.

2) We become stronger as we lean into Jesus and wrestle with Jesus.

2 Corinthians 12:7b-10

Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. ⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. ⁹ But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. ¹⁰ That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

3) We recognize that God is helping us with His Spirit.

John 14:16

¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—

Are you willing to trust Jesus in the dark places of your disappointment?

4) Remember, that prayer is a gift that God has given us and His ways are not our ways.

Isaiah 55:8-9

⁸ “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord.

⁹ “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Isaiah 55:10-11

¹⁰ As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, ¹¹ so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

5) We need to be the safe place for people to journey with Jesus. We need to love well for people struggling with unanswered prayers.

1 Corinthians 13:2

² If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.