

“Why Hasn’t God Answered my Prayer”

Text: Job 30:20

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Pray!

We’re in a series called, “Questions I’ve Wanted to Ask God”. This morning, we’re going to look at the third most asked question: “What hasn’t God answered my prayers?”

- That’s not a new question: Job asked it many years ago. Job 30:20 in the NIV, *“I cry out to you, O God, but you do not answer; I stand up but you merely look at me.”* The Good News Bible says, *“I call to you, O God, but you never answer; and when I pray, you pay no attention.”*

Have you ever felt like Job? **Why hasn’t God answered my prayer?** Prayer is a confusing mystery to many people. To some people, prayer is like a meaningless ritual.

- A seminary professor tells about the day his family got ready to pray at the meal. His son, a young boy, said, “Daddy, tonight can I be the one who talks to our plate?”
- Some people think of prayer as an Aladdin’s lamp. God is a genie up in the sky “Your wish is my command”.
- Some people think of prayer as a magic wand or a first aid kit to be used in case of emergency.

The fact is God wants to answer your prayer. Over and over Scripture uses phrases like “anytime, anywhere, everything.” Then what is the problem?

God answers prayer three ways. He says in Jeremiah, *“Call to me and I will answer you.”* Sometimes God says “Yes”. Sometimes He says “Wait”. Sometimes God says, “No”.

The fact is God doesn’t give us everything we ask for. The Bible is full of examples where God said “No” to people.

- Abraham said, “Make Ishmael the son of the promise.”
- Moses said, “I want to go into the Promised Land.”
- David said, “I want you to save the life of my son.”

In each of these God said “No” to their request. **Why does God say no?**

I. THREE REASONS WHY GOD SAYS “NO”.

1. God says “no” when He has a bigger perspective.

A. God can see the whole picture, we don’t. He can see the future and

can see things from a wider viewpoint than we do. Hebrews 4:13, *“He knows about everyone, everywhere. Everything about us is bare and wide open to the all-seeing eyes of our living God; nothing can be hidden from Him...”*

- B. Life is unpredictable. We can't predict the future. We can't predict the consequences of our choices. As a result we have a lot of problems. If you were like God and knew everything, that would solve most of your problems.
1. You'd never run out of gas, you'd never have car trouble on the freeway, you'd get A's on every test because you'd know what the questions would be in advance, you'd never be late to anything because you could always predict last minute interruptions. Life would be much simpler if we could see the future. But unfortunately we don't. God does see the future and He can predict the effects.
- C. Proverbs 2:8, *“God guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones.”*
1. Sometimes God says, “No” to protect us from unforeseen problems. He can see what it is going to do in your life.
 2. A good example of this is Paul in Acts 16. He tried to go to Asia Minor and God protected Paul by saying, “No”. Paul wasn't embarrassed by that fact; he just trusted God.
 3. There are times in my life that I am grateful that God said, “No” to my request.
 - Career planning opportunity & the Navigators
- D. God says “No” to protect us from unforeseen problems. He has a bigger perspective.

2. God says “No” when He has a better plan.

- A. Often God want to fulfill our desires but He want to do it in a different way than we have in mind. He has a better idea in His infinite wisdom. Isaiah 55:8-9, *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. My ways are higher than your way.”* Living Bible says, *“This plan of mine is not the way you would work it out.”*
1. Notice the plural of “ways”. My ways. Not My way. God has more than one way of doing things. He has many alternatives and options.
 - Example: I read a testimony this week of a couple that was praying to have a baby. God answered it by having them adopt a baby. They said, ‘If God had answered our prayer for natural kids, we wouldn't be the proud parents of the child God picked out for us before the beginning of time.’ God knew what He was doing.

- B. Our problem is that we get a preconceived idea: “God, do this and do it my way.” We not only want God to answer our deepest desire but we want Him to do it the way we’ve already planned out, because we think that is the most logical way. We tell God how to do it. And we always pick the least painful way of having God answer our requests.
 - 1. Daniel in the lion’s den. Daniel prayed, “Lord, keep me out of the lion’s den.” God said, “My plan is to put you in the lion’s den and shut the mouth of the lions.”
- C. Example: Irvington Church & Park Blvd.
- D. Biblical example: Paul’s desire to preach in Rome.
 - 1. God said, I’ve got a bigger perspective and a better plan to fulfill your desires.

3. God says “No” when He has a greater purpose.

- A. Isaiah 46:10, *“I (God) say My purpose will stand and I will do all that I please.”*
 - 1. God isn’t obligated to explain to us everything He does. He doesn’t have to check it out with us or need our approval. God may have a purpose that we may never understand this side of heaven. Everything God does in your life He has a purpose for it – including problems and including saying, “No” to some of your prayers. There’s a purpose in it.
- B. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, *“Therefore we do not lose heart ... For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal!”*
 - 1. Behind every problem there is a purpose. That purpose is an eternal purpose that you don’t even see right now. If you’ll get your eyes off the temporary situation and look behind it you’ll see the eternal purpose that God wants to do in your life. What Paul is saying is God says, *“I have a greater purpose. I’m going to say, “No” to your request because it involves the temporary and I’m going to say “No” because there is a greater purpose that is involved here and it involves the future.”*
 - 2. I think of Joni Erickson, the paraplegic. She has been an incredible blessing and encouragement to people. I’m sure she’s prayed that God would heal her. Yet God has said, “No”. Instead He has a greater purpose for her life.
- C. One of the marks of maturity and faith is the ability to accept a “No”. Immature people cannot accept a “No” for an answer. Ask your kids. As we grow, we learn to accept “No as a legitimate answer.
 - 1. Jesus had to learn what it meant to submit to God’s will. In the Garden of Gethsemane, right before the cross, Jesus prayed, *“Father, I don’t want to go to the cross. If it’s possible, let this cup pass from me. Let me not have to go through this*

suffering.” The Father said, *“No. I’m not going to spare you from the cross.”* God let Jesus Christ go to the cross because of a greater purpose – our salvation.

What do you need to remember when God says “No” to your prayers:

1. **Everything God does, He does out of love.** Romans 8:28, *“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love God.”* It’s working for good not bad.
 - Daughter & knife.
 - Psalm 25:10, *“All the ways of the Lord are loving and faithful.”*
2. **God always give us grace when He says “No”.**
 - Paul talks about his thorn in the flesh, his problem, his weakness. 2 Corinthians 12:7-9, *“Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But He said, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’”* Whenever God says, “No” to a request He always give you more power, more grace to do what is right.

How do we respond when God says “No”?

You can resist God.

You can resent God.

Or you can relax and rejoice knowing that God has your best interest at heart, that He loves you, that He has a bigger perspective, a better plan, a bigger purpose.

PRAYER

Father, thank You that You don’t always say “Yes”. Thank you that sometimes You say “No” or “Wait”. But I thank You that no matter what You say it’s always because You love us. Help us to trust in that fact. In Jesus’ name. Amen.