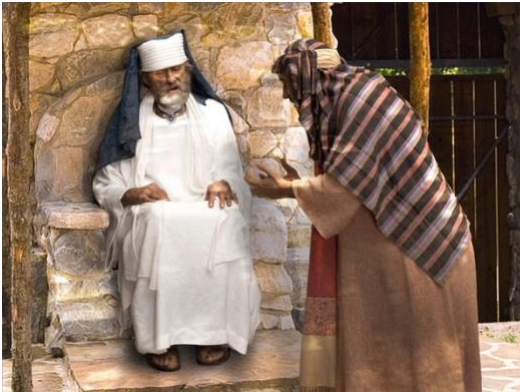


20191110 Luke 11:1-12 and Luke 18:1-8 DOES GOD ANSWER EVERY PRAYER?



DOES GOD ANSWER EVERY PRAYER?

Begin by reading: Luke 11:1-12 and Luke 18:1-8

There are two related parables found in the Gospel of Luke. One is called the Parable of the Persistent neighbor (Luke 11:1-12), and the other is called the Parable of the Persistent widow (Luke 18:1-8).

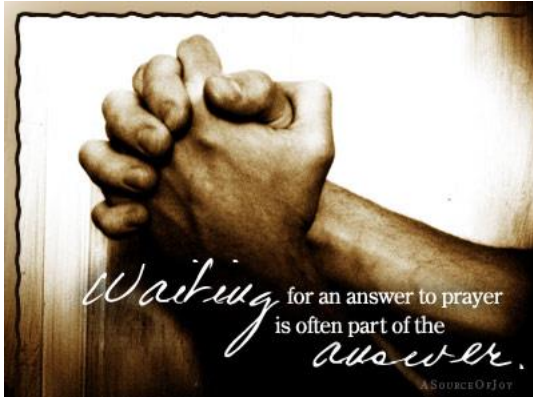
Remember that a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly message. It is easy to wrongfully read these parables and think that they are saying that if we really want God to answer our prayers then we need to pray to we wear God out or something like that. That is an improper interpretation of the two parables. The point of these parables is to pray about all things, to keep on praying about all things, and to never give up.

There are several kinds of parables and these parables are what we call "contrasting parables". They contrast the way that a loving heavenly Father answers our prayers not out of being worn down, but rather because He loves us and He wants the best for each of us. Both parables teach us that we should be persistent in prayer and we should not give up. We should be faithful in prayer. A true disciple of Jesus must learn that effective prayer requires tenacity and continued faithfulness in God. We must pray having a faithful expectation that the Lord hears our prayers and He will answer our prayers when, where, and how He chooses in a way that is for our own good.

Jesus presents a pertinent question at the end of the parables when He asks, "But when the Son of Man returns, how many will He find on the earth who have faith?" (Luke 18:8) The Apostle Paul tells us that our prayer life should be continual. He urges us to "pray without ceasing" and ALWAYS accompany our prayers with thanksgiving for everything. (1 Thess 5:16-18)

I have to remind myself to commit to praying every day. It's easy to forget to pray, especially when you're not in the midst of some crisis. My prayers have been sort of continually lately as my sisters and I wait for mother's transition to heaven. But regardless of whether we're in pain or a crisis, prayer should be a continual part of the life of a disciple.

Colossians 4:2 also tells us to keep on praying. Be persistent. Be alert while you pray. Always give thanks to God. We should be filled with gratitude for the past and hope for the future. I am trying to get beyond the things I want that I think would make me happy and to move on to the things God wants for me that will make me holy.



So, why doesn't God answer our prayers the first time we ask?

1. It keeps my attention focused on God.

When you give your attention to someone, you're telling them that they matter and they are important to you. God wants our attention. It is our affection. It is a way that we show Him that we love Him and have our trust placed in Him alone.

Psalm 25:15 "I always look to you, because you

rescue me from every trap. (Psalm 25:15 CEV)

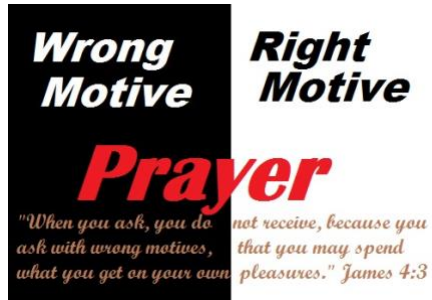
Psalm 105:4 "4 Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always. (Psalm 105:4 NIV)

2. Having to wait teaches me about myself. We learn all about ourselves while we're praying. We learn about God when we don't get what we want instantly. Some of my prayers have taken YEARS to be answered in God's way. [Like being called to be a pastor] As I pray, my heart gets changed in many ways. [give example of Alex] This time of waiting purifies us and tests us.

Zechariah 13:9a "9 Then I will purify them and put them to the test, just as gold and silver are purified and tested. (Zechariah 13:9a CEV)

Sherri Livengood recently sent me a story about how silver is pure when the refiner can see his reflection in it. God sees Himself in you when all the impurities are burned out of you. The impurities are burned out through trials and testings that we go through. I once heard a pastor/teacher say, "The prayers in the testing come before the blessing. God tests you with stress before He blesses you with success." It doesn't mean we always have to go through a test to have the blessings of God, but we often experience God's greatest blessings after we go through the most extreme tests.

We learn many things about ourselves waiting for prayers to be answered:



i. Waiting tests my desires - gets to the bottom of my motives. In waiting, I learn my real motives? Remember that God is all about motives. All of God's gifts are good. Any of God's gifts can be used and abused. There are good desires in your life and there are bad desires in your life. Each of us has good, bad, constructive, destructive, holy, unholy, desires that are at the bottom of what we ask God for. Waiting for answered prayer gives time for our motives

to be revealed. *Psalm 37:4 Take delight in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart.*

A close friend of mine was married to a spouse who abused him for many years. He recently separated, and yet he has been overcome with profound loneliness. He tells me that he had grown so comfortable with his abusive wife that he feared loneliness more than the abuse. Naturally, this has led him to pray for someone to come into his life that can know him, love him, care for him, etc. Loneliness is the symptom, but God may fill it in ways beyond what my friend can think of or imagine.

Are you looking for a wife, a husband, a job, better health, a changed situation? Perhaps you're just praying for a symptom to change, when God wants to change the real reasons that drive you to pray the prayers you pray. Are you willing to pray about it continually? Realize God may give you an answer to that prayer, but He may give it to you in a form you don't expect. If you begin to pray like this, you will begin to figure out why you're asking for what you think you need. I prayed desperately to keep my company and the security of my income from it, and the Lord gave me instead the true desires of my heart: a life in the country, a church to shepherd, and a host of friends who love me and would do anything in the world for me, and a sufficient income to do the work he has called me to do. Did God answer my prayer to give me back my company and the income from it? No, but He provided what I needed and desired in the deepest recesses of my heart.



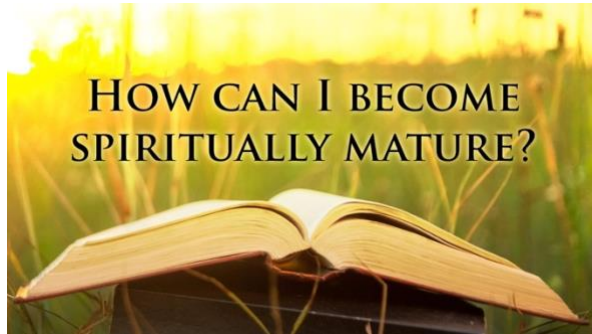
ii. Waiting for prayer to be answered clarifies our priorities. It pinpoints what's really important to us. This reveals areas where you and I need to grow. What's really important to you? What do you worry about most? That is what is your priority. But worry is acting like you don't have a heavenly Father who cares about you. Worry is ineffective. It is a waste of time. If it's worth worrying about it's worth praying about. Pray about EVERYTHING. Begin turning your worries into a prayer.

Matt 6:32-33 Jesus says that we should not be like unbelievers who worry about everything.

When my priorities are right, God's answer is YES. Your first concern should be to live for His kingdom. Are you waiting on God or is He waiting on you to get your priorities right?

Psalm 84:11 ¹¹ For the LORD God is our sun and our shield. He gives us grace and glory. The LORD will withhold no good thing from those who do what is right.

So, the question becomes am I doing what is right? Are your priorities out of wack? What are your priorities? Are you spending more time on Facebook than you are in the word? Get into the Word and come before the Father. Take delight in Him and surrender your prayers to His sovereign grace.



iii. Persistent praying while waiting tests my maturity. Waiting will test my character. Praying shows me the areas in which I need to grow. It teaches me to wait. Immaturity is when we are not able to wait.

This principle is lived out in our finances when we are unable to defer our gratification. Sandy and I learned early on in our marriage not to sacrifice tomorrow on the altar of today. We learned that by not giving in to our every desire to have things we were able to save, invest, and grow what we had then for enjoyment today. Maybe deferred gratification is a key element in answered prayer. When we pray and we wait, we are deferring the gratification of having that prayer answered until the time and the circumstances when God wants us to answer it.

I heard a preacher say "While we're whining God is working". That's sort of funny, but there's a lot of truth in it. I'm praying for this church daily that it would grow to the place to be a sustainable healthy congregation that will be a community of faith that wins this entire area to Christ. Right now, God is doing that by growing each of us who read or hear this sermon. I see spiritual maturity happening in almost everyone at Union Grove, so I think we're exactly where we need to be. Becoming spiritually mature is knowing the difference between a delay and a denial. God is not saying NO to my prayers for the health and growth of this church. He is saying that now is not His time for explosive growth in numbers. In fact, I may NEVER see it, but I believe it is coming.

There comes a time when parents leave their child alone in the room to go to sleep. I think sometimes it's that way with God. When He feels you're mature enough, He might let you go through a time when you feel you're alone. It will build your spiritual character. This is when you go from feeling to fact. Your feelings will tell you that He has left you and forsaken you. The facts are in the Bible. He has told you, "*I will never leave you or forsake you.*"

God withdrew from Hezekiah in order to test him and to see what was really in his heart. (2 Chronicles 32:31 NLT)

That's exactly what God often does for us. He leaves us alone for seasons to test what is in our hearts. What is in your heart? Are you running on faith or are you running on feelings? Start having the mind of Job who said, "*Even though He slay me yet will I love Him*" (Job 13:15 Author's paraphrase)

God often tests our hearts before great breakthroughs. He does this to make sure we're ready for the blessing. If He had shown me what I would be doing now and how it was all going to happen, I would have rushed God's blessing and ruined it. [Story about the Home Fellowship and Union Grove] If you're not mature enough to handle the blessing, the blessing could destroy you.

Feelings or Facts? WHAT WILL YOU STAND ON?

www.Thoughts-about-God.com

iv. Waiting on answers to prayer determines whether I trust my feelings or my Father? God will only give you what is good. He knows what you need more than you know what you need. He has a plan, a purpose, and a place for you. Are you willing to surrender to His plan and His purpose? God has GOOD plans for you. He has plans for you to have a future and a hope.

¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you," says the LORD. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. (Jeremiah 29:11 NLT)

You have to wait on God's timing. His timing is forever. Think about God's plans to bring me to becoming a pastor. Those plans took 30-40 years to happen from when it was first put into my heart. That is a LONG time. We just can't grow tired in waiting.

⁹ So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up. ¹⁰ Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone—especially to those in the family of faith. (Galatians 6:9-10 NLT)

In your persistence, God will change you. He is building your character. He is strengthening you. So if God really does answer EVERY PRAYER that we pray, how does He answer them?:

- 1 When my request is not right, His answer is **NO**. (He is good and He will only give you what is good for you).
- 2 When I am not right, His answer is **GROW**. (when I'm not ready to handle the responsibility He puts me through a time of growth).
- 3 When the timing's not right, God says **SLOW**. (We cannot rush the things of God)
- 4 When my request and the timing and the character are all lined up, God says **GO**.¹

¹ <https://pastorrick.com/four-ways-god-answers-your-prayers/>

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.