

UNANSWERED PRAYER

Ps 73



SYNOPSIS

What do you do when you pray, especially for the things Scripture promises, and are met with silence? P. Peter provided a few highlights from *God on Mute* by Pete Greig, answering the questions of why our prayers may not be working and what we can do about it. (Ask staff for a full copy of the appendix.)



OUTLINE

1

PRAYERS THAT HAVE NO COMMON SENSE

If you are praying in violation of common sense, ask yourself what you're expecting to happen. For example, if the fuel gauge on your car is near empty, the nearest gas station is 50 miles away, and you're praying for God to get you to that station, what do you expect to happen?

Suggestion: Consider praying in a different way or just doing something practical yourself. For example, you could pray that the first driver to offer you a ride is a safe person with whom you could strike up a meaningful conversation. Or, you could pull over and call an Uber or Triple A.

Note: If unanswered common sense prayers are causing you to have a faith crisis, you are invited to seek discipleship.

2

PRAYERS THAT CONTRADICT OTHER PRAYERS

There are ~8 billion people in the world. Desires and motivations behind prayers will inevitably contradict. A couple may pray for fair weather on their wedding day, but agricultural workers may pray for rain that same day. Whose prayer does God answer? God loves to have relationship with us, so we can feel free to ask for what we want, but we should also remember that our God loves the world. Our prayer life should lead us to a powerful submission to the sovereign wisdom of God. He is not a vending machine that bows to our whims. He is a loving God who knows what we need even before we utter it (Ps 139:4), and he loves to have relationship with us. Pray in relationship with him, and seek his sovereign wisdom.

3

PRAYERS FOR GOD'S BEST

The worship director who wrote Ps 73 struggled with envying the wicked and wondering if his pursuit of righteousness was worth it. His psalm gives us freedom to worship God in our frustrations. The psalm pivots in v. 21, which implies repeated visits to God's presence where the psalmist gains an eternal perspective. He is also reminded that God has always been with him. (vv. 21-24) God invites us into an intimate relationship with him, so he welcomes our emotions around prayer. However, simply dwelling in emotions is like being in a boat with no anchor, easily tossed back and forth by waves. We can sit in our emotions, but we should bring God's word into them with us. In God's presence, relationship with God is affirmed. He wants to give us himself more than he wants us to have what we ask for. (vv. 25-26)



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1

If you could have any kind of discipleship you desire related to prayer, how would you want to be discipled?

2

Have unanswered prayers caused you to stop praying? What keeps you from starting again?

3

What could you do to leverage prayer to submit yourself to God's sovereign wisdom?

4

Has your prayer life done more to affirm or to dilute your relationship with God? What is one way you could encourage affirmation?

5

What does it look like for you to repeatedly enter God's presence and gain eternal perspective from him?



BIG IDEA

Unanswered prayer understandably elicits an emotional response from us. Yet we must pray. Pray to seek relationship with the Lord and to enter his presence. Pray persistently and let your hope in him anchor you in the storm of emotions.

