

## CORE COMPETENCIES

### Core Beliefs

- Trinity
- Salvation by Grace
- Authority of Bible
- Personal God
- Identity in Christ
- Church
- Humanity
- Compassion
- Eternity
- Stewardship

### Core Practices

- Worship
- Prayer

**"I pray to God to know Him, to lay my requests before Him, and to find direction for my daily life."**

- Bible Study
- Single-Mindedness
- Biblical Community
- Spiritual Gifts
- Giving Away My Time
- Giving Away My Money
- Giving Away My Faith
- Giving Away My Life

### Core Virtues

- Love
- Joy
- Peace
- Patience
- Kindness/Goodness
- Faithfulness
- Gentleness
- Self-Control
- Hope
- Humility

One of the more troubling and at times frustrating aspects of our relationship with God is the issue of unanswered prayer. In moments of frustration or discouragement, we find ourselves wondering if prayer really changes anything or if we just can't seem to "do it right." Maybe we wonder if God is really even paying attention to us. If you've ever felt that way, you're in good company—including people like David and other authors of Scripture. But there are some reasons that God has given us for why some prayers aren't answered—or at least answered in the way we hoped they would be. I pray that as you explore these relevant passages of Scripture this week that God will give you not only insight but also greater confidence in Him—and cause you to desire to come to Him even more with the longings of your heart.

On the journey,

**Richard Gotthardt**, Pastor of Spiritual Formation

### Monday

Sit in silence for a few moments. Think of a time that you prayed and felt as if your prayers were not heard. What were you praying for? How long did you pray? How did you feel about your perceived lack of response to this prayer?

All of us will most likely experience a time in which we earnestly ask God for something and it seems as if our prayers aren't heard. This can be a disappointing experience and shake our faith in God as the One who hears and is near to us. However, just as God is near and responsive, He also knows far better than us what we need. At times we are not ready for the answer we seek; at other times we cannot see the answer because of our own sin or disbelief. This week we will look at four examples in scripture that demonstrate different reasons for unanswered prayers.

Many of the Psalmists expressed fear that God had not heard or would not answer their prayers.

Read Psalm 5.

Note the progression of the Psalmist's prayer:

*Vs. 1-3: Expresses desire for God to hear and respond to his prayer*

*4-6: Reaffirms the true character of God in relation to the situation he is facing*

*7-8: Expresses desire to enter into the Lord's presence*

*9-10: Brings specific need before God*

*11-12: Reaffirms the need for God's intervening protection and presence*

What is something you are currently praying for in which you feel that God is not listening?

Close your time in prayer. Use the progression of Psalm 5 to spend several minutes bringing your request before God.

### Tuesday

Begin your time in prayer this morning. Ask God to help you bring your unanswered prayers to Him and His Word.

Read Luke 18:1-8.

Jesus and his disciples are on the way to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. This is where Jesus will soon be arrested and crucified. This passage is among his teachings on his final journey to Jerusalem.

What was Jesus' purpose in telling this parable to His disciples?

What does this passage tell us about the judge?

What was the judge's reason for granting the widow's request?

What was required of the widow to continue to beseech the unjust judge? How might this experience have caused her to grow?

God's character is completely different than the judge's. He cares deeply about us and our needs! The widow believed that her request for justice was right and that the judge was the only one who could help her.

Examine your own unanswered requests. Does it line up with the truth of scripture? Do you have faith that God is the only One who can truly answer this prayer?

Close your time in prayer by continuing to bring your request before Him. Ask God to help you have faith that He can hear you and will answer in a way that is best.

### **Wednesday**

Begin your time today in prayer. Ask God to shape your desires for Him and His purposes in your life.

Read Psalm 66, reread vs. 17-19.

These verses are a song of praise focusing on God's ability to hear and answer our prayers.

What lesson or theme does each of these verses offer?

Psalm 66:17-

66:18-

66:19-

In prayer, ask God to examine your heart and show you any areas of sin. Sit in silence for a few minutes.

What areas of sin has God exposed in your life? Confess these to Him. Ask God to help you turn from these sinful patterns and follow Him.

### **Thursday**

Begin your time in silence. Are there any areas of sin that you need to confess?

Read James 4:1-3. James is an instructional book written to believers to help them know how to live godly lives. What issue is addressed in these verses?

What two reasons are given for why they have not received what they desire?

List some of the desires that you currently have? For things? Relationships? Circumstances?

Spend a few minutes in silence pondering each of these desires. Next to the desire, write what your motives are for this desire.

Close your time today by bringing each of these desires to God. Ask Him to give you right motives that will shape healthy desires. If you notice any desires that are spurred on by a sinful motive, confess this to God.

### **Friday**

Look back at the unanswered prayers you listed at the beginning of the week. Examine this unanswered prayer in light of the last three days in scripture.

*\*Have you continued to bring this request before God with faith that He is the only One who can answer?*

*\*Is there sin that you are holding onto that is keeping you from hearing from God?*

*\*Is your desire rooted in sinful motives?*

Ask God to continue to help you learn from His Word today.

Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10.

For what does Paul pray in these verses?

What was God's response to this prayer?

What was Paul's response to God's answer to his prayer?

Think of a time when you have prayed for something and God did not answer your prayer because His plan was different than your own. Looking back, how did you grow through this experience of unanswered prayer?

Think back on your unanswered prayer from the beginning of the week. How have you sensed God responding to you about this desire? How are you seeing yourself grow through this unanswered prayer?

Spend a few moments pondering God's answer to Paul's prayer and Paul's response to this answer.

God's answer: *"My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness."*

Paul's response: *"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."*

Close your time in prayer. Ask God to help you delight in waiting on Him in these areas of unanswered prayer. Ask Him to help you endure and hear His voice.

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## For Group Prayer

### **A Adoration**

**Leader:** You are the One—the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. You existed before there was anything else and You will never come to an end. You are from forever—our eternal King.

**People:** We worship You, our God. Your Kingdom is an eternal Kingdom and You will reign forever and ever. At Your feet we bow in awe and wonder, singing to You, the King of Kings.

*Pause to add your own prayers of adoration of God.*

### **C Confession**

**Leader:** We confess that we have sinned by often ignoring the needs and hurts of other people—those made in Your image. We have been too easily selfish and self-absorbed.

**People:** We have missed opportunities to love and to listen, to care and to show compassion. Though we have sinned, we claim Your mercy and Your forgiveness.

*Pause to express your own prayers of confession before God.*

### **T Thanksgiving**

**Leader:** You have done great things for us that fill us with joy. You pour out Your abundance on us—of food and drink, of shelter and shade, of clothes to wear and homes in which to live.

**People:** You have given us many great gifts and we say to You, "Father, thank you." You give us light and life, friendships and families, Your own presence with us and among us. You have been good to us indeed.

*Pause to express individual and specific prayers of thanksgiving to God.*

### **S Supplication**

**Leader:** We ask for your wisdom to guide us in each day and in each moment. You know the way we should turn and the paths we should take. Please help us to hear Your voice and to know Your ways,

**People:** We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on You. Help us to have discerning hearts and to be willing to follow Your direction. We need Your guidance, Lord.

*Express your own prayers of requests to God—be specific.*