



Why Do My Prayers Go Unanswered?

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*How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?
How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and
every day have sorrow in my heart?*

Psalm 13:1-2 (NIV)

*But if I go to the east, he is not there;
If I go to the west, I do not find him.
When he is at work in the north, I do not see him;
When he turns to the south, I catch no glimpse of him.*

Job 23:8-9 (NIV)

*Every day I call to you, my God, but you do not answer.
Every night you hear my voice, but I find no relief.*

Psalm 22:2 (NLT)

*...my foes taunt me,
saying to me all day long, "Where is your God?"*

Psalm 42:10 (NIV)

What Does Jesus Say About Prayer?

I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, ... you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done. ²² If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.

Matthew 21:21-22 (NIV)

Some Christians attempt to explain why your prayers go unanswered by blaming God's silence on you, saying:

- Your prayers are selfish and not pleasing to the Lord.
- You have unconfessed sin in your life.
- You are praying with impure motives.
- You don't have enough faith.

Question:

Could it be that we simply misunderstand what Jesus meant?

An overstatement or exaggeration to make a point.

Example #1: *If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away ... And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away.* Matthew 5:29-30 (NIV)

Point: Jesus is saying that sin is serious. Do what you can to avoid it.

Example #2: *It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.* Mark 10:25 (NIV)

Point: Hoarding your wealth, failing to give back to God, and believing that all your security is found in money can have a devastating impact on your soul.

Example #3: *I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.* Matthew 5:28 (NIV)

Point: Jesus is shaking us out of thinking that the thoughts of our hearts don't matter. Lust is wrong, and you should think of it as adultery of the heart.

Matthew 21:21-22 (NIV)

I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, ... you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done. ²² If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.

Think about it: Were these words a promise to be taken literally, or an invitation to take prayer seriously and to pray boldly and with faith?

How Does God Answer Prayer?

The most common way is _____.

When you care for the poor, visit the sick and those in prison;
When you bear one another's burdens;
When you take time to talk with the lonely;
When you show compassion to the hurting;
God uses you to answer the prayers of others.

God will not suspend another person's _____ to answer my prayers.

What is the Purpose of Prayer?

God is not a divine vending machine.
Prayer is not like rubbing Aladdin's lamp.
God is not our Santa Claus.

Prayer ushers us into the _____ of God, who is our source of comfort and hope.

Prayer changes _____, not necessarily the circumstances.

Primary Sources for today's teaching – *Why? Making Sense of God's Will* by Adam Hamilton, *Prayer: Does It Make A Difference* by Philip Yancey.