

# Coach House Church BEACONS

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## KEEP ON PRAYING

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One of the questions that Christians frequently ask is "Why doesn't God answer my prayers?" You know that feeling, you ask for something, you feel it is right to do so, you ask repeatedly over a period of time and still nothing happens. This can be disheartening or discouraging, it can lead to doubts or even a loss of faith, so it is important to understand why this sometimes happens.

The first point to make is this. God is not there to serve us, we are here to serve Him. God is not there to serve us, we are here to serve Him. Prayer forms a vital part of our service of God. It helps us to align our thinking with God's thinking, if we listen we will learn far more than if we just blurt out a load of words. I think we all know someone who likes talking and will tell you many things that you already know, you can't get a word in edgewise, and even when you do you feel that person isn't listening. Think how you feel in that situation, if you aren't being listened to you might just go and chat with someone who will listen. God, in His mercy and grace will continue to listen patiently, but what good is it if you don't listen to God's response. For 35 chapters of the book of Job God listens to Job making some good points and his so called friends making some very bad points. I think I would have had enough by that point and God breaks into the conversation with the words "Who is this that questions my wisdom with such ignorant words" This comment was aimed mainly at Job's friends but what it does remind us of is the huge gap between our understanding and God's understanding.

When God speaks He reveals many amazing facts but He never answers Job's original question. Job's prayer was to understand why he had to suffer as badly as he did. God didn't answer that prayer, but He did restore Job's fortunes, his health, his family and his possessions, and He also described Job as "The finest man in all the earth"

The second point is that God has a plan. God has a plan for my life and a plan for your life. If I pray for you, not knowing the full facts, I might be asking for the wrong thing. Under those circumstances it is better if God doesn't answer my prayer. Those of you who are parents might recognise this example. When my son was young he often wanted to eat at a well known hamburger restaurant. I could have given in to his request but of course that would have led to problems later in life. Even when our request seems very reasonable there may be reasons why God wants to do something different. We should bear in mind that in the book of Ephesians it says "All Glory to God, who is able to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think" God's answer might be infinitely more practical than the one you have thought of. After I had separated from my wife I became increasingly concerned about how my son was being brought up so I asked God to bring him back to me. God answered this prayer quite quickly, 3 months to be exact, but now I found myself with a problem I hadn't considered. I was working shifts, and that clearly wouldn't work well with being a single parent. Of course I prayed about this but what I was asking for wasn't the right thing. To keep the story short I will just say that several miracles later and I was in a new job and on the way to a much better blessing. Not one I asked for but the one God knew was right. This proves the words of Jesus in Matthew chapter 7 "If you, as sinful people, know how to give your children good gifts, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask Him"

The third point is about perseverance. Jesus told a story about a widow who hadn't received the justice she deserved. The judge was unjust and wasn't about to give in to the woman but she went before him so many times that eventually the judge gave in and granted her request. Of course God is just, and will always act in accordance with His will, but sometimes He wants us to pray repeatedly because that way we will be certain of what we are asking for. It will not be something that we pray for on a whim, or in accordance with popular opinion, but something that we are prepared to see through. If I had prayed once for my son to be brought back to me and then forgotten about it that would have showed that my heart wasn't really in it. Then where would I have been if God had answered it on day one. Earlier in chapter 7 of Matthew Jesus said "Keep on asking and you will receive, keep on seeking and you will find. Keep on knocking and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, everyone who seeks finds. And to everyone who knocks the door will be opened." I know someone who gave his heart to the Lord when he was 40 years old after having gone away from the Lord earlier in his life. His mum was a member of the church at the time and she told

me that she had had to pray for 20 years to bring him back to Jesus. Sometimes perseverance pays off.

The last point is about timing. There are times when answers to prayer cannot be given immediately, not because of ourselves, but because of the actions of others. In the book of Daniel we see a time when Daniel was waiting for God to answer his prayers. Daniel was living in Susa which was in Babylon. He was a captive, taken from Israel when the Jews were forced into captivity as a result of their sins. Daniel had read and understood the scriptures, he knew that this time of captivity was due to come to an end, but he also knew that the sin that had led them there was unresolved so he did what he could and started praying for forgiveness not just for his own sin, but for all the sin of all his people. He was clearly doing the right thing at the right time. In response to Daniel's faithfulness God had shown him visions of times to come and he wanted to be able to understand the visions clearly. When the answer came Daniel had been fasting and praying for 3 weeks. The sight of the angel caused him to faint but the angel roused him and said "Daniel, you are very precious to God" Now this doesn't just apply to Daniel, it applies to you also, you are very precious to God. The angel went on to say "Since the first day you began to pray for understanding, and to humble yourself before God, your request has been heard in heaven. I have come in answer to your prayer. But for 21 days the spirit prince of the kingdom of Persia blocked my way. Then Michael, one of the archangels, came to help me, and I left him there with the spirit prince of the kingdom of Persia"

This is quite a complicated piece of scripture but for simplicity we can think of the spirit prince of the kingdom of Persia as being an evil spirit who is acting on his own accord, or in conjunction with a bad person. You can see that Daniel's prayer was both heard and acted upon on the very first day that he prayed but something prevented the answer from reaching him straight away. Whilst God is all powerful, and can act when and where He chooses, there are always going to be times when He takes into account the actions of those who have rebelled against Him. This is the most difficult part to understand but also the most important.

In summary then we should note that it is important to pray and keep praying. When it seems as though our prayers are not being answered it is useful to consider, is it my will or God's will I am praying into, is it in God's plan, is it in God's timing or is it just that there is something in the way which I have no knowledge of?

The response to this is just to remain faithful, and keep on praying. This will be a tremendous blessing to you and I am confident that God will bless you in the right way at the right time, and of course when you stand before Him at the end of time, because of Jesus, he will call you, like Job, "The finest person in all the earth".



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