

BIBLE LIFE MESSAGES

Why God Sometimes Doesn't Seem to Answer Prayer

Acts 1:1-8

¹ Have you ever wondered, after you have prayed very earnestly and genuinely, why God sometimes doesn't seem to answer your prayer? ²

God's promise is that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. ¹ ³ But, a dear friend, that we love, is dying of cancer! ⁴ We prayed so earnestly for God's divine healing! But – she died! ⁵

Why, when we pray for things, do they go wrong anyhow? ⁶

Let's look at Acts, chapter 1, the first 8 verses.

In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He

¹ Romans 8:28.

appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.² ⁷

On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days, you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”³ ⁸

So when they met together, they asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”⁴ ⁹

The first reason, I believe, that the Lord sometimes doesn't seem to answer prayer is . . .

² Acts 1: 1-3.

³ Acts 1:4-5.

⁴ Acts 1:6-8.

I. Sometimes You Don't See the Big Picture.

Sometimes you don't see the big picture. God does!

Poor little Amy was seen crying her eyes out and desperately searching for someone to come and rescue her kitten. The kitten had climbed to the highest branch of the tree in the front yard and was meowing loudly.

When Amy found an adult and, frantically, pulled him to the tree, the man tried to conceal his grin. The man knew that kittens were perfectly safe in trees, but Amy didn't! She believed this was a life-or-death situation!

So, the man consoled the terrified little girl. He went to his garage, pulled out a tall ladder, climbed it to the branch and rescued the kitten. Amy was so relieved to have her kitten back safely in her arms.

Amy didn't see things the same way the experienced adult saw them. Amy saw the kitten in danger. The adult saw a frightened cat who was perfectly safe! 10

God sees everything in context whereas we tend to only observe the immediate! ¹¹

The Jewish Festival of Purim is celebrated annually. It memorializes an event where a beautiful woman named Esther, the queen of Persia, risks her life to prevent the genocide of her people.

As she confides to her cousin, Mordechai, her fear of what might happen to her, he responds, **For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?**" ⁵

Suppose you are in heaven, in a different dimension that doesn't experience time, at least as we know it. (I know it's impossible for any of us to think timelessness.)

⁵ Esther 4:14.

But suppose you look down from heaven at those who are experiencing time. Think of a giant terrarium where, at one end, there is the creation of everything that exists. At the other end is the end of time. All activity, however, between the two ends, is happening simultaneously! You can see all of history at once. God could jump in and out of that history any “time” He wanted. You could see the past, the future and what is taking place anywhere in the “present”.

Thinking that way helps us understand some of the attributes of our almighty Master! He is all powerful, exists everywhere, all at the same “time”. He has all knowledge. He can instruct certain people with prophetic ability. At the perfect time, He could take on a human life with the mission of teaching us how to live. Then, He could live that life perfectly to show us it could be done. Then, He could die on a cross to pave a way for us to heaven. Then, He could be resurrected to live eternally with us in heaven! ¹²

For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night. ⁶ ₁₃

But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. ⁷

God appears to be timeless. We are trapped in time!
He sees the big picture; we don't!

But God loves you intently!

So, maybe God sometimes doesn't seem to answer prayer because . . . ₁₄

⁶ Psalm 90:4.

⁷ II Peter 3:8-9.

II. Sometimes the Problem Would Become Worse If Answered.

Sometimes the problem would become worse if answered! ¹⁵

We often see things distorted. God always sees them as they really are.

One of my sons, Dan, would project images on a wall with his hands in front of a light source. By forming his hands a certain way, he could project what looked like cats, birds and other objects. They were distorted, but looked similar to the real thing enough that the rest of us could say, “Aha, I know what that looks like!” ¹⁶

Now, lets look at some scriptures. Romans, chapter 11, verse 33, **Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!** ¹⁷

Again, First Corinthians, chapter 1, verse 18, **For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are**

perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁸

Again, in verse 25, For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength. ⁸ ¹⁹

Finally, in chapter 3, verse 19, For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. As it is written: "He catches the wise in their craftiness" . . .

When you pray, you may be asking for something that might not be good for you or actually end up causing you harm. You can't see it; but God can! ²⁰

Thankfully, there was a time when God didn't answer my prayer!

I was about to graduate from seminary with a major in biblical linguistics. I had a desire, at the time, to eventually teach biblical and classical Greek at the college level. Applying to the only graduate institution that offered what I wanted at the doctorate level, I

⁸ I Corinthians 1:25.

began praying earnestly for acceptance. They turned me down! ⁹

As a result, my life ended up being redirected in a direction, I now feel, benefitted the Lord's ministry much better. I am now grateful He didn't answer those prayers the way I had hoped! ²¹

The final reason I believe the Lord sometimes doesn't seem to answer prayer is . . .

III. Sometimes the Timing is Not Right

Sometime the timing is not right. ²²

God's timing is not our timing. It's always better!

Abraham questioned God's timing. He and his wife were too old to bear children. He wanted a son to inherit his estate and heritage. Here's the story! ²³

But Abram said, "O Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abram

⁹ That institution required the acceptance of a theological set of teachings I could not genuinely support.

said, “You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.” ¹⁰ ₂₄

Then the word of the Lord came to him: “This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir.” He took him outside and said, “Look up at the heavens and count the stars — if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” ¹¹

Abraham had obeyed the call of God. He had left all of his kin, and taken only his immediate family, to where the Lord wanted him to go. Now, he felt stuck, with no son to take over when he died!

The Lord’s answer to Abraham? “Not yet!” Just trust Me! ²⁵ So, he continued to wait patiently for the Lord to fulfill His promise. ¹² ₂₆

The Lord hesitated for two full days before He responded to the news that His friend, Lazarus, was

¹⁰ Genesis 15:2-3.

¹¹ Genesis 15:4-5.

¹² Hebrews 6:15 - And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised.

deathly sick. ¹³ Everybody was disappointed about the delay. But we discover later in John, chapter 11, that Jesus needed to demonstrate His almighty power to raise the dead! Wow!

The Lord wants us to trust Him enough to wait for His perfect timing! ²⁷ **Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.**

¹⁴ ₂₈

Again, The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him. ¹⁵ ₂₉

Pray earnestly.

Pray believing God will answer!

But – always trust the Lord for His best for you!

<http://biblelifemessages.org/>

¹³ John 11:6 - . . . when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days.

¹⁴ Psalm 37:7.

¹⁵ Lamentations 3:25.