

What can I expect from prayer?

Session 4 on Prayer

Today we quickly gain access to information on the internet. Any time of day we expect answers to our questions. We text or email people and count on quick replies. When there is not an immediate reply to our questions we might wonder if we will ever receive an answer.

1. How dependent are you on immediate responses? Check the item that best describes your tolerance in waiting for answers.
 - a. ___ I have the patience for snail mail to arrive
 - b. ___ I can wait for the phone to ring
 - c. ___ The longer I wait, the more likely I will lose interest
 - d. ___ It is Christmas and I want to open my presents right now and I can't figure out why no one else is ready.

2. Read Psalm 91:1-2; 14-15.
 - a. God's presence is described as a shelter, shadow, refuge, and fortress. Which image connects with you the most?

 - b. Describe the four things God promises in verse 15.

3. Read Matthew 7:9-12
 - a. What does Jesus teach regarding those who make requests of him?

 - b. What comparison does Jesus make?

4. Read 2 Corinthians 12:8-9
 - a. We do not know what Paul requested of God, what do we know about God's response?

 - b. Why did God act this way for Paul?

Waiting is difficult, and made more challenging because of God's promise to hear us. God says, "While they are still speaking, I will hear" (Isaiah 65:24). We can find comfort knowing God hears our prayers, but yet this may make the waiting all the more difficult.

Abraham and Sarah had been promised by God to be a great family that would bring blessings to all the world. They had prayed for a child all their lives. When Abraham was 75, God promised him an heir but did not fulfill this promise for 25 years.

5. Read Hebrews 11:11-12; 17-19. What did God produce in Abraham?

6. God does not treat us as consumers, giving us whatever we want. The customer is not always right. We are treated more like a dependent child, giving us what he deems best. How is patience in prayer being answered aligned with the First Commandment to not have any other gods?

7. Read Psalm 27.
 - a. Why is David confident? 27:4-5

 - b. In v. 6 there are still enemies, but what does David confess he can do around his enemies?

 - c. 27:7-12, David prays for God to answer him. What does he want God to do for him?

 - d. Psalm 27:13-14 express the truth of patience and faith. How do these verses help guide us in our waiting?

As we grow in faith to trust in God as the one who answers our prayers, we become more aware of his answers. God's constant action in our lives are opportunities for us to give thanks.

For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." 1 Peter 3:12 (ESV)

When you are frustrated and disappointed with God's answers, God offers help for you in your prayer life.

8. Read Romans 8:12-17; 26-27
 - a. When we doubt God's love, what does the Holy Spirit testify?

- b. What does the Spirit teach us to say?
 - c. How does the Spirit intercede for us when we don't know what to pray?
 - d. How are "groanings" helpful?
9. For what prayers do you need the "groanings" of the Holy Spirit to help you?

In John 16, Jesus promises that he will send the Holy Spirit to "guide us into all truth" (John 16:13). The Spirit guides us into the truth of God's will and helps us to speak to God in prayer. Pray for the Holy Spirit to continue to intercede on your behalf and thank God for this guidance in your prayers.