



REFLECTION AND STUDY

MONDAY | Read John 14:13-14

Today's scripture can be tricky for some because they think no matter what they ask for in prayer, it will be given to them. There are many examples in the Bible when this is true. One excellent example is Daniel. When he was thrown in the lion's den and prayed for safety, God closed the mouths of the lions. But there are also examples in scripture of prayers not being answered. In the following days we will explore some of the reasons why our prayers may not be answered.

- If you could ask God for anything, what would it be? Why would you ask for it?
- Describe a time when God didn't answer a prayer of yours. What did you learn from your unanswered prayer?
- What are you praying about that God has yet to answer? How have you reacted to your unanswered prayer?

Thank God for the prayers He has answered in your life. Take time to praise Him for all He has done.

TUESDAY | Read Mark 11:24-25 and 1 John 4:20

Our relationships with other people matter to God. In fact, our relationships with others directly reflect what kind of relationship we have with God. Whether we are at peace with each other, are angry, holding a grudge, or are talking badly against each other, the way we treat others reflects our relationship with the Lord. Our broken relationships may therefore be one reason why our prayers haven't been answered.

- What broken relationships may be hindering your prayers? What steps will you take to restore them?

Ask God to help you restore those broken relationships that may be hindering your prayers.

WEDNESDAY | 1 Peter 3:7, James 4:3 and Proverbs 16:2

Another reason why prayers are sometimes not answered is because our motives are self-centered and not God-centered. The people Jesus scolded the most were the ones with self-centered, wrong-headed motives. The Pharisees would make their way into the public limelight and offer prayers to God as a sign of their righteousness, and a means of telling others, "We are favored by God, look at how righteous we are. Whatever we ask for, God will give to us." The truth is, God didn't respond to their prayers because their motives were not God-centered.

- What wrong motives may be hindering your prayers? What will you do to change these motives?

Ask God to help you check your motives to ensure that your prayers come from the right place.

THURSDAY: Mark 9:22-23, Matthew 9:28, Matthew 17:19-21

Maybe your prayers aren't being answered because in your heart you do not believe God will answer them. What was Jesus' response to the father in Mark 9:22-23 when he said, "...if you can do anything..."? Jesus was irritated because the father didn't believe he could heal his son! Your faith matters when you pray. Jesus said that all it takes is the faith of a mustard seed (the smallest seed of all) to move a mountain! Remember though, even if we pray and have faith, we are under God's Lordship and He is not obligated to give us what we ask.

- What things are hindering your faith in God that He will answer your prayers?

Ask God to help you strengthen your faith in Him.

FRIDAY: Read James 1:6-7 and Isaiah 55:8-9

Maybe you don't have broken relationships, maybe your motives are correct, and maybe you have faith—but you are still wondering why your prayers haven't been answered. It may be that God has a different plan for you. Even though we may think what we want, or how we want our prayers answered is best, God's will is always greater because only He truly knows what is best for us.

- How do you feel knowing that you may never fully understand the way God answers prayers?
- Do you trust God to direct you, not where you want, but where He wants?

Ask God to help you have a better understanding of why He doesn't always answer prayer.

SATURDAY: Read 1 John 5:14-15 & 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

When we ask for something outside of God's will, even if we are certain it would be the best thing (or it is what we think God *should* do), he loves us enough to not give us something that is outside of His perfect will. The Apostle Paul is a perfect example of this because if anyone's prayers should have been answered it should have been his. Paul was responsible for the spread of Christianity and the planting of many churches, and it was through the life and love of Paul that Christianity was birthed into the faith it is today. Paul pleaded three times for the sufferings and thorn in his life to be removed, but God didn't. Instead, God reminded Paul that His grace was sufficient for him. Another inspiring story is that of Australian born Nick Vujcic, who was born without limbs and is doing amazing things for the Kingdom of God. He once struggled with the "thorn" of not having limbs and questioned the purpose of his life. Consider, Nick could have prayed for God to end his life or enact a miracle by giving him limbs, but Nick has realized that his "thorn" is changing lives for Jesus. Nick's amazing story and mission to share the love of God can be found here: <http://www.lifewithoutlimbs.org>

- How have you seen God work in your life through unanswered prayers?
- What changes in your thinking do you need to make so you can better understand unanswered prayer?

Ask God to help you believe and trust in His ways, and to remember that His grace is sufficient for you.

SUNDAY

Today is your "Sabbath" and a time for reflection. How has God been speaking to you over the week? Use what the Lord has said to you to remold and reshape your life. If you are having trouble hearing God's voice, slow down or even stop what you are doing so that the busyness of life's demands do not squelch the whispers of God's language of love upon your heart.