

Day 1

June 22



Pray | For the strength to face your doubts.

DARE TO DOUBT

For the past month we've been studying the Lord's Prayer and discussing our own prayers: how to pray, when to pray, why to pray and how to make it a habit. But what about when our prayers go unanswered? Fill in the blank: When God doesn't answer my prayers, I _____. Unanswered prayers may leave us in deep pain and suffering. We may doubt God's love and power and shrink back from him and others or feel there is no point in praying or even trying to believe in God. We might feel all kinds of feelings we think no good Christian should be feeling and feel doubts creep into our hearts and souls-doubts too great to speak out loud or to even think about. And then somewhere in the dark those doubts sit and fester. But God knows, God understands, and God loves us deeply. He wants to hear from us -- even to hear our anger or confusion toward him. If we never bring our doubts into the light, they continue to have power over us and the truth cannot shine on them.



Read | Matthew 6:9-13, 11:28-29; Ephesians 5:13-14



Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on the following prompts:

When doubts go unspoken and unaddressed, they have power over us. When we bring them into the light by voicing them and praying about them, God can touch us and speak life into us. What doubts do you feel creeping in when your prayers go unanswered? Whom will you talk to about your doubts to let God begin to heal them? Consider reaching out to the Prayer Team at Five Oaks Church to pray for this or whatever your need is today.

What unanswered prayers have grieved you deeply? Jesus came to earth to enter into our pain and suffering with us. He will always walk through our pain with us. Rest assured, if you are angry with God, he can take it. Take a moment today to ask Jesus to hold your grief -- angry or resentful or hurt as you may be -- and lay it at his feet. Take on his rest, as Matthew says.

The popular 90's Garth Brooks song, "Unanswered Prayers," tells the story of a happily married man who many years post high school runs into the woman he had previously prayed that God would give him as a wife. He is thankful that God didn't answer that prayer. He says, "Sometimes I thank God for unanswered prayers...just because he doesn't answer doesn't mean he don't care. Some of God's greatest gifts are unanswered prayers." What unanswered prayers can you thank God for today.



Pray | For the World

Pray for our Ministry Partners in Cuba: God is working in the church in Cuba, but there are still needs for training, education, resources, and facilities. Please pray for the development of a Five Oaks ministry strategy in Cuba in areas such as leadership development, construction, ESL, men's ministry, etc. Also pray for the Five Oaks Leadership Team as they evaluate these opportunities and develop strategy.

Day 2

June 23



Pray | That God would put people in your life who will pray with and for you.

WHERE TWO OR MORE ARE GATHERED

Sometimes when God seems distant and silent, we withdraw from him and from people, even our closest friends. Jesus was arrested, tortured and killed, a drawn-out death by hanging on a cross. He had always known only oneness with the Father, and it had sustained him throughout his life. But hanging on the cross taking on our sins, he was separated from his Father in a way he'd never experienced. Earlier that night he had prayed that God would spare him all of the above, but God did not answer that prayer and Jesus suffered.

In this lonely, dark time, Jesus had not isolated himself. He went to the Father in fervent prayers, sweating blood and tears about what was to come. He asked his friends to pray, too. He knew there is power in the prayers of many, and he knew that people need support from other people. The Bible tells us to gather together. We are to be with other believers praying, aligning ourselves with God's will, encouraging one another, and loving each other.



Read | [Matthew 6:9-13, 18:20, 26:36-42; Hebrews 10:23-25](#)



Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on the following prompts:

Even Jesus needed constant prayer and connection to his Father and needed friends to support him. Who in your life can you rely on when you're feeling vulnerable and your prayers seem to be going unanswered?

When do you tend to isolate yourself in your grief? What would you like a friend to do for you during that time? If you don't have people to gather together with, consider a small group at Five Oaks. [Click here](#) for more information.

If you have never experienced the closeness of Jesus Christ in your life, take some time today to simply tell him you'd like to be close to him. It doesn't have to be fancy or scripted. Just speak whatever is on your heart. If that too feels difficult, consider praying the prayer Jesus taught us to pray from Matthew 6:9-13: "Our Father in Heaven, praise your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive me my debts, as I also forgive my debtors. Lead me not into temptation but deliver me from the evil one."

Day 3

June 24



Pray | That God would help you pray in light of eternity.

BANK ON ETERNITY

The Bible tells us about a spiritual reality and warzone. There is an enemy who stalks God's creation as we see in John and 1 Peter, looking for those he can destroy, and we must be on guard, prepared to fight, and prepared to take hits as well. That means some of our prayers, hopes and dreams will go unanswered. Jesus never promised life on earth would be easy, and he promised that we could have abundant life even *while* the spiritual world is at war. He also promises in Revelation that we will take part in the new Heaven and earth with him as he wins the war for eternity.



Read | [John 10:10, 16:33; 1 Peter 5:8-11; Revelation 21:1-7](#)



Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on the following prompts:

Revelation tells us that God will win the eternal war with darkness and we will live closely with him for eternity. How might your prayers be different if you prayed in light of eternity instead of the here and now?

While we are still here on earth, we are engulfed in a battle, and life is difficult. In John 16 Jesus said that we will have trouble. In John 10 he said that he came to give us abundant life. Do you find you can experience abundant life even while you're facing trouble and your prayers seem to go unanswered? Consider challenging yourself with God's help, to experience abundant life in the middle of chaos and trouble. Who could join you in this?

Take some time today to thank God that he has overcome the world and ask him for the peace that passes understanding. If you haven't yet surrendered your life to him, read John 16:33 in prayer, asking God for the peace he brings.

Day 4 June 25



Pray | Not as I will, Lord, but as you will.

NOT AS I WILL, BUT AS YOU WILL

In the book of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were threatened with a fiery death if they didn't bow down to the god that the King had ordered built. After refusing, they were brought before this King who gave them one more chance. But their response was "...the God we serve is able to save us...but even if he does not...we will not serve your gods..."

In the Garden of Gethsemane, before Jesus was arrested, tortured and crucified, he asked God to rescue him, ending his prayer with, "Not as I will, but as you will." In both cases, those who were praying had complete trust in their God, even if he didn't answer them the way they wanted to be answered.

To be able to say, "even if he doesn't" or "not as I will, but as you will" can take all the strength we have within us. But the goal of prayer is to align ourselves with God's will. "Not as I will, but as you will" is the surest way to see God answer every prayer on earth as he does in Heaven.



Read | [Daniel 3:13-18](#); [Matthew 26:39](#)



Spend some time reflecting on one the following prompts:::

How often are you ending your prayers with, "not as I will, but as you will"? How can you trustingly increase that in your prayers starting this week? [Click here](#) for Mercy Me's musical interpretation of "Not as I will, but as you will."

How do you respond or react to the idea that your prayers may not be answered? Do you pray harder, or give up trying? How can you pray fervently AND end with, "not as I will, but as you will"?

How able are you to follow Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego and Jesus' examples and proclaim that even if God doesn't do what you want him to, you will still worship and follow him? How can you grow in this?

If praying for God's will alone to be done is difficult for you, or even if it feels next to impossible, that's ok! God is always working on our hearts to bring us closer to him. Reach out to someone at [Five Oaks](#) and ask them to pray for you as you work to accept God's will. [Click here](#) for another practical, helpful tool on praying this way.

Day 5

June 26



Pray / Thank God that he sees you, knows you and loves you.

TRUST THE FATHER

We don't always understand God's ways or why he doesn't answer our prayers, and we often ask God, "Why?" The Bible says that his ways are not our ways and his thoughts are not our thoughts. Doesn't it just make sense that the Creator of the billions of galaxies in our solar system who set the world in motion would do, say or allow some things that we don't understand? Much like a toddler doesn't understand the mean mandate not to play in the street, or to eat that awful green stuff, we can't possibly understand the mind of God. But we *can* trust him always. In the words of an old Twila Paris song, "He sees you. He knows you. He loves you. Jesus loves you." And it's important to remember that we serve a loving, good God who *does* have our best interests at heart and who *will* win the war for eternity. The more we can trust him with our hearts and souls, the more we can truly pray, "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven."



Read | [Isaiah 55:8-9](#); [Matthew 6:9](#); [John 3:16](#)



Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on the following prompts:

We all have areas of our lives we cling to. If we dig down deep, we see that we typically cling to those areas because we don't fully trust God with them. What do you need to surrender to God's loving will today? What will it look like when you've done so?

If you've never fully surrendered your life to God, take a moment today to tell him you relinquish control and want his will in your life.

Listen to the song, "[Every Heart That Is Breaking](#)" by Twila Paris and meditate on the fact that sees you, he knows you, and he loves you wherever you are and whatever you are going through.

The issue of unanswered prayers is deep and wide and full of questions. [Click here](#) for more tools to help you with unanswered prayer. [Click here](#) for another sermon on "When God Doesn't Make Sense." And always feel free to reach out to the staff at Five Oaks with your needs and questions.

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