

Prayer – Tapping into God’s Power
Why Doesn’t God Answer All My Prayers?
Grace Fellowship Church / Pastor Brad Bigney / March 1, 2026

I. We’re Not the First to Struggle with Unanswered Prayer

Habakkuk 1:2 “O LORD, how long shall I cry, and You will not hear? Even cry out to You ‘Violence!’ and You will not save.”

Psalms 13:1-2 “How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? ²How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily?...”

Job 30:20 “I cry to You for help and You do not answer me; I stand, and You only look at me.”

These verses are not settling, but I’m so glad they’re in the Bible because they show us how honest we can be with God!

These verses help us to know that we’re not alone. We’re not the first to feel this way.

There are some verses in the Bible that are not there to fix it, but to voice it and give expression to how we feel.

II. Is There Any Benefit to Unanswered Prayer?

Yes, there is! Unanswered prayer frees us from the illusion of thinking that there’s a formula for controlling God.

We want to be told how to pray it and how to say it, so that we can get it every time, all the time, right on time, without fail.

Because then we wouldn’t need to know Him, seek Him, wait on Him, or trust Him because that all takes so much time!

God’s not running an efficiency training center. He’s conforming us to the image of His Son. The process is more like childbirth than it is a one-day training seminar.

It takes time, it’s messy, and it involves waiting because God wants to strengthen our faith, not just give us some kind of prayer formula.

If you are inclined to be a formula Christian, you’re going to be a frustrated Christian because as soon as you think you’ve got Him figured out and safely corralled in your little “God Box” where you can control Him, He’ll blow the walls off your box.

Hebrews 11 is often called the “**Hall of Faith**,” but it could also be called the great “**Hall of Faith-Formula Shattering**,” because it shatters this “faith-formula” thinking. See **Hebrews 11:30-39**.

A helpful reminder as we wrestle our way through why some of our prayers may go unanswered:

If the **Request** is wrong, God says, “No.”

If the **Timing** is wrong, God says, “Slow.”

If **You** are wrong, God says, “Grow.”

III. Why Doesn't God Answer All My Prayers?

A. You Might Be Asking for the Wrong Thing

If we're not all-knowing, not all-wise, and not as good as He is, then doesn't it stand to reason that sometimes we're just asking for the wrong thing?

There are examples of this all through the Bible!

- In **Matthew 20:20-23**, James and John come to Jesus with their mom asking if they could reserve the best two seats in His kingdom for themselves. Basically, they're asking to be His Chief Executive Officers, because they wanted to sit on His left and right.

But Jesus told them they didn't know what they were asking for, and that those two places had already been reserved.

- In **Luke 9:51-56**, James and John were so ticked off when the Samaritan village said, “We don't want you here!” that they said, “Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven to consume them?”

Jesus said, “No!” In fact, He rebukes them for even making such a request.

- In **Luke 10:40-41**, Martha says, “Lord, tell my sister to help me!”

In other words, she's saying, “There are people all around me that need to hear from You, because I know who needs to be changed most - my sister! In fact, I could give you a list of people You should be working on.”

B. You Might Be Asking with the Wrong Motive

James 4:3 “You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.”

God would love for us to pray **Psalms 139:23-24**.

Psalms 139:23-24 “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. ²⁴ See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

It's not always wrong to pray for God to change somebody else, but you're probably off if you didn't start with, “God change me first and show me what I'm not seeing about me.”

C. You Might Be Asking for the Right Thing with the Right Motive But at the Wrong Time

Waiting is one of God's favorite tools in shaping us and making us into the image of His Son. It's never a waste of time to be in God's "Waiting Room."

Isaiah 40:31 "But those that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."

Don't stomp around in God's "Waiting Room" or try to kick the door down. Instead say, "God, while I'm here, what do you want to do in me? I'm ready."

D. God Might Have Something Better than What You're Asking For

When your prayer is not answered the way you wish it was, trust that God knows what He's doing because He might be giving you something different or something better!