

How Does God Answer Prayer? *Or How Does Prayer Work?*

Intro: At first, this looks like one of those “dumb” questions. Many of us in “church” have been taught that God answers prayer with either Yes, No, or Wait. But behind this question is the one almost all of us have asked at some time in our lives: “Why didn’t God answer *my* prayer?” Whether it’s a miracle we were looking for or some sign for direction, sometimes we just wonder about it. Didn’t we have enough faith? Didn’t the person we were praying for have enough faith? And why don’t we see the same kinds of Godly miracles in North America that we hear about in Argentina, Guatemala, China, and India?

This week, you will have the opportunity to examine what the Scriptures’ teach about how God responds to our prayers – and to prayerfully consider your part in the process. As you do, you’ll learn to articulate your beliefs about prayer and how to share those beliefs with those around you.

What the Bible Teaches: Break into Groups of Four, read the following Bible verses, and discuss the questions. You may want to jot down notes and thoughts on the back of this page.

For each of the following Scripture passages, answer the question: “What is the result or purpose of the prayer in this passage?”

Acts 8:15-17; 1 Timothy 2:1-4; Matthew 26:41

For each of the following Scripture passages, answer the question: “What is expected of us when we pray or seek the presence of God?”

Jeremiah 29:13; 1 Peter 4:7; John 15:16; Mark 11:22-25

For each of the following Scripture passages, answer the question: “What do these passages tell us we should pray for?”

Luke 10:2-3; Philippians 4:6; James 5:13-16

For each of the following Scripture passages, answer the question: “What were the apparent results of the prayers in the following passages?”

2 Corinthians 12:7-9; Acts 4:24, 29-31; Acts 14:23; Acts 9:40

What I Believe: Take ten minutes for silent reflection and thought. Ask yourself what you believe about how God answers prayer. Use the back of this page to formulate a response to the question:

“How does God answer prayer?”

Write your final response here: _____

Articulations: Pair up with one other person and share your response with one another. Take five minutes each. Try to *not* look at your written statement; instead, try to tell your beliefs from your heart. This will prepare you to share whenever you are asked about what you believe.

Therefore: Jesus said His followers should Go and make disciples (Matthew 28:19-20). One of the first steps in making disciples is being ready and able to share the reason for the hope we have (1 Peter 3:15), in other words, knowing what we believe, why, and then being able to share it. Sharing your faith is important. This week, find someone—it can be *anyone*—and articulate your belief about this issue. If you have an unchurched/unreached friend whom you can share with, all the better (you can always say you have a homework assignment from church and you’d like to share it with them). Be ready to talk about your experience next week over the meal at your House Church.