

Discussion Questions

Preparation:

Share how things have been going since you began "21 Days of Prayer with Fasting." Any new insights? Any answered prayers? Any direction received? Any encouragement from God?

Do you have any unanswered prayers? What are they and how have they affected your life? Do you think there is such a thing as unanswered prayer?

Passage

"And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. Women received back their dead, raised to life again. There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated—the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground." Hebrews 11:32-38

1. Looking at the list of people above, would you say the one group's prayers were answered and the other group's prayers were not? How do you account for the differing experiences of those who are faithful to the Lord? Which group would you rather be in? Notice which group received the greater praise. Why do you think that is?
2. Have you ever prayed a prayer that was "off," meaning it was outside the will of God but at the time you did not know it.
3. How grateful are you for unanswered prayer? How different would your life be today had God given you everything you asked him for? Is there a specific request you are glad he did answer in the affirmative?
4. Why does God reserve for himself the right to wield supernatural power? Why hasn't he given us the same power or has he?

To help answer the above, consider our ability to handle power. How well have we handled these sources of power: 1) Words. 2) Money. 3) Political. 4) Nuclear. 5) Musical. 6) The media.

We have used all of these for great good and for great evil. Imagine what would have happened had we been given the responsibility to be good stewards of supernatural power?

A fun movie to watch that answers this question is *Bruce Almighty*. Hold a movie night with your small group. Make some snacks and enjoy the movie. Discuss it afterwards.

5. Have you ever received what you thought was a "No" to a prayer but later you discovered it was a "Yes, but wait?"
6. We are a worshipping people but not a waiting people. What value is there in waiting for something and not getting what we want immediately? Do you tend to be impatient or are you able to wait for things calmly? What about at the gas station, the checkout line, while booting up your computer, at the DMV, while on the phone waiting for someone to pick up and address the reason for your call?
7. Discuss Pastor Richard's contention that when God is silent it may be because he is telling you that he trusts you to make the decision. How does Psalm 37:4 fit into the discussion?
8. Share ways you have grown as the result of God either saying No to your prayer or delaying its answer. How have you grown in character, obedience and compassion?
9. Read the passage below and discuss Pastor Richard's advice: *"Instead of asking God to bless your life, live a life He can bless."*
*"Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save,
nor his ear too dull to hear.
But your iniquities have separated
you from your God;
your sins have hidden his face from you,
so that he will not hear."* Isaiah 59:1-2
10. If we prayed the following how would our lives change?: *"Lord, give me the strength and the will to live a life you can bless."*
11. Share ways God has grown your heart through suffering and hardships. What group(s) of people do you have a heart for? What group(s) of people do you have a hard time showing compassion to?
12. How good are we with mystery, not being able to understand why something happened to us or to those we love? Are there unanswered prayers that are still a mystery to you? Does Job's response help you cope with unanswered prayer?
Then Job replied to the Lord:
*"I know that you can do all things;
no purpose of yours can be thwarted.
You asked, 'Who is this that obscures my plans without knowledge?'
Surely I spoke of things I did not understand,
things too wonderful for me to know."* Job 42:1-3
13. Any further questions or insights from the sermon you'd like to discuss or share?

**21 Days of Prayer with Fasting: Unanswered Prayer
Various Passages**

1/29/23