



Our first question for today builds upon last week's second question.

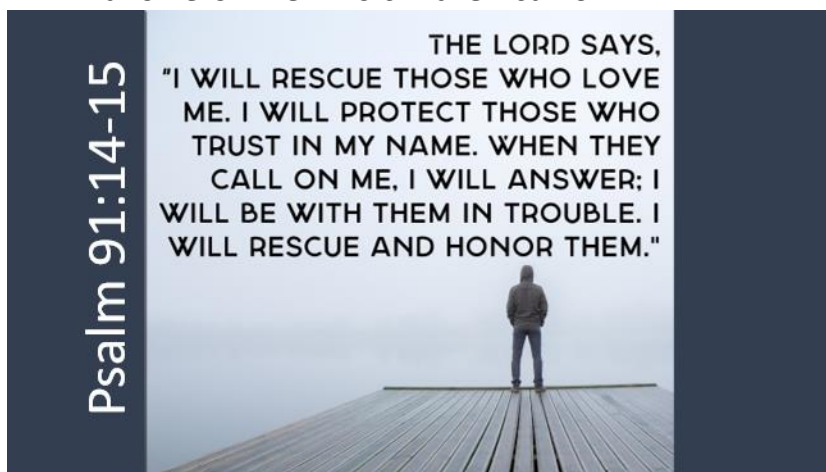
1. Why bother praying?
2. How are we to understand unanswered prayer?
3. **When God says no.**
4. Is there a right way to pray?
5. Am I praying about the right thing?

Before we jump in, let me recap.

God is not wordless ...but is a speaking God.

God is not hidden ... but is a self-revealing God.

- God is a loving Father who speaks to and with his children; a Father who answers when his children call on him.



The Bible makes known to the reader that if God is silent there is a reason, and it is not because God is prone to sulk.

- Sometimes God is silent... because of sin in our lives.

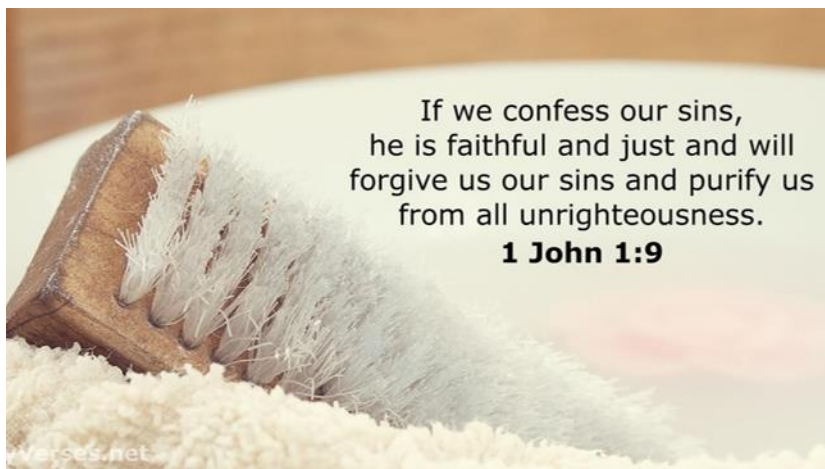
**Isaiah 59:2**

Your iniquities have separated you  
from your God,  
your sins have hidden his face from you,  
so that he will not hear.

**Psalm 66:18**

If I had cherished sin in my heart,  
the Lord would not have  
listened to me.

If the Spirit of God convicts us of this, then we put into practice what 1 John 1:9 teaches...



But what if we are uncertain if sin is the cause of God's silence?  
Again, the Scripture teaches us.

**Psalm 139:23-24**

**Search me, O God,  
and know my heart;  
test me and know  
my anxious thoughts.  
See if there is  
any offensive way in me,  
and lead me  
in the way everlasting.**



And if God reveals there is something offensive in us... then we put into practice what 1 John 1:9 teaches.

- Sometimes God is silent and seemingly distant... for the sake of glory. Let me explain.

Sometimes, as was the case with OT Joseph and Job, challenging circumstances will pass through the hands of our Father and touch our lives, and as we ask for our Father's help he may not immediately answer us, he may not immediately come to our help.

Why does our Father do this?

Again, the Scripture explains and teaches us.

For our light and momentary troubles  
are achieving for us an eternal glory  
that far outweighs them all.

**2 Corinthians 4:17**



Our circumstances can feel like a great weight and God's seeming silence can make that weight feel even heavier.

I remind you... that the people of God live by faith and not by sight.

How does God describe the troubles that he permits to touch our lives?  
As being... light and momentary.  
In comparison to what?  
To the weight of glory that is coming!

If God says this is so, then it is so... and we persevere... and we encourage one another to not give up.... to follow Jesus until we draw our last breath or he return.

God does not waste anything.  
He uses even our troubles, even his seeming silence to forge in his people a character like that of our Lord Jesus.

Our Father will answer.  
He will come to our rescue.

Therefore, we resolve that with the help of the Spirit we will wait for him.

**Psalm 27:14**

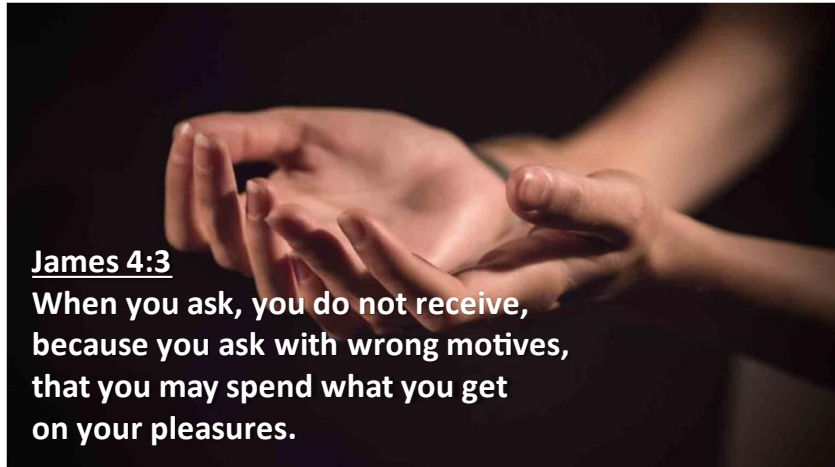
**Wait for the Lord; be strong and let your heart take courage; yes, wait for the Lord.**

**Micah 7:7:**

**But as for me, I will watch expectantly for the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation. My God will hear me.**

Let's now interact with our first question for today.

- Sometimes God says no to what we ask of him...because we've asked with wrong motives.



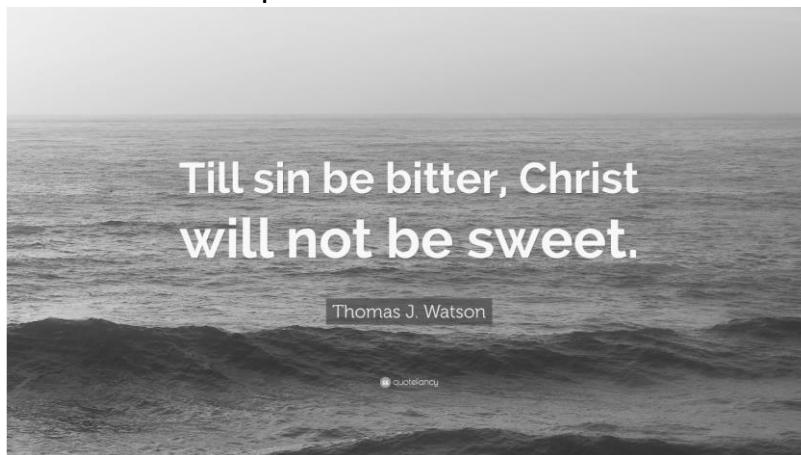
As a wise Father, God knows us better than we know ourselves.  
He knows what we need... and he takes care of us.

This is why he will sometime say no to our prayers... why sometimes he withholds things from us that he knows would harm us, or that he knows would feed our old sin nature, or distract us from seeking first the kingdom of God.

That said, in God's wisdom... if a child of his is stubborn and insistent, he may wisely let them have what they ask for.

Why would the Father do that?

Thomas Watson provides us with the answer...



This is what the prodigal son had to learn.

He thought life on his terms would be better... until it wasn't... until things completely imploded... and then and only then... did he come to his senses... and begin the journey home to his father.

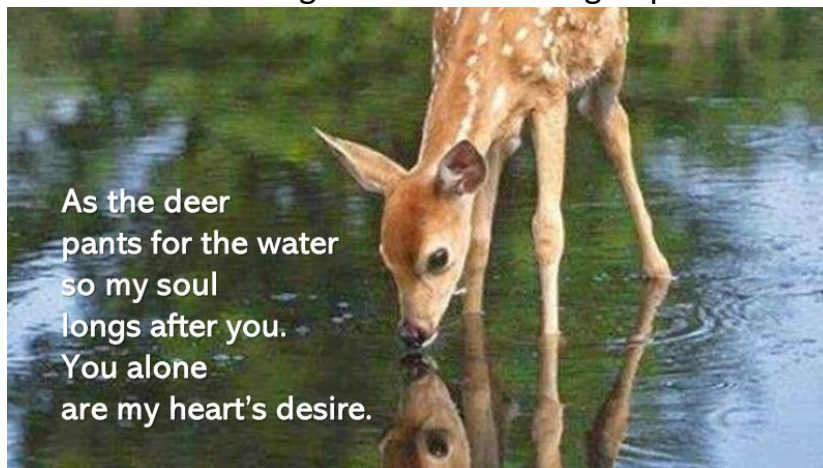
Life doesn't work unless God is at the center... unless God is our first love.

That is why as the Spirit transforms us, forging in us a character that is like that of Jesus Christ, he simultaneously is teaching and training our hearts to love God first and foremost.

**Psalm 63:3**  
Your love  
is better  
than life.

**Psalm 63:1**  
I thirst for you,  
my whole being  
longs for you...

This is what we sang of in our first song of praise....



An important question each of us will answer... again and again throughout the years we follow Jesus... is how do we respond to our Father when he says no to something we have asked him for... something that we think we need and should have?

Do we get angry?

Do we question our Father's goodness?

Do we pull back from him in disappointment and let distance grow between us?

Or do we press into him, refusing to let go of him?

Do we accept his decision, trusting that he knows best what we need?



Let's now interact with the next question.

1. Why bother praying?
2. How are we to understand unanswered prayer?
3. When God says no.
4. **Is there a right way to pray?**
5. Am I praying about the right thing?

Let's look at Matthew 6:5-15.

Matthew 6:5-15

"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.

<sup>6</sup> But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen.

Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

What is Jesus saying here?

Prayer is not a public performance.

Prayer is communication with...our Father who is unseen.

Here we find ourselves back at the point that has been crucial to the questions we've already interacted with.

Remember Hebrews 11:6?

Hebrews 11:6  
Without faith  
it is impossible to please God,  
because anyone who comes to him  
must believe that he exists,  
and that he rewards those  
who earnestly seek him.

### **Is there a right way to pray?**

Yes... by faith... believing that God our Father exists though he is unseen... believing that our Father hears us... and believing that the Father rewards those who earnestly seek him in prayer.

Without faith... it is both pointless and impossible to pray.

### Matthew 6:5-15

<sup>7</sup> And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.

<sup>8</sup> Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

With the practice of magic... a petitioner has to determine the right words to say, and how often the words are to be repeated and in what order ...and in what tone they are to be spoken... and at what time of day or night ...and in what setting.

Magic tries to gain control of spirit beings in order to get them to do something for the petitioner.



Jesus says that prayer is nothing like magic.

Prayer is a relational conversation.

God hears his children because he is their father; he knows what they need; and he is committed to provide and to care for them.

### Is there a right way to pray?

Yes, simply, like a child speaking to their father.

Having said these things, Jesus then provided his disciples with an example of how to pray.

#### Matthew 6:5-15

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come.

May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven

Give us each day our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins, for we also have forgiven  
everyone who sins against us.

And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from the evil one.

Without taking a break, Jesus continued...

#### Matthew 6:5-15

<sup>14</sup>For **if you forgive** other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

<sup>15</sup>But **if you do not forgive** others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

When we speak with our heavenly Father, what did Jesus say the Father requires? That we forgive others to the extent which the Father has forgiven us.

This was a profound teaching that I think surprised the disciples. It was a teaching that Peter specifically thought much about.

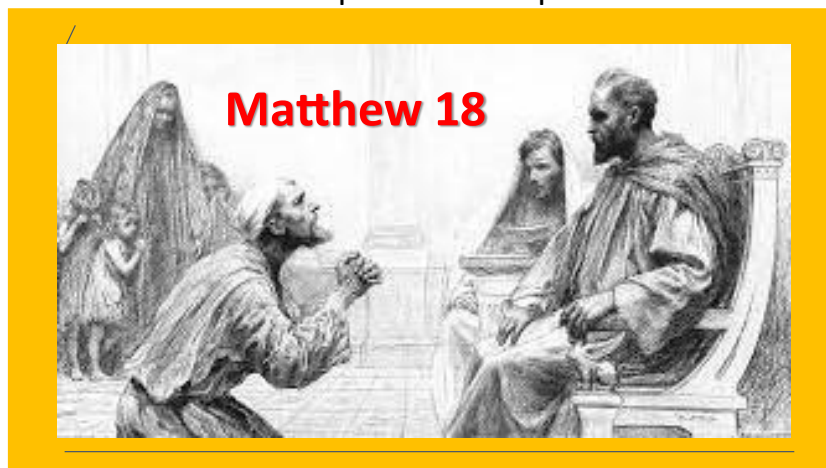
I say this because some time later Peter asked Jesus how many times, he had to forgive a brother who had sinned against him.

Thinking he was being overly generous Peter suggested... seven times?

To which Jesus answered –

~~70 X 7~~

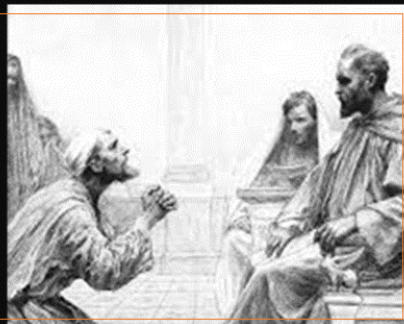
And then Jesus told a parable to explain his answer.



What point did Jesus make with this parable?

It was summed up in the question the king asked.

“Should you not have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?”



## Is there a right way to pray?

Yes, with awe and with gratitude... that the grace and mercy of God has forgiven our sin debt.

And in obedience... forgiving those who sin against us.

We forgive as we have been forgiven.

The Spirit of God is a reconciling Spirit...who reconciles us to the Father... and then to one another.

Let me sum it up.

Is there a right way to pray?

We pray by faith.

We pray simply, like a child speaking to their father.

We pray in awe of God's mercy.



Let's interact with our last question.

1. Why bother praying?
2. How are we to understand unanswered prayer?
3. When God says no.
4. Is there a right way to pray?
5. **Am I praying about the right thing?**

Before we consider what the Bible says about this question, let me remind you of a passage we looked at two weeks ago.

Romans 8:26

The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us...

Romans 8:34

Christ Jesus, who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

How incredible is this?

Even when we are unsure if we are praying about the right thing, the Scripture promises ... that our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are praying for us, they are speaking to the Father on our behalf...

Romans 8:26

The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us... **according to the will of God.**

Romans 8:34

Christ Jesus, who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

... and what they are asking is in complete agreement and alignment with the Father's will.

Your name and your circumstances are constantly placed before the Father. You are never forgotten; never passed over. Does that not leave you in awe of the triune God?!

But it is still important... that as we grow in our faith... that we pray about the right things.

There are three verses that teach us regarding this question.

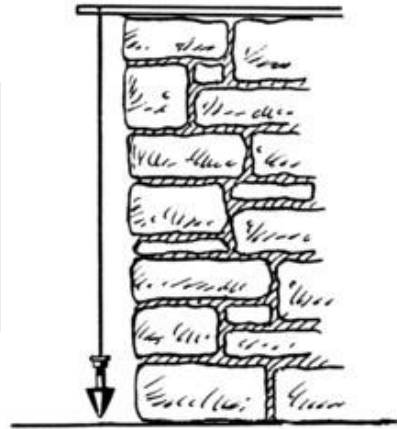
Psalm 145:18

The Lord is near  
to all who call on him,  
to all who call on him  
**in truth.**

We are to pray in truth.

In a culture where we constantly hear, “speak your truth,” “this is my truth,” how do we know we are calling on God in truth?

The bible teaches that the word of God functions like a plumbline.



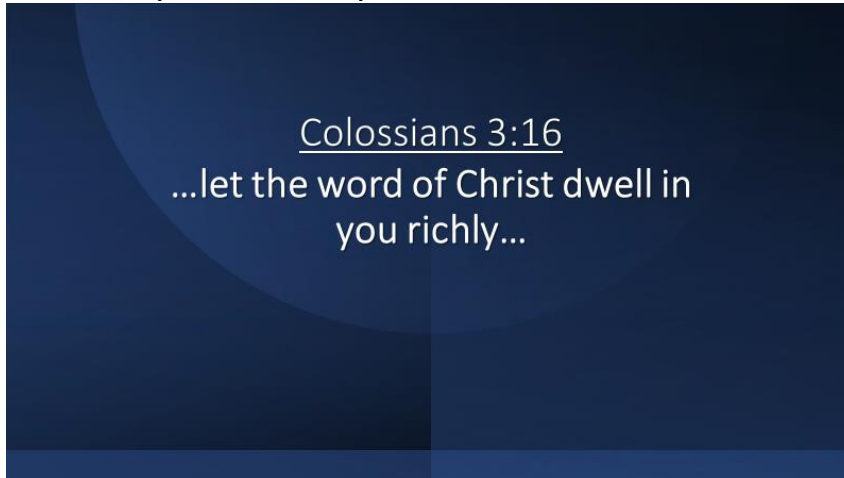
If our requests are not in line with what God’s word says, then we are not praying in truth.

**How do we learn to pray about the right thing?**

**How do we know we are not asking with wrong motives?**

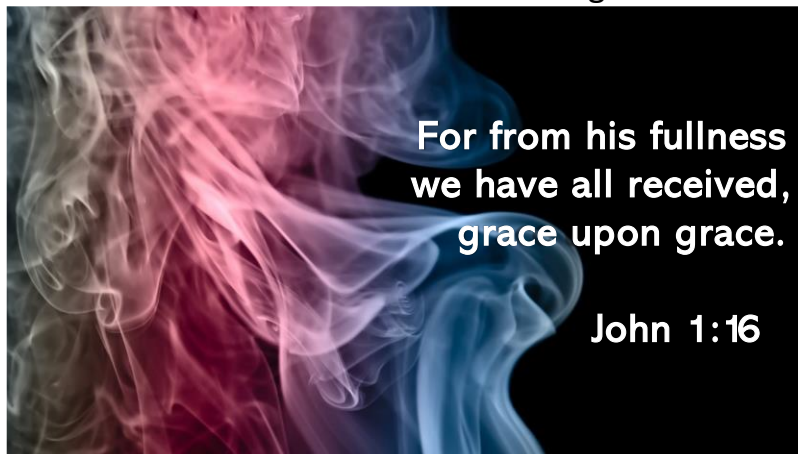
The word of God teaches us what is truth... in the eyes of God.

This is why the Bible says...



We are told to let the word of God inhabit our lives... to let it be present and in control of every aspect of who we are... informing and shaping our thoughts... our words... our actions ... our feelings.

Jared Wilson explains the significance of the word “richly.”  
The word of Christ is rich with Christ’s graces.



From Jesus, from his person and his work... we receive grace upon grace.

The word of Christ is rich in substance, because the Scriptures are God-breathed, and are sufficient for every need... we have and ever would have...

## 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV)

16) All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17) so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

The will of God is that the word of Christ dwell in us...

### Colossians 3:16

...let the word of Christ dwell in you richly...

...not sparsely, but richly.

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/jared-c-wilson/the-word-of-christ-dwells-richly/>

As the word of Christ dwells in us richly...it will inform and shape and empower our prayers.

**How do we know if we are praying about the right thing?**

**How do we know we are not asking with wrong motives?**

Look at 1 John and John's gospel.

1 John 5:14

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask **anything according to his will**, he hears us.

John 14:14

Jesus said... "You may ask me for **anything in my name** and I will do it."

### **How do we know what God's will is?**

We are back to the verse we just looked at – let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.

### **What does it mean to ask for something in the name of Jesus?**

It doesn't mean that when we pray, we tack on the phrase – in Jesus' name. To pray in Jesus' name is to make requests of God that are in line with Jesus' character – that do not contradict who he is.

The priority of immersing our lives in the scriptures is inseparable from our practice of prayer.





### **Prayers of the People: for ourselves**

We ask you O God that you search our hearts and reveal if there is anything deceitful in us, anything that grieves you. Please speak... we are listening.

We agree with you and confess our sin. Please forgive us because of Jesus who died in our place. Please cleanse our inner person and break the power of cancelled sin. We ask this in His name.

**We give you thanks for your mercy.**

### **Prayers of the People: for the church family**

Psalm 1 says that there is a great blessing for those who delight in your word, who live according to it, and meditate upon it. Father, you promise that if we do so, we will be like a tree planted by streams of water, that yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither in drought. O Father, we ask that the people of this local church would spiritually thrive and that our lives would demonstrate the reality of heaven. We ask this in His name.

**We give you thanks for your mercy.**

### **Prayers of the People: for the church family of El Redil Caldas**

We ask on behalf of Jesus, who is discouraged that he would be encouraged in who You are and in Your grace that has saved him. May he and Adriana grow strong in their faith.



**We give you thanks for your mercy.**

### Prayers of the People: for family, friends and neighbors (written by Tim Keller)

O Father, please send your blessings, on my family, friends and neighbors. Bless those who have done us good, and pardon those who have done us ill, and give them repentance and better minds. Be merciful to those who are in any trouble or suffering and come alongside of and help them according to their needs. We ask you to do this for the sake of the One who went about doing good, your Son and our Savior, Jesus Christ. We ask this in His name.

We give you thanks for your mercy.

### Prayers of the People: for Awakening

O Father, may you make known your glory in all the earth. We ask you to fulfill all you have purposed for your Son in the nations of the earth, and in your church.

Please do this for the glory of the cross. We ask this in His name.

We give you thanks for your mercy.