

WORD ALIVE — WEEK 12

Why Isn't God Answering My Prayers?

What Jesus Really Taught About Prayer • Matthew 6

1. When You Pray

In Matthew 6, Jesus assumes prayer and fasting will be normal parts of a disciple's life. Before teaching what to pray, He addresses motive: prayer is not a performance for people, nor is effectiveness measured by many words. We pray to a Father who sees in secret and already knows what we need.

Scriptures: Matthew 6:5–8, 16–18

2. The Lord's Prayer: A Model for Prayer

Jesus gives His disciples a pattern that begins with relationship—"Our Father"—and moves through worship, surrender, provision, forgiveness, guidance, and protection. The prayer is not merely words to repeat; it teaches us how to approach God and what matters in prayer.

Scriptures: Matthew 6:9–13; Luke 11:1–4

3. Jesus Modeled a Life of Prayer

The disciples had watched Jesus minister in extraordinary power, yet their request was, "Lord, teach us to pray." Jesus repeatedly withdrew to pray, prayed before major decisions, and demonstrated a life of communion with the Father.

Scriptures: Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16; Luke 6:12–13; Luke 9:28–29; Luke 11:1

4. Ask, Seek, Knock

Immediately after teaching on prayer in Luke 11, Jesus tells a story illustrating bold persistence. He then gives the invitation: Ask. Seek. Knock. Prayer is persistent, expectant, and rooted in confidence in the goodness of our heavenly Father.

Scriptures: Luke 11:5–13; Matthew 7:7–11

5. God Invites Us to Pray—and Promises to Hear

Throughout Scripture, God repeatedly invites His people to call, ask, seek, pray, and come boldly. Biblical prayer is not wishful thinking; it is responding to God's invitation and trusting His character and promises.

Scriptures: Jeremiah 33:3; Psalm 34:17; Psalm 50:15; Isaiah 65:24; Matthew 7:7–8; Matthew 18:19–20; Matthew 21:22; Mark 11:22–24; John 14:13–14; John 15:7; John 15:16; John 16:23–24; Philippians 4:6–7; Hebrews 4:16; James 1:5–6; James 4:2; James 5:16–18; 1 John 3:21–22; 1 John 5:14–15

6. Understanding Unanswered Prayer

The promises of prayer do not turn prayer into a formula for getting anything we want. Scripture teaches us to examine our motives, abide in Christ and His Word, forgive, walk obediently, and ask according to God's will. Sometimes God's answer is different from the one we expected, but His grace and wisdom remain trustworthy.

Scriptures: Psalm 66:18; Mark 11:25; John 15:7; James 4:3; 1 John 5:14–15; 2 Corinthians 12:7–10

7. Pray and Don't Lose Heart

Jesus specifically taught His disciples to keep praying and not become discouraged. Scripture gives repeated examples of persistence when an answer was delayed. Delay is not necessarily denial; we continue to seek God while trusting His timing and His wisdom.

Scriptures: Luke 18:1–8; Daniel 10:12–13; 1 Kings 18:41–45

8. The Foundation: Knowing the Father

The confidence behind prayer is not that we know how to say everything perfectly—it is that we know the One to whom we are praying. Jesus continually points us back to the goodness of our Father: He knows, He hears, He cares, and He invites us to come.

Scriptures: Matthew 6:8–9; Matthew 7:7–11; Luke 11:9–13; Hebrews 4:16

Take This With You

Ask. Seek. Knock. Pray. Don't lose heart. Bring your needs to the Father, surrender to His will, remain in His Word, and trust His goodness—even when the answer has not yet appeared.