

God Answers Prayer

Luke 1:5-25

There is this song that we used to sing in Sunday School a long time ago – Whisper a Prayer. The chorus says: “God answers prayer in the morning. God answers prayer at noon. God answers prayer in the evening to keep your heart in tune. We must always remember that God still answers prayer, hence we must never stop praying about the things that are important to you.

- Pray for your family
- Pray for your country
- Pray for your church
- Pray for the people you love that don't know the Lord
- Pray for God to provide and financial breakthroughs
- Pray for healing
- Pray to draw closer to God and to be filled with His Spirit
- Pray to find the right person – a godly man or woman to marry
- Pray for God to heal broken relationships
- Pray for help in your dreams and your studies
- Pray for wisdom and leadership

When something is important to you then you must keep praying about it because God answers prayer. Many times, in the bible Jesus prayed or He taught His disciples how to pray. At different times we will need God to help us – the only way we can help from the Lord is through prayer. You cannot ignore praying for a situation and expect things to change. If you want it to change then you must soak that situation in prayer

Main Points:

There is the story of this elderly couple in the bible. Zechariah and Elizabeth. Zechariah was a faithful man of God who worked hard for the Lord in the temple. They were devoted to the Lord, but they had a serious situation. They couldn't have children. For many years they had this situation.

Many of us today have our own situations. Their situation was not having a child. Your situation might be different. Your situation might be your spiritual life, a family member or some other need in your life.

This situation wasn't something they caused. It just happened that Elizabeth couldn't conceive. Sometimes we would want to know what did I do wrong? Not every time you face a situation means you did something wrong. There will be times when the Lord will allow us to be tested.

This couple had to carry a very heavy cross. They were serving God and doing everything right, but still they had to carry this cross. When you are a child of God and doing your best to do the right thing, we will still have to carry our cross and deal with the trials and tribulations that come our way.

One day Zechariah was worshipping and praying in the temple when an angel from the Lord visited him inside the temple. Nobody except him and the angel were there. Zechariah was very afraid, and the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, your prayer has been heard. God is going to give you and your wife a son and you will call him John. He will be a blessing to you and he will be great in the sight of the Lord.

There is a lesson here. The angel said God has heard your prayers. For many years he and his wife would have been praying about this situation and now when they are old and it almost impossible to have this child, they receive this message that God is finally going to answer this prayer.

What happened to Zechariah and Elizabeth should give us hope that when you pray and truly believe God in your heart, He will hear your prayers. Matthew 19:26 says "with God all things are possible." There is nothing that God cannot do. When we read the bible, Jesus had power to heal the sick, drive away evil spirits, provide food for thousands of people, forgive sinners and convince sinners to become born again. There is no situation that the Lord cannot touch.

They never had children because Elizabeth couldn't conceive. Even if she wanted to, she couldn't because she had no control over conception. We need to understand that there are some situations we will face where you have no control. You have no control to change somebody or to release certain miracles. Elizabeth would have wanted a child before, but she had no control. However, with God all things are possible and in cases of serious situation, we must remember to give that problem over to the Lord

As I looked at the life of Zechariah and Elizabeth there are some lessons the Lord placed inside my spirit:

1. We must be patient with the Lord

They would have been praying for a child since they were young. God didn't give them a son when they were young, He gave it to them when they were old. God made them wait. There are times when we must wait upon the Lord. In 2nd Samuel the bible says there was a long war between the House of David and the House of Saul. David was chosen by God to be the King, but the House of Saul was fighting him in a very long war.

Although it was a long war, David held on and never gave up on getting the kingdom because he knew in his heart that God called him to be a king. Joseph had to wait a long time in the prison before God promoted him, but he waited.

One of Satan's weapons is discouragement. Satan will do things to discourage you while we wait on the Lord. He will tell you that you are wasting your time, or the person will never change or that will never happen. He wants you to believe waiting is not making sense.

Guard your heart from listening to the devil. Rebuke him and if the Lord really put something in your spirit, then wait and be patient with the Lord.

Psalm 40 says I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear the LORD and put their trust in him.

Someone came to me sometime ago and was sharing how their business was getting slow. I said maybe it is just a season your business is facing. If you hold on things will change. Many times, we write things off because we can't see it happen but the answer from the Lord might not be No! God might just be saying Not Yet!

2. Be Faithful to the Lord whether things are going good or bad

Look at verse 6. It says both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commands and decrees blamelessly. But they were childless.

They would have something from the Lord and God wasn't coming through for them in the time we expect. Yet the bible says they were righteous and obedient to the commandments. Many people start to serve the Lord and attend church because they need a touch from God. The problem is that desire to pull away from serving the Lord when you feel discouraged or hurt.

Elizabeth and Zechariah might have felt discouraged and hurt because of this situation, but they stayed with the Lord. We must be faithful to God whether things are good or bad.

My personal life verse is 1st Cor 15:58. It says be steadfast, unmovable and always abounding in the work of the Lord knowing that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.

Nothing you do for God will go in vain and we must be faithful to Him, whether you feel happy or sad. Be Faithful

- a. Remember: You have no control over the day of visitation – Just keep sowing good seeds.

Zechariah was old, and it didn't seem like he will ever have child. He might be discouraged, but where is he, in the temple worshipping and praying – sowing good seeds. You cannot control the day that God will manifest Himself in your situation, but when He shows up let Him see you sowing good seeds

The Lord looks at all these things: faithfulness, commitment, loyalty, trust and attitude.

- b. God will answer prayers!

In verse 13 the angel said: "Your Prayer has been heard"

God was hearing the prayers all along. He received it in His heart and He knew exactly when John will be born. My sister gave me a present for my daughter. I put away. I know it's a gift that she wants but even though I have it, I am not giving it to her right now. One it is for Christmas and you cannot get Christmas gift before Christmas. Similarly,

there are some things the Lord wants to do at certain seasons of your life and only when that season comes you will get it. The most important thing is the gift is safe. There is no question of if. She is going to get it, just at the right time

We must trust that His timing is perfect and have faith that God will answer that prayer. Remember we must walk by faith and not by sight. Don't let what you see going wrong with your eyes break your spirit – Look at Jesus and learn to walk in faith.

You must trust God's timing. We see only our picture, which is the small picture, but God looks at the big picture. God answered the prayer and gave them a son that went to become John the Baptist.

John was the forerunner to Jesus Christ. He started to prepare the hearts of the people for lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. God times John's birth to work out just in time for Jesus's birth. God has a plan and we must believe in faith that our prayer has been heard. He has a reason why He is choosing to operate the way He is operating.

Always remember every decision the Lord makes for you when it comes to answering prayer is in your best interest.

c. Sometimes the longer the wait the better the blessing:

There are times when God will make you, but you when you open your heart to the Lord, you will realise that by the time He finally answers the prayer it was because He was making you wait for something great

When He gave them a son, He didn't just give them an ordinary. He gave them John the Baptist. One of the most powerful prophets that ever lived. Matthew 11 says:

As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind?"⁸ If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings' palaces.⁹ Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.¹⁰ This is the one about whom it is written:

*"I will send my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way before you."^[c]*

11 Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

Look at the bible and you see many times when God made His people, it was for something great:

- Hannah waited years for her son who became a prophet
- Abraham waited years for Isaac
- Moses waited years in the desert
- David waited years for the kingdom
- Joseph waited years to become the leader
- Noah waited years for the rain to fall
- God's people waited years for the Messiah, Christ Jesus to be born

Every single one of them had to wait, but when God finally moved, He did something great. Today you might wait on God, just trusting and most importantly keep praying because God still answers prayer

- d. Some of us might be young today and things are tough – don't worry things will get better and some of your greatest blessings in life will come as you get older

Hold on and keep sowing good seeds. Do what you believe in your heart God wants you to do and as you get older, God will honour you for your faithfulness

It is never too late for God to do something great in your life

We Must Have Faith

In verse 18, after the angel Gabriel told Zechariah all the great things that God was going to do in his life, the first thing that came from his mouth was doubt. He started to speak about his age and the fact that his wife was old. He heard the message, but he couldn't believe. Many of us hear but you might be struggling to believe

Zechariah was a godly man. He was faithful to the temple and righteous in deeds but he struggled with faith.

Many times, we doubt God and put limits on Him. We need to take the limits off God and trust Him in faith. We also need to be careful about

the things we say our words have power. What we say can open doors or close doors?

In verse 19 the angel said I am Gabriel. I come here with a message from God. Verse 20 then says, "and now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time." Just that one statement had such a deep effect on this man's life. We must speak with Faith and not unbelief!

1. Unbelief has consequences.

When God wants to do something in your life or even in the church and we doubt Him, it could obstruct your blessing. The Bible says without faith it is impossible to please. Jesus told Martha if you only believe you will see the glory of the Lord. We must believe if we really want to see God in His glory. We must believe if we want to see God do miracles. We must believe if we want to experience the fullness of God's power. Everything is By Faith!

Sometimes God in His grace will do it still whether you believe or not such as the case of Zechariah, but then look at what happened. His quality of life was affected, and he couldn't speak. I personally believe there are times when God will make a promise over your life and because of His grace, whether you believe it or not He will keep that promise, but your happiness, peace and joy could be affected until the time He fulfils the promise just because of your attitude towards the promise.

Unbelief is like throwing cold water on a word from the Lord. It grieves Him when we say things that are contrary. We must speak with faith

2. We must believe God – faith has rewards.

In Luke 1:37 the angel went to somebody else – the Virgin Mary with a powerful promise. You will be the mother of the messiah. The Holy Spirit will come on you and you will become pregnant with the Saviour of the world. The angel said no word from God will ever fail. That means of God has spoken something over your life through the blessed Holy Spirit or if He has made a promise to you in the word then that promise will never fail.

We need to receive that in our spirits and believe it in faith. God cannot fail! Regardless of how big that mountain is in your life, God cannot fail! Although things might be slow and dry for you right now, God cannot fail!

Then verse 38, Mary says "I am the Lord's servant. May your word be fulfilled." She receives it and she believed it! So, let it Be! She was never with a man, but God said I will get pregnant, then I receive it. She was engaged to another man and having this child meant she would be accused of adultery, but so let it be. There is a song we sing from the Brooklyn Tabernacle: "Lord I believe in you." It says:

*Lord, I believe in You
I'll always believe in You
Though I can't see you with my eyes
Deep in my heart
Your presence I find
Lord, I believe in You
And I'll keep my trust in You
Let the whole world say what they may
No one can take this joy away
Lord, I believe*

Years before Brooklyn tabernacle ever existed, this young virgin was making declaration in her heart, Lord I believe in you. We need to believe God and remember deep inside of our hearts that God answers prayer – so just keep praying.

- *Faith is when you believe in something even though you cannot see it*
- *Faith is when you believe something could happen even though you cannot see how it will happen*
- *Faith is when you believe in your heart things will work out even though it doesn't look like it will work out*

Conclusion:

Whenever God determines to do a Great Work, He first sets His people to pray – Charles Spurgeon. To solve any problem in your life, start with prayer. Bring it to the Lord and if the Lord leads you to do something, do it. If the Lord leads you to be still, Be still. Whether the Lord is

leading to move or be still, whatever you do, don't do it until you bring it before the Lord in prayer.

God answers prayer!

The most important lessons we must remember are:

- We must be patient with the Lord
- We must be faithful, whether things are good or bad.
- Remember we have no control over the day of visitation – just keep sowing good seeds
- In due season God will answer your prayer
- Have Faith

Life might not be going the way you would like it to go but remember this – God answers prayer! We just need to trust Him and keep praying. Take the limits off God and don't doubt Him. Have faith!

Verse 23 says when the encounter with the angel ended, Zechariah went home and just as God said, he wife really got pregnant and for five months she did not come outside. Maybe she was uncomfortable being an old woman carrying a child. I do not know. However, she said something: "The Lord has done this for me." Man didn't do it. The Lord! Remember your trust is not in man, your faith is in the Lord and there is nothing that the Lord cannot do

There are some things the Lord will help you to do that you will never be able to do in your own strength – remember your faith is in the Lord!

Elizabeth said the Lord has done this for me and He has shown His favour and taken away my disgrace from the people. Just remember that tvery situation, every trial and every matter that might be causing you disgrace, God is able to take it away! Just keep trusting and remember, God answers Prayer!