

WEEK 4: Does God hear my prayers?



In the first three weeks of this series, we have discussed some core questions about prayer. Having laid a foundation about the nature of prayer, we now turn to some of the thorny questions that many of us struggle with. This week, we will grapple with the complexities of whether and when God “hears” our prayers.



Key reading: John 14.8-14

Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father; that will be enough for us.” Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe I am in the Father, and the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority.

Rather, the Father, living in me, is doing his work. Believe me when I say I am in the Father, and the Father is in me, or at least believe the evidence of the works themselves. I tell you that whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

If you want to add supplementary readings to support this theme into your worship service, consider 1 Kings 8.37-43 or Psalm 66.16-20 from the Old Testament and either James 5.13-16 or Philippians 4.4-7 from the New Testament.



The verses from John 14:8-14 are part of what is known as the “Farewell Discourse” of Jesus, which spans chapters 14 to 17 of the Gospel of John. This section is particularly significant as it captures the intimate teachings and reassurances Jesus offers to His disciples shortly before His impending arrest, trial and crucifixion.

These particular verses occur during the Last Supper, a pivotal moment in which Jesus prepares His disciples for His impending departure. He addresses their concerns about where He is going and provides comfort about the future. The discourse is rich with theological insights, particularly concerning the relationship between Jesus and His Father and the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus responds to Philip's request to show the disciples the Father, emphasising the unity between Himself and the Father. He assures them that those who have seen Him *have seen the Father*, highlighting the deep connection between His words, actions, and divine will. This discourse is meant to prepare the disciples for when Jesus will no longer be physically present with them. It's a profound moment where Jesus comforts His followers, encourages them to maintain their faith, and introduces the promise of the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, Jesus speaks of the works His followers will do in His name, suggesting that their future mission will continue His work and even exceed it in scope—all to the glory of the Father.

This passage is central to understanding the nature of Jesus' ministry and His promises regarding the empowerment of believers through faith and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. It's a source of theological reflection on the nature of God and the dynamic interplay between divine action and human agency.

Key Themes and Lessons

Whilst the entire passage really needs to be read as a whole, we focus on the last three verses for our purposes. John 14:12-14 focuses on the spiritual empowerment of believers and the nature of prayer in Jesus' name. Here are the main points:

- **Prayer in Jesus' Name:** Jesus emphasises the power of praying in His name. This is not a formulaic incantation but an alignment with His character and will. Praying in Jesus' name means seeking what will glorify the Father through the Son.
- **Glorifying the Father:** The ultimate purpose of these more significant works and answered prayers is to glorify God the Father. Believers' works and prayers should reflect and point to the divine source from which they come.
- **Jesus' Ongoing Work:** The promise of doing greater works is linked to Jesus going to the Father, indicating that His departure (His death, resurrection, and ascension) would initiate a new phase of God's work on earth through the Holy Spirit and the believers.
- **Greater Works:** Jesus assures those who believe in Him will continue His works and do even greater ones. This is not necessarily in miraculous signs but in the Gospel's impact and the Holy Spirit's transformative impact through the church's ministry.

These teachings encourage believers to understand their role in God's plan, the importance of faith in action, and the assurance of Jesus' support through prayer as they seek to fulfil His mission on earth.

Interpretation and Practical Application

- **Praying with purpose:** We should pray to align with God's will and purposes. This means seeking guidance to live in ways which further the Gospel message, always aiming to reflect Jesus' character in our requests.

- **The expectation of answered prayer:** Believers are expected to pray, and when made in Jesus' name, their prayers will be answered. This encourages boldness and confidence in prayer, knowing it is a powerful tool for bringing about change and achieving God's purposes on earth.
- **Glorifying God in everything:** Everything we do should aim to glorify God. This principle guides our decision-making and actions, ensuring that the ultimate goal is to honour God, whether in public or in the quiet acts of kindness that may go unseen.
- **Doing greater works:** The anticipation of doing greater works than Jesus's can inspire us to pursue grand visions and projects. We are called not to limit the scope of our impact but to be open to the Holy Spirit's leading.

These applications guide believers daily, providing a framework for living out their faith in practical and impactful ways.



Online resources

How do I know God hears my prayer

<https://billygraham.org/story/know-god-hears-prayers-billy-grahams-answer/>

How can I know God hears my prayer?

<https://www.christianity.com/wiki/prayer/how-can-we-be-sure-god-hears-our-prayers.html>

Five reasons we know God hears our prayer

<https://www.biblestudytools.com/bible-study/topical-studies/essential-reasons-we-know-god-hears-our-prayers.html>

Three signs God hears my prayer

<https://www.ibelieve.com/faith/surefire-signs-to-know-god-hears-our-prayers.html>

Here is a summary of these online resources.

We can be assured that God hears our prayers based on several key points:

1. **Divine Promise:** The Bible contains numerous promises that God will hear our prayers. For instance, Psalm 55:16-17 expresses confidence in God's attentiveness to prayer.
2. **The Nature of God:** The Bible portrays God as loving and caring, deeply involved in the lives of His people. This relationship implies that He is attentive to our prayers.
3. **Biblical Testimony:** Throughout the Bible, there are accounts of prayers being heard and answered, reinforcing the belief that God is listening.
4. **Personal Experience:** Many believers report a sense of peace and confirmation in their hearts after prayer, which they interpret as a sign of God's listening presence.
5. **Answered Prayers:** When prayers are answered, even if not in the way we expected, it shows that God is engaged and responsive to our petitions.

Remembering that God's ways and timing differ from ours is important. While we may not always understand His responses, we can trust His wisdom and love.

Discerning God's answers to our prayers involves a combination of faith, awareness, and reflection. Here are some ways to recognise His responses:

- I. **Alignment with Scripture:** God's answers will never contradict His Word. Knowing the Bible, we can discern whether an answer aligns with God's character and promises.
- II. **Peace of Heart:** A sense of peace often accompanies God's answer, even if it's not what we hoped for. This peace transcends understanding and can signify that God has heard us.
- III. **Circumstantial Signs:** Sometimes, God's answers are evident through changes in our circumstances, opening or closing doors, and guiding our steps.
- IV. **Wise Counsel:** Seeking the advice of spiritually mature individuals can help us discern God's voice, especially when it aligns with biblical principles.
- V. **Prayerful Reflection:** Continual prayer and meditation on God's Word can help us clarify and understand His will.

It's essential to approach this process with an open heart and mind, trusting that God is at work even when His answers are unclear.



"God does nothing except in response to believing prayer." (*John Wesley*)

"Four things let us ever keep in mind: God hears prayer, God heeds prayer, God answers prayer, and God delivers by prayer." (*E.M Bounds*)

"God answers prayer in three ways: yes, no, and wait awhile." (*Norman Vincent Peale*)

"Whenever the insistence is on the point that God answers prayer, we are off the track. The meaning of prayer is that we get hold of God, not of the answer." (*Oswald Chambers*)

"God answers prayer in His way, not ours." (*Mahatma Gandhi*)

"Nobody ever got anything from God because he deserved it. So if God answers prayer, it's because God is good. From His goodness, His lovingkindness, His good-natured benevolence, God does it!" (*A.W Tozer*)

"God speaks in the silence of the heart. Listening is the beginning of prayer." (*Mother Teresa*)

"The world was made partly so that there may be prayer; partly so that our prayers might be answered." (*C.S Lewis*)



As I repeat each week, offering a sermon outline is in no way prescriptive. You can use it, adapt it or ignore it as you wish. Many of you will want to start from scratch and “work up” a sermon yourself. However, there are others who might value a little inspiration or “starter for ten”—and if you are in that cohort, then feel free to use this outline if it helps.

Introduction

Begin by acknowledging the weight of life’s troubles—the fears, anxieties, and uncertainties surrounding us. Mention global challenges, personal struggles, and the longing for answers.

Scripture Passage: John 14:12-14

Key Point: Jesus’ promise that our prayers ARE heard.

1: The Troubled Heart

Set the context: The Last Supper, Jesus’ impending arrest, and Judas’ betrayal. The disciples’ troubled hearts: Fear, uncertainty, and the looming power of death and evil.

Set against that turbulence is Jesus’ seemingly paradoxical command: *“Don’t be troubled.”*

Application: Our troubled hearts: Life’s storms, personal challenges, and global crises. The struggle to find peace amidst chaos. Jesus’ invitation to trust Him despite circumstances.

2: The Unwavering Promise

Jesus’ assurance: Those who believe in Him will do more excellent works. The power of prayer: Access to the Father through Jesus. Praying in Jesus’ name is not a magical formula but a heart aligned with God’s glory.

Application: Encourage believers to pray boldly, knowing God hears. Emphasise the privilege of approaching the Father. Remind them that God’s glory is the ultimate aim.

Point 3: Wrestling with Doubts

Our doubts and unanswered prayers. Wrestling with faith and trust. *“I believe, help my unbelief” (Mark 9.24)*

Application: Acknowledge doubts as part of the journey. Encourage honest conversations with God. Share personal testimonies of God’s faithfulness. Remind the congregation that God’s delays are purposeful.

Conclusion

Challenge the congregation for the week ahead:

- Encourage daily prayer.
- Set aside intentional time.
- Invite congregants to share their prayer requests.

Remind them that God hears—even in silence. Send them forth with hope, trusting that God is at work.



Suggested Hymns and Songs

STF H&P

663		I, the Lord of sea and sky
161		Speak, O Lord
545	378	Be Thou my vision
	224	It is a thing most wonderful
495	673	Dear Lord and Father of humanity
248	136	I heard the voice of Jesus say
	451	Nearer my God to thee
544		As the Deer
465	437	Guide me, O thou, Great Redeemer
451		Open the eyes of my heart
345	216	And can it be
	346	Hear us, O Lord, from heaven

Call To Worship

We lift our eyes to the hills,
From where does our help come?
Our help comes from the Lord,
Maker of heaven and earth.

Congregation:

**Our help comes from the Lord,
Maker of heaven and earth.**

He will not let your foot be moved;
He who keeps you will not slumber.
Behold, He who keeps Israel
Will neither slumber nor sleep.

Let us lift our hearts in gratitude and trust,
For the Lord, our keeper, watches over us.
In His presence, we find our strength and peace,
As we journey through life's trials and cease.

Congregation:

**Our help comes from the Lord,
Maker of heaven and earth.**

Prayers of Approach and Penitence

Short Opening Prayer

Dear Father, quieten our minds and still our hearts.
Your loving ways are all we seek.
Strengthen our lives, inspire our spirits,
and let Your living waters flow with endless grace. Amen.

Prayer of Approach

Lord, today we recall Your faithfulness.
Thank you for walking with us every day; you are always present.
We proclaim that Your promises are true
and that Your goodness and love never fail.
As we gather, we lay our lives before You.
May we honour, worship, and adore You with every fibre of our being
In Jesus' name, Amen.

Invocation Prayer

Father, thank You for bringing each of us safely to this place.
We gladly surrender our lives to You in worship and praise.
As we gather, we remember those who are not with us today
—those who are sick and those away from us.
We invite Your Holy Spirit to move freely among us.
Dwell in our hearts, equip, challenge, comfort, and teach us.
Inspire us as we learn more about Your majestic ways.
In Jesus' name, Amen.

Prayer Inspired by Psalm 95

As we open Your Word, Almighty God,
we are reminded of Your call to worship You with reverence and joy.
We bow before You, acknowledging Your sovereignty and love.
May our hearts be tuned to Your voice,
and may our praises be a sweet melody in Your ears.
Amen

Collect

Almighty and gracious God,
You who incline Your ear to our cries,
Hear us as we call out to You.
Grant that our prayers may rise like incense before Your throne,
May Your love surround us constantly.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen

Intercessions

Almighty God, Shepherd of our souls, we gather as Your Church, seeking ears attuned to Your voice. Stir our hearts to listen amid our worship. Grant us discernment to recognise Your whispers amidst the noise of life. May our gatherings be the holy ground where Your truth resounds. Strengthen our unity as we listen together, seeking Your will.

Lord, in Your mercy
Hear our prayer

Compassionate Creator, Your love extends to every corner of the earth. We intercede for the nations where hearts ache and ears strain to hear. Speak through the chaos, the languages, and the barriers. May leaders heed Your wisdom, and may the lost find hope in Your message. Let Your truth resound, drawing all to salvation.

Lord, in Your mercy
Hear our prayer

Loving Lord, we lift our community—the streets and homes we inhabit—before You. Open ears that have grown deaf to Your whispers. May our neighbourhoods, schools, and workplaces hear Your call to love, justice, and compassion. Use us as vessels of Your grace. In times of division, unite us in Your truth.

Lord, in Your mercy
Hear our prayer

Merciful Healer, we bring those who suffer physically, emotionally, and spiritually before You. Comfort the sick, ease their pain, and grant healing. Console the bereaved, whispering hope in their grief. May they hear Your promise of eternal life. Surround them with Your presence.

Lord, in Your mercy
Hear our prayer

Gracious God, quieten our hearts. Amid life's noise, help us discern Your voice. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer. Remove distractions that drown out Your whispers. Grant us ears attuned to Your Word. Speak to us in Scripture, silence, and ordinary moments. May we hear You clearly and follow faithfully.

Lord, in Your mercy
Hear our prayer

Sending Prayer (Benediction)

May the God who spoke creation into existence,
whose voice echoed through the ages,
and whose whisper sustains the universe,
go with you.

May you hear His voice in the rustling leaves,
the laughter of children, and the silence of solitude.
May His words guide your steps,
ignite your passion, and soothe your soul.

As you go, may you recognise His voice—
gentle, yet powerful; familiar, yet awe-inspiring.
And may you respond with open hearts,
ready to follow where He leads.
In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
Amen.



Prayer Activity: Candles

This week's prayer activity is simple—all you need is a candle (any type will do) and a few minutes in your day. Light a candle and sit quietly in its glow, using the flickering flame as a focal point for your prayers and meditation.

- Find a quiet, safe space to set up your candle, such as a table.
- Light the candle and take a moment to gaze at the flame, allowing its flickering light to calm your mind.
- Offer a prayer of intention, expressing your desires or concerns to God.
- Sit quietly in the candle's glow, allowing the warmth and light to symbolise the presence of divine love and guidance.
- Spend as much time in prayer as you feel called to, then extinguish the candle with a sense of peace and closure.

Prayer Activity: Scripture-Based Prayers

Materials Needed

- Bible or printed scriptures
- Pen and paper or a prayer journal
- Quiet space for reflection

Step-by-Step Instructions:

A. Choose a Scripture Passage

Select a passage that speaks to the theme of God hearing our prayers. Here are some suggested scriptures to get you started:

- Psalm 34:17: "The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles."
- Jeremiah 29:12: "Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you."
- 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."

B. Reflect on the Passage

- Read your chosen passage slowly and carefully. Let each word resonate with you. You may want to read it multiple times to absorb its meaning and significance fully.
- Spend a few moments in quiet reflection. Consider what the passage reveals about God's character, promises, and how He responds to prayer.
- Think about how the passage speaks to your current situation or concerns.

C. Personalise the Scripture

Rewrite the passage in your own words, personalising it to reflect your own prayers and circumstances.

For example: "The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles." might be rewritten as, "Lord, when I cry out to You, You hear me. I trust You to deliver me from all my troubles and help me constantly."

D. Write Your Prayer

Based on your reflection and personalisation, write a prayer that incorporates the essence of the scripture. Here's how you can structure your prayer:

- Start by addressing God with a name that is meaningful to you (e.g., "Heavenly Father," "Lord," "Loving God").
- Thanksgiving: Express gratitude for His presence, promises, and specific assurance in the scripture.
- Petition: Present your requests to God, aligning them with the truths found in the passage.
- Commitment: Commit to trusting in His response and timing, reaffirming your faith in His hearing and answering your prayers.

E. Pray the Scripture

- Read your personalised prayer aloud or silently. Allow the words to sink in and connect you with God's presence. Feel free to add any additional thoughts or concerns that come to mind.
- After you have prayed, spend a few moments in silence. Listen for any thoughts, impressions, or guidance from God. Reflect on how He might be speaking to you through the scripture and your prayer.
- Write down any thoughts, feelings, or insights you received during the prayer. This can help you track your spiritual journey and see how God responds to your prayers.
- Make scripture-based prayers a regular part of your devotional life. Each time, choose a different scripture or revisit a passage that has been particularly meaningful to you. This practice can deepen your understanding of God's word and strengthen your relationship with Him.

Using scripture as a foundation for your prayers helps ground your conversations with God in His word and promises. As you practice this regularly, may you grow in confidence that God hears you, understands your needs, and answers your questions in His perfect way and timing.

Icebreaker Questions

Imagine you could send a prayer directly to God via text. What emojis would you use to sign off your prayer? *(Optionally, you could ask people to text you before the meeting with a prayer consisting entirely of emojis)*

or

If you were writing a "How to Pray" guide for beginners, what would be your #1 tip?

or

What do you think God's 'inbox' looks like with all our prayers coming in? Show the scene from the movie *Bruce Almighty* about how he deals with having a bulging inbox. This could lead to a helpful discussion about how God copes with hearing prayers from all around the world simultaneously!

This clip can be [found on YouTube](#). There are a few different version on YouTube—search for "Bruce answering prayer." to see what is available.

Discussion Questions

1. What experiences or evidence in your life make you believe that God does or does not hear your prayers?
2. How do you interpret moments when it feels like your prayers are not being answered? What does this say about God's hearing and responding to prayers?
3. What role does faith play in believing God hears your prayers? How do doubt and uncertainty influence this belief?
4. How do you think God's 'timing' affects how we perceive whether He hears our prayers? Have you experienced a situation where an answer came at an unexpected time?
5. What is the difference between praying for something and believing it will happen versus leaving the outcome in God's hands?
6. How do you discern between God's response to your prayer and coincidences or natural outcomes?
7. How do community and collective prayer impact your belief that God hears your prayers? Can the prayers of others strengthen your faith?
8. How do different religious or spiritual traditions approach the idea of God hearing prayers, and what can we learn from these perspectives?
9. How do you reconcile believing in a loving and attentive God with instances where prayers for critical needs, like health or safety, seem unanswered?
10. What practices or attitudes have you found helpful in feeling more confident that God hears your prayers? How do these practices affect your spiritual life?

Multiple Choice Bible Study

1. Which of these scriptures directly addresses the idea that God hears our prayers?
 - A. "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."
 - B. "The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles."
 - C. "God helps those who help themselves."
 - D. "Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you."
 - E. "Cleanliness is next to godliness."

2. Which of the following is a common belief about why some prayers seem unanswered?
 - A. Prayers are answered in ways we might not understand.
 - B. The prayer request exceeded God's monthly quota.
 - C. God stopped answering prayer once Jesus had Ascended.
 - D. The timing might not align with God's plan.
 - E. The prayer didn't have enough likes on social media.

3. In which of the following places did Jesus teach about the importance of prayer?
 - A. Sailing on the Sea of Galilee
 - B. In a quiet place on a mountain.
 - C. At a rock concert.
 - D. At the first Olympic Games.
 - E. In the Garden of Gethsemane.

4. According to Christian teachings, Which of these attitudes is often considered essential for effective prayer?
 - A. Humility and faith.
 - B. Closing our eyes when we pray.
 - C. Persistence and trust.
 - D. Memorising many Bible texts
 - E. Speaking in 16th Century English during prayer.

5. What is a common reason people feel God hears their prayers?
 - A. They use lots of words—including LONG words...
 - B. They sense a feeling of peace or reassurance afterwards.
 - C. They send a certified letter to heaven.
 - D. They see changes or responses in their lives.
 - E. Their prayer was featured on a reality TV show.

Leaders Notes for Multiple Choice Bible Study

These questions are designed to provoke thought and discussion while adding a bit of humour to keep the conversation light and engaging.

Print our copies of the previous page and hand them out to the group (with pens).

Some of the answers are deliberately ridiculous to keep the tone light!

There is always more than one viable "correct" answer. So, it is perfectly possible for people to plump for different correct answers.

Q1 Answers B and D are correct; you might argue that A also supports the premise. Did anyone spot that neither C or E are verses from the Bible at all (even though some people assume both statements come from the Bible)

Q2 Answers A and D are correct.

Q3 B and E are correct according to the New Testament. Whilst answer A "looks" correct at first glance, nothing suggests that Jesus taught about prayer while he was in a boat on the Sea of Galilee.

Q4 A and C are correct. The other three answers all reflect things that many Christians assume are part of the devotional life, even though nothing in the New Testament tells us to do those things.

Q5 B and D are the answers we are looking for here.

