

Family & Friends..... May 8th, 2018

It was definitely a beautiful Lord's Day with lots of sunshine and warmth. This coming Sunday will be Mother's Day. A pretty special day to give homage to our mothers. Remember your moms! Eva Phillips had a special story I want to share with you. She was watching out her window at home, while it was raining, and a female Cardinal came and perched in a tree under some leaves. The male Cardinal flew up to her and then returned back down to pick up bird seed on the ground. He then flew back to his mate and fed her beak-to-beak. How special is that! This is a common practice of the Cardinals during their mating, bonding, and nesting time before they bring new babies into the world. They like to sing to one another, and you might hear, "purdy, purdy." The bonus is if you are lucky to see the baby birds as they leave their nest, one-by-one. I saw this amazing event one time, something I will never forget. It is even more special in our own human world when a mother gives birth to a baby. We have all been a part of this great event at one time or another and bonded with our precious mothers and fathers and our children, and grandchildren. Thank you Lord for our mothers, You are the great Creator who gave us life through our mothers!

*As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you.
Isaiah 66:13a*

We are happy our visitors worshipped with us on the beautiful day: Dan & Becky McCartney (N Venice, Fl), Kamdan Ward (Tucumseh), Mark & Penny Andrews (Clinton, AR), George Bowman and Heather Hayre (Rogers), Clayton & Samantha Hufford and Natasha Pitts (Bentonville), Conner Evans, Kelli Homeyer, Brian & John Shepard, Jule LaRachal, and Gay Lynn Welden (Bella Vista), Schon Booher and Gracie Hatch.

Our prayer list: We have been asked to pray for David Saunder's mom, Janice Boyle. Kim Barrett, a friend of LaFonda Williams, who has stage four cancer. Continue to remember and pray for Wendall Holeman, Louise Webb (both at Concordia), Harold Williams, Ann Clark, Lisa Nash, Mary Kerley, Charles Branstetter, Malcolm Winters, our missionaries, our military and police force, our country and president.

Mary Louise had a beautiful birthday celebration! There were lots of family & friends, a day I am sure she will not forget!

Items this week for Fair Haven Children's Home: Microwavable popcorn, jellies, spaghetti sauce, cookie mix, and cleaning supplies.

*To the world you are a mother,
but to your family you are the world.
Happy Mother's Day!*

Love you, see you next Lord's Day. *Karen*

**Bella Vista
Church of Christ**

Highway 71 and County Road 40
989 NW McNelly Road
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LORD'S DAY	9:30 AM
Bible Class	10:30 AM
Worship	6:00 PM
Evening Worship	
WEDNESDAY	9:45 AM
Ladies' Class	6:45 PM
Bible Class	

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Bella Vista

MEMBER LINES

Struggling With Prayer

Sounds strange doesn't it that we would struggle with prayer, but we do. There are times when God answers our prayers as we envision, and that excites us! Then sometimes Heaven seems silent to our request, and we wonder why? We're left wondering, does God answer prayer? Really? Perhaps this doubt has left some of us praying less. Come, let's see what we can learn...

God Desires We Pray.

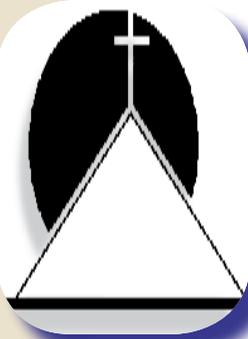
I Samuel 12.23 has Samuel saying... "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray." This verse tells us that prayerlessness is a sin!

The Apostles asked Jesus: "Lord, teach us to pray." It's interesting to note that they did not say teach us "how" to pray, but "teach us to pray." It's not that we don't know how to pray, it's that we forget to pray. The how is not nearly as important as the praying. Scripture tells us that the Holy Spirit will help us with the how: "We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. The Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will" (Romans 8.26-27). The Spirit will help, but we gotta pray! James 4.2 tells us "we have not because we do not ask," do not pray! Jesus said: "Men ought always to pray," Paul admonished "pray without ceasing, pray always with all perseverance."

Indeed, our greatest prayer tragedy is not that our prayers are not answered, but that we do not pray. God desires we pray, it's a part of our faith walk, a part of the faith that pleases Him.

God Promises To answer Our Prayers.

Second Chronicles 7.14 has God saying: "If my people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked way, then I will hear from Heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land." Matthew 7.7 & 8 has Jesus saying: "Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, he who seeks finds, to him who knocks it will be opened." Matthew 21.22: "If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer." "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will



be given you" (John 15.7). This same John is found saying: "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us" (1 John 5.14). It was James who concluded that "the prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."

There's no doubt that these verses tell us that God not only hears our prayers, He promises to answer them. Now, if this is true, why are not all of our prayers answered as prayed, in the way we imagine? What does Scripture have to say about apparent unanswered prayers, anything? I believe the answer lies in two areas: One is that sometimes prayers go unanswered because it is our fault. And sometimes it is God who refuses to answer in the way we envisioned.

The Problem Of Unanswered Prayers

OUR PROBLEM. Our prayers go unanswered because we are harboring unrepentant sin in our life. Isaiah 59.2 contains this statement: "Your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear." 1 Peter 3.12 reads: "The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." It was Solomon who wrote: "If anyone turns a deaf ear to the law, even his prayers are detestable." These verses, along with others, tell us that our prayers go unanswered because of our habitual unrepentant sin.

Sometimes our prayers go unanswered because of our lack of faith in God and His power. James tells us: "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord." Jesus promised: "I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you" (Matthew 17.20). We all struggle here, don't we? For us "Faith to move mountains" is not possible because we do not believe. Amen?

Sometimes our prayers go unanswered because of a faulty relationship with others. Jesus testifies to this in His model prayer: "If you forgive men when they sin against you, Your Heavenly father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive their sins, Your father will not forgive your sins." In verse 23 & 24 of this same 5th chapter of Matthew: "If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift (Your prayer) and go first be reconciled to your brother, then come offer your gift (Prayer)." 1 Peter 3.1-7 tells us our relationship with our spouse can and does inhibit our prayer life. If our prayer life is not as effective as it once was, perhaps it's time to check our relationship with someone, anyone!



Sometimes our prayers go unanswered because we ask with an improper motive. James addresses this prayer problem: "When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures" (James 4.3). Truth is, in religion, motive is everything: "A man's ways may seem innocent to him and others, but motives are weighed by the Lord" (Proverbs 16.2).

There are times that our prayers are not answered because we ask outside the will of God. We must not just pray "give me" prayers; going to God with a list of things we want: a bigger house, better job, new car, bass boat, designer clothes, etc. Instead, we ought to be praying "make me" prayers: Make me a better person, make me a better spouse, father, mom, a more caring servant, a better preacher, teacher, elder etc. God answers "make me" prayers: "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us" (1 John 5.14).

GOD REFUSES TO ANSWER OUR PRAYERS FOR HIS OWN REASONS. For instance, God may say "No." Scripture indicates that God is the Perfect Father: "If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in Heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!" (Matthew 7.11). As a Father, He may be withholding those things He knows are not for our benefit and well-being.

God may be saying wait. Think back to Abraham and Sarah. God had promised, through them, to make a great nation. But they had to wait eleven plus years for the promised son Isaac. We are on God's timetable, not our own. Impatience can become a real prayer problem for us.

God may have something better in mind for us. When Paul prayed, not once but repeatedly, for his thorn-in-the-flesh to be removed, God said: "My grace is sufficient." Later we hear Paul say: "I've been made strong so that I could withstand this thorn. Give me more thorns because I enjoy experiencing God's power at work in me." "I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me... I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12.9-10). Indeed, Paul received something much better than what he was praying for; so may we! So may we!

There are times when God wants others to see Him through us, in us, as we deal with apparent unanswered prayers. Remember the demonic from the area of the Gadarenes in Mark chapter five. After Jesus had caused his demons to go into a heard of swine, the demonic asked Jesus to allow him to follow Him; be like the twelve apostles, and Jesus said "no!" Later, The man was found witnessing for Jesus in the Decapolis. Ten cities, trans-Jordan, heard about Jesus because God wanted them to see His son through him. Again, God had something better in mind.

Then, sometimes God leads us in paths of righteousness for His name sake, for His purpose. God uses our unanswered prayers to further His cause, His Kingdom purposes, to demonstrate His mercy and grace. Go with me to John chapter nine. There we find the blind man; blind from birth. His disability was the cause for debate: Was he blind because of his own

sin, or the sins of his parents? Jesus said neither! He is blind so that the work of God, the power of God, might be displayed in his life, and Jesus healed him. At the end of this narrative, the blind man is found coming to a faith in Jesus and worshiping Him.

At times, our prayers go unanswered because God will not violate the free moral agency of others. We pray for our children. We pray for our Political Leaders. But you see, mankind's free will is stronger than God's will. Scripture tells us that "He is not willing that any should perish, but that all come to repentance." However, God will not protect us or save us against our will. He doesn't force us. Keep on praying that God, through His word or His divine providence, will soften hard hearts causing a change.

Sometimes God's discipline precedes our prayers. Jeff gave a great instance of this two weeks ago when he spoke of Solomon's Temple being destroyed for two reasons: One, because God had already promised punishment upon Israel for their sin. For Israel it was too late, much too late. Secondly, Israel had turned the Temple into an idol. They thought as long as the Temple was standing they were safe and saved. But it wasn't the Temple at all, but Jehovah God.

You see, God always answers our prayer: He may say No. He may ask us to wait. He may be about to bless us with something better than what we have in mind. He may be saying, I will not violate the person's free choice. God's discipline may precede His answer to our prayer. He may be about to lead us and others in the path of rightness, allowing Jesus to be proclaimed by the way we struggle with our unanswered prayer.

Well, as we pray, may we examine our own life making sure we are not inhibiting our prayers by our own selfish attitudes and behavior, while understanding that, as a Father, God will always answer in terms that are best for us and His Kingdom purpose. Some of God's greatest gifts are to be found in apparent unanswered prayer. Amen?

—RANDALL CASELMAN

FOR THE RECORD: 5/8/18		
Sunday Class.....	162	Sunday AM Worship.....260
Sunday PM.....	122	Wednesday.....
138	Offering.....	\$15,373,74
	Budget.....	10,718
SUNDAY SERVANTS: 5/13/18		
Announcements.....	Jeff Grisham	AM Song Leader.....
		Anthony Christiano
Elder's Prayer.....	Tracy Bowman	PM Song Leader.....
		Lance Bowman
Communion Scripture & Prayer.....	Mark Tucker	PM Closing Prayer.....
		John Bowman
Greeters.....	Marquis Elliott & Glen Myers	Server.....
		Roy Barnica, Jim Branstetter
Server.....	Don Cope, Greg Fulgham	Server.....
		Michael Hale, Keith Hubanks
Server.....	Chris Johnson, Mike Lunsford	Server.....
		Harold Phillips, Gary Syverson
Nursery.....	Jerri Dobbs & Jamie Fulgham	Van Driver.....
		Bruan Busbee
Ladies Encouragement & Prayer.....	
		Doris Rhodes & Barbara Roberts
Worship Coordinator.....	Mike York	Video Operator.....
		Randall Hunt
WEDNESDAY SERVANTS: 5/16/18		
Song Leading.....	Anthony Christiano	Speaker.....
		Dan Moss
Announcements.....		Aaron Sloan