



Theme: What is God Thinking?

Making Sense of Suffering and Grief

"Unanswered Prayer"

We have a great new way for you to get these Meditation Moments each day directly to your phone. Just text **"med moments"** to **970-426-0700** to receive the **daily Meditation Moment** each morning and start your day grounded in faith and peace.

Weekly Memory Verse:

⁴² [Jesus prayed] ***"Father, if you are willing, please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine."*** – Luke 22:42

Meditation Moments for Monday, October 26 – Read **2 Corinthians 12:7-10**. If we read the Bible as a set of short, literal sayings, a text like [Matthew 21:21-22](#) seems to promise to give us anything we ask for in prayer. Yet the apostle Paul, a deeply loyal servant of God, wrote to Christians in Corinth that he had earnestly asked God to remove a "thorn in the flesh," or a physical ailment. He never detailed the ailment, but it clearly hindered his missionary travels. God did **not** take the ailment away. Yet Paul said the experience didn't weaken his trust in God but deepened it.



Paul did not blame God for causing his ailment—he called it "a messenger from Satan." He did say he "pleaded with the Lord three times for it to leave me alone," or to heal it. How good a case can you imagine Paul, who often traveled on foot, making for God to give him full health? Did the fact that his physical struggle continued mean that God didn't care about him? Did it suggest that he didn't pray "correctly"?



The Message translated verse 9 as, "I take limitations in stride, and with good cheer, these limitations that cut me down to size.... I just let Christ take over!" What "thorn" (or "thorns"—physical, emotional, relational) do you have to deal

with? How have you found “My grace is enough for you” a spiritual reality in everyday terms? In what ways, if any, have you, like Paul, found that “when I’m weak, then I’m strong”?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, I’m human, and you know I like being strong much better than I like being weak. Help my trust in you to keep growing stronger even at times when everything else in life is making me feel weaker. Amen.*

Tuesday, October 27 – Read **Mark 14:32-36 and 41-45**. Mark, [Matthew](#), [Luke](#) tell us Jesus himself prayed, intensely, for a result that did not happen. We noted this last weekend a web site that listed “common reasons” why prayers go unanswered. The list included, “You are not seeking to please the Lord; You have unconfessed sin in your life; You pray with improper motives; and You lack faith.” Using these words on hurting people is upsetting. Using these reasons to explain Jesus’ unanswered prayer is utterly ridiculous.



[Luke 22:40](#) recorded that Jesus also urged his disciples to, “Pray that you won’t give in to temptation.” We saw a video clip this last week from the film Bruce Almighty that showed us how silly it would be for God to answer every single person’s prayer just the way they wanted. It also is not logical that God would suspend another’s free will to answer my prayer. What temptations did the disciples face in the hours before this prayer? In what ways can prayer strengthen our free will to meet temptations and spiritual struggles we face?



When one of our Care Ministers comes to the hospital, we pray boldly and ask for full physical healing. We also know that miracles are rare. That’s why we call them miracles. Jesus in the garden asked God for what he wished for even though he knew it would not happen. Does fear of disappointment keep you from asking God for what you most want? Practice this week by praying for something big or small on your heart. Model it after Jesus’ prayer.

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, you know how disappointing it is to ask for something important and not receive it. Thank you for promising to go through disappointment and pain with me so I know I’m not alone. May I find a peace in you. Amen.*

Wednesday, October 28 – Read **Mark 1:35; Matthew 14:23; Luke 5:16 and 11:1-4**. Jesus prayed often. Sometimes we think prayer is a way to make God aware of things that we want. We seem to assume God won’t know about unless we tell God. Jesus even voiced one of the reasons some folks give for not praying when he says in Matthew 6:8, “your Father knows what you need before you ask.” But he didn’t see that as a reason not to pray. Right after that, in [Matthew 6:9-13](#), he taught his disciples the Lord’s Prayer which is a bit different than the one we read in Luke today.



In these gospel descriptions of Jesus praying, what do you notice about the timing, the settings in which he chose to pray, or the frequency or intensity of Jesus’ prayers? Have you ever felt as though “I can’t get to a deserted place, or stay up all night—I guess I can’t pray?” God is with you wherever and whenever.

When do you pray? Where? How often? How can you learn from Jesus' prayer patterns without making them an obstacle to building your own?



If filling God in on your needs and wishes isn't the only (or even main) reason to pray, why does it matter to pray? How do you respond to the idea that prayer is often less about changing God and more about opening yourself to God?

Phillip Yancey wrote in his book on pray, "The simplest answer to the question 'Why pray?' is 'Because Jesus did.'" What do you miss if you don't pray? If Jesus needed to pray, why would any of us think we don't?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, I love you. It doesn't make sense to say I love you, and then never talk to you. Thank you for listening when I pray. Thank you that, if I am quiet, sometimes you speak in the deep silence of my heart and mind. Amen.*

Thursday, October 29 – Read **Luke 18:1-8**. Jesus' parables most often taught by saying or implying, "God is like..." In this story, he taught by contrast, saying, in effect, "God is MUCH BETTER than this unjust judge." The story asked, "If even a bad judge can be worn down by persistence, isn't it clear that your good, generous God wants to listen to your prayers?" The real question, Jesus said, is not about God's faithfulness, but ours: When Christ returns, will he find faithfulness on earth?



Luke said Jesus wanted his followers to learn about "their need to pray continuously and not to be discouraged." The apostle Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 concisely urged his converts to "[pray continually](#)". Have you ever persisted in prayer even when you weren't getting the result(s) you asked for? If so, how did that experience affect you? What makes you most likely to give up praying? What experiences or beliefs lead you to keep on praying?



[2 Peter 3:8-9](#) said, "The Lord isn't slow to keep his promise," but that for God a thousand years are as one day. In Luke, Jesus said God will "quickly" give God's children justice and then linked that to his future return, which we still wait for 2000 years later. How hard is it for you to hold onto your faith and trust given the divine pace of what God's patient and eternal love that enfolds everything?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, I'm impatient, partly because I live in a stream of time that I never seem to have enough of. Grow your patience in me—a patience rooted in your eternity, where neither you nor I will ever run out of time. Amen*

Friday, October 30 – Read **Philippians 4:4-9**. [Philippians 1:13-14](#) tells us that Paul wrote this letter in prison. In [Philippians 1:20-26](#) he writes he might be put to death or freed. Imagine the apostle in that dank Roman dungeon, which was likely a hole in the ground, waking each day uncertain about whether and when guards might come to end his life. Clearly Paul's words were much more than just religious "happy talk." With every human reason to be anxious, he instead recommended prayer, peace, trust, and a focus on the good and beautiful in life.



What did Paul say results from presenting your requests to God in prayer? Do you ever wish he'd said, "Bring up all of your requests to God in your prayers and petitions—and God guarantees that everything will come out the way you

want"? As we read on Monday in [2 Corinthians 12:7-10](#), Paul knew firsthand that wasn't how prayer worked. What made the gift of God's peace more precious than any other gift, even when he was unsure if he faced execution?



Paul wrote that God's peace "exceeds all understanding." Even in conditions when our human understanding thinks there is no reason for peace, Paul's phrase said we can have God's peace. In what ways does a wish for total understanding, to figure everything out logically, at times rob you of peace? How can you value your mind, yet not expect or demand merely human explanations of all divine reality?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, I want to walk every day in your peace. I want to focus on the excellent, on the admirable, even if the latest scandal or conflict obsesses everyone around me. Keep my heart safe in your eternal hands. Amen.*

Saturday, October 31 – Read **John 17:11-24**. Praying just before his arrest, Jesus didn't ask God to immediately take him or his followers out of the world's pain and evil. Instead, he asked God to be with all of them, those with him that night and all who would follow him through the centuries to come. Scholar William Barclay pointed to the core of Jesus' prayer in his commentary on the Gospel of John: "The first essential is to note that Jesus did not pray that his disciples should be taken out of this world... [that they] might find escape; he prayed that they might find victory... Christianity... does not offer us release from problems, but a way to solve them. It does not offer us an easy peace... It does not offer us a life in which troubles are escaped and evaded, but a life in which troubles are faced and conquered." Jesus' prayer was a prayer God always answers.



Scholar N. T. Wright observed in his commentary, *John for Everyone*, that Jesus' prayer can deepen and enrich your prayer life: "This prayer... can with only slight variation, be used by Christians of all sorts for themselves. Substitute 'Jesus' where the prayer says 'I,' and replace 'they' and 'them' with 'I' and 'me,' and you'll get the idea. But be careful. This is a serious prayer. It is one of the most serious things Jesus ever said. That's why, deep down, it is also among the most joyful and hopeful. Pray it with awe, and with delight." Are you willing to seriously try Wright's suggestion for at least a week, and to watch what happens inside your mind and heart as a result?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, I am humbled and amazed that, with the cross right ahead of you, you took the time and energy to pray for me. Help me to seek, and embrace, your offer of victory in life rather than escape from life's challenges. Amen.*