

ALL IN 19 Expectant Prayer

“Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God.”

Acts 12:5

“He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart.”

Luke 18:1



Years ago a small town in the Midwest was experiencing a severe draught which scorched the crops and baked the earth. The pastor of the town’s only church gathered the people for a special day of prayer crying out to God that He would send them desperately needed rain. That evening the pastor began the meeting with a surprising statement. “I can see that none of you really believe that our God is powerful or gracious enough to answer our prayers to send us rain.” The people vigorously protested his remarks regarding their lack of faith until the pastor responded, “If you believe that the Lord will answer our prayer to send rain if it pleases Him and is part of His purpose for us, then why didn’t each of you bring an umbrella?” **How would you describe your real feelings regarding prayer especially when you have prayed for something for a seemingly long time with no apparent results?**



Acts 12:1-25 In this passage we find Peter in jail for the 3rd time as he continued to faithfully lead the church in spite of the growing persecution. It had been 11 thrilling years since Christ’s resurrection and His command to proclaim the Gospel of His grace to the nations (Matt 28:18-20; Acts 1:8) and they had experienced God’s power, love and presence many times. Decades of prayers had been offered up to the Lord asking for relief from King Herod the Great who ordered the children of Bethlehem exterminated at Christ’s birth (Matt 2:16-18) and his nephew, Herod Antipas, who beheaded John the Baptist (Mk 6:14-29). Now Herod’s grandson, Herod Agrippa I, killed John’s brother, James (Acts 12:2), and was coming after the rest of the church leaders (Acts 12:1). Once again God put His men in a desperate situation where their only recourse was to pray. When has God put you in a situation where all you could really do was pray? Why was Peter allowed to live yet Stephen (Acts 6-7) and James (Acts 12:2) were called to die though fervent prayers were prayed for each? (Job 42:1-3; Is 40:13-18; 43:0-13; 45:5-6; 46:8-11; 55:8-10)

In what ways can you identify with these folks and their prayer lives? How did you feel and what did you do when in the past you prayed for “rain” (health, circumstance, provision, protection, etc) and did not rain even though you brought your umbrella? What does it look like to pray and bringing your umbrella? How did feel when you prayed for rain and got and drought?

How did God sovereignly and finally answer their prayers in His way, in His timing, for His glory and for their good? For what have you been praying for a long time that seems like the Lord is taking His sweet time? Is it wrong to expect God to answer our specific requests for “rain” (James 4:2-3; John 15:7)? Scripture teaches that the Father knows what you need before you pray (Matt 6:8, 32; Ps 38:9; Ps 139:17-18). So, why should we pray? (Prov 15:8; Ps 116:1; 1John 5:14)



Luke 18:1-8 God’s men often just plain give up and stop praying when things get hard. What was Jesus teaching His knucklehead disciples like us about prayer, trusting Him and umbrellas?

If a godless unrighteous judge (2, 6) will answer a widow’s requests, what do you think our compassionate, wise, caring, powerful Father will do with our requests? How should our Father’s gracious character motivate us to **PUSH? Pray Until Something Happens!** So, what is the real purpose of prayer?

Where are you growing weary and losing heart in your prayers and your faith? Are you willing to get your umbrella out of the closet and open it again as you pray trusting and delighting in God as your Father whether it rains or not? List several things for which you have given up praying that you commit to faithfully start again? (James 5:16-18)



TAG TEAM DISCUSSION What key insight from this lesson has God burned into your heart? Why? What 1 thing will you begin to pray for in earnest trusting God to answer in His sovereign time and way for His glory along with your good?

ASSIGNMENT Think...where have you grown weary and lost heart in your prayers for a certain person or situation? What will you do to rekindle your heart and renew your motivation to not give up in your prayer?

