



Wednesday Night Bible Study Notes, September 15, 2010

Unanswered Prayers

John 11: 1-46

When JoAnne and I first started dating she was working at Longhorn Steakhouse here in Douglasville. During this time Garth Brooks was very popular and Longhorn played a lot of his music in the restaurant. One of his more famous songs was a song titled "Unanswered Prayers". The chorus to this song goes like this:

*Sometimes I thank God for unanswered prayers
Remember when you're talkin' to the man upstairs
That just because he doesn't answer doesn't mean he don't care
Some of God's greatest gifts are unanswered prayers*

I'm not sure if that that's correct English or not but the point is well made; some of God's greatest gifts are unanswered prayers.

1. God wants us to bring Him our concerns.

Mary and Martha had a godly desire; they wanted their friend Jesus to come heal their sick brother. At the beginning of the story, they didn't hesitate to share their request with the Lord (v. 3). Later, neither was afraid to tell Him about her disappointment that He didn't show up in time to save Lazarus from death (v. 21, 32). *Remember last week, point #1 Be honest with God.*

2. When God doesn't respond as we think He should, He has a higher purpose for our suffering.

- Although Jesus loved Lazarus, He chose to stay in Bethany two more days. What was His perspective on Lazarus's sickness (v. 4)?
- What was the ultimate purpose for Christ's delay (v. 14-15; 45)?

In a similar way, God has wonderful plans for us that don't always include answering our prayers in the way we or when we expect. However, we can trust that He will always work things out for our good and His glory.

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. Romans 8:28

3. Even though God knows the ultimate outcome of our suffering will be glorious, He still has compassion on us in the midst of our heartache.

- Read John 11: 32-36. Why do you think Jesus wept?
- The Jews who came to mourn with the sisters had two reactions to Jesus' weeping. What were those two reactions (V. 35-37)?

When God takes a long time to fulfill our requests, it's easy to start to doubt Him and think, why would a good God allow suffering?

Just as a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him. Psalm 103: 13

4. In order to see our prayers answered, we must sometimes obey God when He asks us to do things that don't make sense. (Remember Joshua from Sunday's sermon – OF COURSE YOU DO!!!)

- Why did Martha initially protest that the stone should not be removed from the grave?

Personal question: Has God ever asked you to do something that, at the time, made little sense, but later on, you realized it was essential to seeing your prayers answered?