

Why God Delays His Answers
A Series on the Ministry of Prayer: Part 4 (Ronald Dunn)

This series of lectures was presented in October 1979 by Ronald Dunn (Lifestyle Ministries / Rondunn.com) at Western Conservative Baptist Seminary's Bueermann-Champion Lectureship. The series is notable for its emphasis on intercession.

It would be difficult to express just how grateful I am for this privilege of being with you this week. It has been a real joy to me, and for me. Always in these situations I think you will agree that there is always some doubt as to who's been ministered to the most. I want to say that you certainly have ministered to me this week and I appreciate it very much the way both staff and faculty have so graciously opened their hearts and for the way that you have responded to the word. I appreciate it very much. I have enjoyed it so much that I have invited myself to come back and I have accepted my invitation! So thank you very much! I know that God is going to continue to bless and use you in a tremendous way!

Now, I want you to open your Bibles this morning to the Gospel of Luke chapter one. There are so many aspects and dimensions in this matter of prayer and intercession that when you have only four sessions, one of the great problems is choosing, selecting and discarding. There is much more to it than we could every cover.

I have been praying that the Lord would guide me into what we should deal with on this last day. I want to deal with an aspect of prayer that to me personally has ministered, as much as any other truth concerning this matter of prayer and one which I think that a great many times we overlook, but is, I believe, essential if we are going to have the kind of balance that we need to have. So in the Gospel of Luke, I want to read beginning with verse 5 through 23. I will skip over some verses in the middle of that passage, but will begin with verse 5 and read through the 23rd verse.

There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judæa, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years. And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, according to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense. And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. (Luke 1:5-13)

Then in the next three or four verses, the angel describes what this Son shall be and what He shall accomplish. And then in verse 18, you have the most phenomenal question a man ever asked:

And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years. And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings. And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season. And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple. And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless. And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house. (Luke 1:18-23)

Several years ago, I heard a farmer give his Christian testimony. He said that in farming, to be a successful farmer, you must learn the laws of sowing and reaping, and cooperate with them. He said if we ignore the laws of farming and the seasons, we will become a failure. So success, he said, is learning the laws and principles and cooperating with them. He said, I have discovered the same thing is true in the Christian life that there are certain principles, certain laws of the Christian life, and to be a successful Christian, you must learn what those principles are and cooperate with them. I

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thought that there was a great deal of truth and wisdom in what the man said, which holds especially in this matter of prayer. There are certain principles governing the answers of prayer. I believe that what we must do is to learn what those principles are and to cooperate with them, for it seems to me that the Christian life is really nothing more nor less than our cooperating with God in His highest intentions for us, discovering what God wants for us, what He is trying to do in our lives and then making ourselves available to cooperate with Him in that enterprise.

When we come to this matter of prayer, one of the most frustrating aspects of it is why God sometimes answers prayer and other times it seems that He doesn't. There are times when we discover we have found the secret. We think we have learned how to pray so as to get our prayers answered, and so armed with this new knowledge we pray again and lo and behold, the prayer is not answered. God seems to have given us a busy signal when we call on Him. As I said the other day, we have almost come to the place where we are more surprised when God does answer than when He doesn't. It is very frustrating for us to understand. Why does God answer one way one time and why does He not answer this way another time? Why does God work as He works? Why is that we often think we have discovered the true way to pray and then suddenly we come up against a brick wall, and it seems that we know absolutely nothing at all about praying?

I think Zacharias shared this frustration. I said a moment ago that verse 18 is to me one of the most phenomenal questions a man ever asked. You know there have been times in my life when I have had some doubt as to whether or not God was going to give me what I have asked for. I will be honest with you, I think if He were to send a special delivery angel to me and that angel were to announce that God had heard my prayer, I think I would pretty well be convinced, don't you? If an angel were to stand before me right now and say, "Listen, God has heard your prayer and you are going to get what you asked for." I don't know that I would say, "Well, how can I be certain of this?"

Yet, Zacharias asked that very question. An angel appeared before him and said, "Your prayer is heard." And Zacharias said, "Well, now let's not rush into this. How can I be certain about this?" I believe one of the problems with Zacharias is that he failed to understand some truths, some principles governing the answering of prayer. What I want to do this morning is simply to take this incident in the life of Zacharias and Elizabeth and examine what I believe are four very basic principles in this matter of answering prayer. How does God answer prayer? What are those principles governing the answers of prayer?

Delayed Answers of Prayer

The first of four principles that comes to mind is this: the experience of Zacharias and Elizabeth shows us that God sometimes answers prayer later, that the answer is often **delayed**. Now the angel came and in verse 13, he says, "Fear not Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard." Now if you read that casually, you will get the idea that Zacharias was at the present time praying for a son, but that would be a mistake. He was not praying for a son. I think a more accurate translation would be, "Thy prayer was heard." For the angel is not referring to the prayer that Zacharias and Elizabeth are presently lifting to the throne of grace. He is instead referring to a petition they had long since abandoned. The Bible says that they are now quite old and have no children, and they are well past the age of bearing children. When they were young, Zacharias and Elizabeth obviously bombarded the throne of grace with this plea that God would remove the barrenness of Elizabeth and give them a son. But as the years past and God seemingly turned a deaf ear to their petition, they had given up that prayer and they had abandoned all hope, so that when the angel finally comes and says, "Zacharias thy prayer is heard," he identifies which particular prayer he is referring to: "Elizabeth will bear a son." Zacharias says, "How can this be? For I am an old man." Did you notice he didn't say, "My wife is an old woman"? He said, "I am an old man and my wife well-stricken in years." Isn't that beautiful? He is quite the diplomat. He didn't say, "I'm an old man; my wife's an old woman." He said, "She's well-stricken in years." It has a rhythm to it. You could almost set it to music.

He said, "It's too late. We have long since given up on that hope and that petition." You see the angel was referring

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not to a prayer that they were presently bringing before God, but he was referring to a petition that they had long since given up on. The principle is that God often delays the answer of prayer.

How God Answers Prayer

When does God answer prayer? I am going to make a statement that may sound contradictory, and then I will answer it. When does God answer prayer? Well, **God always answers prayer immediately but sometimes later.** God always answers prayer immediately but sometimes later. Now, by that I mean, that the granting of that petition, I believe, is always immediate. I don't think that God needs time to think about it. I don't believe He has to call in a committee meeting and go over the issue and see whether or not that prayer is answerable. Isaiah says even before we ask, He answers and "even while we are calling, He hears." I think the granting of that prayer is immediate even before we bring the petition from our lips, God knows what we are going to ask for and immediately that prayer, if it is answerable, I believe, is granted. The giving of it into our hands in tangible form is often delayed. I think you will find this principle enunciated in Mark 11:24, where Jesus says, "And what things whatever you desire when you pray, believe that you receive them and you shall have them." The Williams Translation reads like this, "Believe that it has been granted and you will have it." Actually, what Jesus is saying is that when you pray for something, believe you already got it and you will get it.

Dr. R. A. Torrey said that for years, he worried over the grammar of that verse until one day he stopped worrying about it and started enjoying the promise. "Believe that you have already got it and you will get it." When do we receive what we have asked for? When we believe that we already have it. You say, "That doesn't make sense." Well, to whom doesn't it make sense? It may not make sense to you, but it makes perfect sense to God. For you see, it requires no faith at all to believe you have something after you have it. If I say I am going to give you a gift, and I place that gift in your hand and you say, "Now I believe," that requires no faith at all to believe that you are to have something after you have received it. Jesus said, "When you pray believe that you already have it and you shall receive it." In other words, the granting of that petition is immediate but the giving of it into your hands in a tangible form is often delayed. I think you find this illustrated in Daniel 10.

You remember that Daniel prayed for the space of twenty-one days, three weeks, until the answer came. When the angel arrived, his words were, "From the first day that you humbled yourself, from the very first day." When was his prayer granted? The first day. But it was twenty-one days later until the answer was given to Daniel in a visible and tangible form. So the first principle is simply this: God often delays the answer of a prayer. The giving of it into your hands sometimes is delayed.

Charles Spurgeon said, "All the promises of God are like checks. We are to endorse by faith and present to God for payment." I think that's true, but some of those checks are postdated. They are not always immediately cashed. It may be a very, very frustrating experience for Christians who have become accustomed to instant coffee and instant credit, think that God moves according to their time schedule and when we close our eyes to ask God for something, we believe that when we open our eyes, it is going to be standing before us. That is not always the case. I think you will find, more often than not, that there is an interim period of waiting before God actually delivers the answer into your hand.

This poses a problem. I suppose one of the most oft asked question that I have in this matter of praying is: "Well, how long should I pray?" There is a controversy with some people about this matter of praying repeatedly for something. There are some who say we just need to ask for it once. To ask for it twice is an act of disbelief and nullifies our praying. There are others who say we ought to keep on asking. I would say to you that the burden of Scriptural evidence is on the latter. As we mentioned yesterday, I believe it was the two parables that Jesus gives to us concerning prayer emphasize persistence, persistence. Ask and keep on asking; seek and keep on seeking; knock and keep on knocking. I would like to make a suggestion to you. I am not saying this is **the way** to pray. I don't know that anybody knows what is **the way** to pray. I have an idea that God is going to hear us on the basis of our heart anyway more than on the basis of our words. I

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don't think that God is going to withhold a blessing from us because we didn't do our I's right or cross our T's. I think it is important that we know how to pray, but I believe the best way is to go at it. I have found some people that have sat around and refused to pray until they knew exactly how to pray. Friend, you will never pray if that's the case. There are some things you can know without understanding. I don't understand prayer, but I know God answers prayers.

I would like to offer this suggestion, just a simple suggestion on how to pray and how long to pray. I have found in my own Christian experience that, more often or not, I need to pray until one of three things happens. I need to pray: 1) Until I receive it. I mean actually receive it into my hand. Or 2) I need to pray and keep on praying until God gives me the assurance that I am going to receive it. I know many of you have experienced that, and it is one of the most blessed experiences that you will ever have in this ministry of prayer. Suddenly the Spirit of God speaks to your heart and there comes over that heart that quiet assurance, that calm assurance that God has heard and God has answered. There is no longer any need to ask God to do this thing, because you have received in your heart the assurance that God has heard and that God is going to give it. From then on, your praying becomes praising and thanking God. So, I believe that it is good to pray until we receive or pray until we receive the assurance that we are going to receive it. Or 3) Pray until God says, "no." Pray until God shows us that this particular thing for which we are asking is contrary to His will. I have found that to be true, and I'm sure you have. Suddenly there is a check on my heart; there is a restraint. The liberty to pray in that direction is taken away. To put it simply – I just don't feel right praying about that matter. I just don't feel right. The peace of Christ has been disturbed in that area. There is no peace, no liberty, no freedom. Suddenly there is a restraint on my heart. I've no liberty to pray for that particular thing.

Pray until you receive it. Pray until you receive the assurance that God has heard, or pray until God says, "no."

God Often Answers Better

First principle: God often delays the answer. Second principle is this: God often answers better. Why does He delay? I believe the reason that God delays most of the time is in order that He might answer that prayer better. Now, let's look at this particular incident.

Zacharias and Elizabeth were praying for a son. Now what if God had answered their prayer immediately and gave them that son immediately? To be sure, they would have been thrilled; they would have been happy parents. But, to be honest, all that they would have had would have been another little Jewish boy. They would have loved him. He would have been a fine young man, I am certain, but we wouldn't be talking about either the boy or the parents this morning. I believe that God answered that prayer better. Instead of giving them just a son, He gave them the last Old Testament prophet, gave them the only Old Testament prophet who ever lived to see his prophecy come true, gave them the forerunner of the Messiah, gave them the first cousin of Jesus Christ and gave them a man of whom Jesus said, "Among those born of women, there is not a greater." I believe God answered that prayer better.

Hannah prayed and prayed and prayed that God would give her a son and He delayed. But He answered the prayer better. He gave her Samuel, the greatest prophet that the nation has ever known. God always answers the prayer better. Do you believe it when the Psalmist says, "No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly with Him?" Sure you do. Then why do you complain about all those things that God withholds from you?

Ruth Graham said, "If God had answered every prayer of mine, I would have married the wrong man seven times." You know what, I have to confess this morning, I thank God for some unanswered prayers. I really do. I think that God's wisdom and grace overrules many a time my asking for things that I do not know is best for me. I really do not know. But I really do know this, that He is able to do exceedingly abundant above all that we ask or think. I tell you one of my great problem is that I usually aim too low. I have an idea that there have been times when God has said, "All right son, if you insist on having that, I will give it to you; but I wanted to give you something much better." I believe that when God delays the answer, when God refuses to give us what we are asking for, I believe that we must come to the place where we

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understand the goodness of God; we must believe that God, who spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all, shall with Christ freely give us all things. He who spared nothing in order to save us, surely has only our best interests and His glory at mind. Whatever God is withholding from us is for our good, and He often answers prayer, not so much exactly the way we have asked for it, but He answers it in a far better way. God often delays the answer in order that He might answer it better.

I have an idea that if there is some petition that you are bringing before God (perhaps you have been bringing it for a long time yet it seems that God has turned a deaf ear), I think you may understand someday that what God is trying to do is exceedingly abundant above all that we ask or think. He answers prayer better. I wish that Christians could discover and learn that God is good and that whatever God does in our lives and whatever He allows us to bring into our lives and whatever He allows to pass through our lives, He is doing it for our good and for His glory. I wish that we were not suspicious of God's motives and God's intentions. If He is delaying the answer of a prayer, my friend, it is in order that He might answer it better.

Humanly Impossible Situations

Now there is the third principle that emerges from this incident. I tell you that, above all the other principles that I know anything of, this has ministered to me more and helped me more than any other. God will often wait to answer that prayer until the situation gets **humanly impossible**. God will often wait until the situation becomes humanly impossible. Now that's exactly what He did in the case of Zacharias and Elizabeth. He waited. Well, how long did He wait? He waited until that situation was humanly impossible, until it was beyond all hope and beyond all help. That's when God moved. Have you noticed in your study of the Bible that this seems to be God's favorite method of working? Have you noticed that? It was that way with Abraham and Sarah.

God had said, "I am going to give you a son." How long did God wait to fulfill that promise? How long did God wait? He waited until Abraham was a hundred years old and Sarah was ninety years old. They were beyond all human ability to produce children and God said, "All right now, now is the time. Sarah is going to conceive and bring a son and you are going to be a father of many nations." Can you imagine? We sometimes poke fun at dear old Sarah, but you know she had to put up with a lot. What would you do one day if your husband, a wealthy man and established in the community, came in and said, "Pack, we are moving." "Where are we going?" "Well, I don't know." "How long will it take us to get there?" "I don't know." "How will we know when we arrive?" "I don't have any idea, but we are leaving." I'm surprised she went with him. Then comes this blow – it is the only case in history where the husband was the first to know. You can imagine old Abraham walking in casually one day and saying, "Oh, by the way Sarah, you're pregnant." Now you know, Sarah did not believe that. The Bible says that she laughed when she heard that. That proves that she didn't believe it. I can guarantee you, friend, that if a ninety-year-old woman discovers she is going to have a child, she may scream, but she won't laugh about it.

How long did God wait? God waited until the situation became humanly impossible. Same way in the case of Lazarus. That is such a beautiful story. Mary and Martha said, "Lord, come quick. Right now." Of course, it is always an emergency situation with us, isn't it? Always is. The amazing thing is that Jesus deliberately delayed. How long did He delay? He delayed until Lazarus died. You know He said this sickness was not unto death. That's what it says in John chapter 11. This sickness is not unto death. But he died. He really did die. You see, the purpose of the sickness was not death. I don't think Jesus was saying that Lazarus won't die. I think what He was saying is that the purpose of this sickness is so that the glory of God may be manifested. I want to tell you something, dear friend, the purpose of everything God does in your life is that His glory may be manifested. Which brings God the greater glory? Healing a sick man or raising a dead man? God will always take the route that brings Him the greatest glory. You may as well put it down that many times that situation, about which you are praying on its way to getting better, will drop by worse for a while.

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I remember several years ago when I was doing a series on intercession, that I had a woman in the church whose husband was antagonistic and hostile towards the church and towards Christ. So she began interceding that God would work in the life of her husband and deal with him. After about two weeks, she came to see me and she was very disturbed. She said, "Pastor, I wish you had never gotten me into this praying business. I wish you had never talked to me about it." I said, "What's the matter?" She said, "My husband, my husband is worse now than he has ever been. He is more hostile towards the church; he is more antagonistic towards my going than he was when I started praying. Things were a lot better before I started praying. I wish I hadn't even prayed about it." I said, "Oh, don't say that, don't say that. God is just allowing the situation to get humanly impossible. The Devil is accelerating his own attack, and it simply means that God is setting the stage for a greater display of His glory." And that was true. Within a month that man had changed completely and God had done a marvelous work in his life.

A businessman came in to see me one day and said, "Pastor, my business is in bad trouble. I want you to pray with me about this that God would enter this situation, take charge." So we prayed. I saw him a few weeks later and said, "How is it going?" He said, "Man, it's worse than it has ever been." What I am saying to you friends is this: that God's activity, God's purpose, God's intention is to display His glory. Your life is to be nothing more than a display case, a trophy case in which His grace can be displayed. He will work in the way that will bring Him the greatest glory. Again and again and again, the testimony of Scripture is that God will often wait until the situation gets humanly impossible before He moves in. You see this illustrated again and again in the experience of Israel.

The old theologians used a phrase that I think we ought to bring back. They called it "shut up faith," where God would just shut them up to faith and close off every other exit. There was no way out but trusting God. That's the way it was with Israel at the Red Sea; that's the way it has been for God's people down through the ages, that God, time and time again, has brought them to the place that their backs are against the wall where there's no way out. I mean there is no human solution to this problem. There is no way that this problem can be solved. There is no way that this building can be built; there's no way this person can be reached; there is no way my life can be straightened out. When it gets to the place there is absolutely no help at all, and no home, that is when God moves in. God will often wait until the situation gets humanly impossible. Of course, here comes the great trial of faith for the believer. What we must do is what Jesus said to Jairus.

Remember when Jairus came to Jesus and his daughter was sick and at the point of death and Jesus said, "Well, let's go." They immediately began towards his house and on the way, Jesus stopped and said, "Somebody touched me." The disciples said, "Of course, Lord, somebody touched you. There's a great crowd and they are thronging around you." Jesus said, "No, that's not what I mean. Somebody touched Me. I felt power go out and I want to know who it was that touched Me." You know I have often tried to put myself in that father's position. Can you imagine what he must have felt at that moment? "Lord, it is not important who touched you, my daughter is about to die." Finally, this woman emerges and identifies herself as the one. Then she begins to relate twelve years of doctor's visits. Can you imagine what that father must have thought about that woman, but more, how he must have been unable to understand the attitudes of Jesus? I think I would have said, "Lord, that's fine about this woman, but she's healed and it's not really important, and my daughter is about to die." Have you ever noticed that immediately when Jesus finishes with the woman and is about to resume his journey to Jairus' house, have you ever noticed the beautiful timing of what happens next? At that precise moment, one of Jairus' servants arrives and says, "Don't trouble the Master any longer, thy daughter is dead." Timing is perfect. How long did Jesus delay? He delayed just long enough for the daughter to die. Then he turned to Jairus and said, "Do not be afraid but keep on believing." But what? "Keep on believing."

Strike the pose of faith. Jairus, you had enough faith to bring to Me in the first place when there was hope. Now that there is no hope, keep on believing. You have to catch that second wind of faith. All of us perhaps have that faith that brings us to Jesus initially when the situation is filled with hope, but I think there are times when the Lord will seemingly abandon us. And when it seems he will delay until we have nothing to cling to except the naked word of God, He says,

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“Keep believing.” Just keep on believing. God will often wait until the situation gets humanly impossible.

Divine Necessity

Now the fourth and final principle is this: God answers prayer when that prayer is *linked to divine necessity*. God answers prayer when that prayer is linked to divine necessity. Now I understand that God has no needs and that God has no problems, but I am going to use that language today of God in order to illustrate this point. When does God answer prayer? When He needs to answer prayer. When will God solve my problem? I believe God will solve my problem when solving my problem solves His own problem. For instance, there came a day when God needed John the Baptist. In the fullness of time, all things were ready. Now He needed that forerunner. He needed the voice of one crying in the wilderness and, in solving their problem, He solved His own problem. When did God give Hannah a son? When God needed that boy, when God needed Samuel, and in solving her problem, He solved His own problem. You understand the way I am using those words. I believe that the purpose of prayer and the answering of that prayer is in order to advance the redemptive purpose and is linked to divine necessity. For prayer is not a means of getting my will done in heaven; it is a means of getting God's will done on earth. Prayer is not a bell that I ring and have a glorified butler to come and wait on me and serve my needs. God does not exist for my convenience; I am to exist for His convenience. I believe that God answers prayer when that prayer is linked to divine necessity, when that prayer and the answer of it will advance the redemptive purpose of God.

I think that there are people that are praying for revival and yet God does not give revival; the main reason they want revival is so that their own church will be filled to overflowing, so that their own lives will be made easier, so that they will gain a certain amount of publicity and notoriety as a great man of God. I believe that there are some people that are praying for the filling of the Spirit that God will never answer, because actually what they are after is not the filling; they are after the feeling. They want the thrill of the fill.

A man called me one day and said, “I want you to come over and anoint me with oil and pray for me.” He had a problem, a physical problem, and the doctors had not been able to solve the problem and he had been to several doctors. So, I said, “I will come over and we will talk about it.” I went to his home and while we were talking about this problem, he revealed that every time a preacher came to town, I mean every time a new preacher came to town or just passing through, he got them to come over and pray for him. He had been to the Katherine Kuhlmann meetings and he had put his hand on the television set when Oral Roberts was on it. He was covering all his bets. That made me suspicious. I thought there must be something a little bit wrong here. If God wants to heal a man, it doesn't take a multitude of preachers to do it. I said, “Brother, I want to ask you a question. Why do you want to be healed?” You may think that's a stupid question but it is not. I said, “Why do you want to be healed?” And this is what he told me. He said, “Well, I belong to this prayer group and everybody in this prayer group has a healing testimony except me. I am the only one that doesn't have a healing testimony and I want a healing testimony. Of course, I knew what was happening. The people were beginning to suspect his spirituality. If he is spiritual, God would heal him. This man was almost at the point of panic. He said, “Every other member of my prayer group has a testimony of healing. I don't have that testimony. That's why I want God to heal me.” I prayed for him, not that God would heal him. I prayed that God would refine and define his motives, show him that there is something better than healing.

You see that there are times that you and I need to re-examine our motives while we are praying for something. I know some parents that are praying that God would save their rebellious teenagers. But I know this, that if God were to go ahead and do more than save their rebellious teenagers and call them to foreign missionaries and send them to the four corners of the earth where they wouldn't see their children for four years at a time, those parents would stop praying for them. I know some wives, and we had ten in my church just exactly like this, who were praying that their husbands would become as spiritual as they were. And the husbands needed to be spiritual. But let me tell you what God did. This happened ten times in my church. You know what? God not only made them spiritual as their wives, He went beyond that. Everyone of these men were fine businessmen, I mean established in the business community. Not a one of them

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was under thirty-five years of age. I mean they had their homes and their businesses established and in ten of these men, God called them into the ministry. You know what those men did? They quit their jobs. They sold their central air conditioned home, sold their automobiles, and moved across town to live in Fort Worth to live in a little four-by-four ramshackle apartment while they went to school. Then they pastored the Third Baptist Church of Podunk, Texas.

What I am getting at is this. I have often wondered if the wives knew exactly how God was going to answer their prayer. I mean really answer their prayer. Would they have continued to pray? Am I praying that God would simply make my life easier? Is this what I want? That my life would become acceptable to the society or that I would have a life of convenience and ease and that my image of a well-rounded life be fulfilled? Or is it that I am really after the will of God? What I really want is for God to be glorified and Lord, whatever, whatever you have to do to glorify Yourself in this situation I am willing to go along. I accept it.

I think there are times when we think we are praying for one thing when we are really praying for two. We say, "Lord give me this job for your glory. Lord, heal me of this illness for your glory." Now what we think we are praying for is one thing, but I think sometimes we are praying for healing and we are praying God be glorified. We are praying God will give me this job, and God will be glorified. Now there will be times, dear friends, when God can't do both. When He cannot be glorified and give you what you want. I believe that I am on praying ground when I say, "Lord, this is what I am asking for. This is what I really want, but if you cannot do this and at the same time bring Yourself a greater glory, Lord, I choose your greater glory." Regardless of how desperately I want this thing, Lord I want Your glory more. If I can glorify You more on a sick bed, then Lord, I choose that. Lord, if I can glorify you more by not getting what I'm asking for, then Lord, I choose that. You see?

I am not saying that's easy, but I believe that's what Christian growth is all about, and what Christian maturity is all about. I think that is where God is trying to bring us to this place, where the only thing we care about is that our blessed Lord is glorified and that God can display, through our human personality, His magnificent grace. I believe that God answers prayer when it is linked to divine necessity. Let's pray together,

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the time that we have had together this week. Lord, I pray that you will take the words and whatever may not be truth, I pray, You will blot it from our minds. But what is truth (and I pray Lord, that all of it is truth), I pray that you will seal it into our hearts. Lord, may the word of God, which we know to be absolute truth, Your word, may it become the good seed sown in ready hearts. May it bring forth a rich harvest that will not only bless humanity but will bring glory to Thee. This is our prayer in Jesus' name that the Father may be glorified in the Son. Amen. God bless you.