



## Group Life Leader's Discussion Guide

Date: 4/6/2025

Sermon Title: Wrestling with Doubt Week 5 – Why do my prayers go unanswered?

Scripture: Matthew 26:36-46

### Gathering:

As you gather with one another be sure to greet each other and check-in. Ask and inquire from group members how their week has gone? Share that we will close with prayer requests at the end of group today.

**OPENING PRAYER** (Group leader or someone prays this prayer to open or create a similar prayer.)

*Gracious and loving God, as we gather to wrestle with our doubts and questions, open our hearts to Your presence. Help us to trust in Your wisdom, even when Your answers seem hidden from us. May this time deepen our faith, challenge our understanding, and bring us closer to You. In the name of Christ, who prayed, 'Your will be done,' Amen.*

### Opening Question:

1. Today we are talking about our doubts around prayer. How has your understanding of prayer evolved over time, especially in moments when you felt your prayers went unanswered?

### Digging into the scripture texts:

2. Read the text for this week's discussion Matthew 26:36-46. What are your initial insights from this text? What stands out to you about Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane?
3. How does Jesus model prayer when facing deep sorrow and distress?
4. Jesus prays, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want." (v.39). Have you ever prayed for something that God did not grant? How did that experience shape your faith?
5. In 2 Corinthians 12:7-10, Paul speaks of his unanswered prayer about the "thorn in his flesh." What do Paul's words, "My grace is sufficient for you," reveal about God's response to our prayers?
6. 1 John 5:14-15 tells us, "If we ask anything according to his will, he hears us." How does this passage shape our understanding of prayer?
7. How can we balance praying for our desires while surrendering to God's will?
8. John Wesley saw prayer as a means of grace—a way to open ourselves to God's transforming presence. How does this differ from seeing prayer as a way to "get" what we want?
9. If prayer is a means of grace, how can unanswered prayer still be an opportunity to grow in faith?

### Sermon Questions:

10. Pastor Allison says that "prayer is more than answers". What are your thoughts of this statement? What do you think this means?
11. The sermon mentions Jesus calling God "Father" in an intimate way. How does viewing God as a loving parent impact your approach to prayer?
12. Pastor Allison says, "Prayer is about alignment." How can we align our will with God's when praying, especially for things we deeply desire?
13. Pastor Allison shared about a time when others were praying for her that brought strength in unexpected ways. Discuss a time when you've experienced the power of others praying for you. How did it make a difference?
14. Pastor Allison said, "Prayer leads us into action." Can you share an example of how prayer has motivated you to take action in your life or for others?
15. Reflect on Kate Bowler's quote: "What if being the people of the gospel meant that we are simply people with good news? God is here. We are loved. It is enough." How might this perspective change our approach to prayer and faith?

**Insights from *Wrestling with Doubt, Finding Faith* chapter 5:**

16. Rev. Hamilton writes on p. 105, "Does God answer prayers for parking spaces and touchdown passes, but not for those who have cancer, or who's unborn children will die without a miracle?" What are your thoughts or reactions to this question that is put forth here?
17. After reading chapter 5 of Adam Hamilton's book, what insights do you have or parts of the chapter that you are finding helpful in this big question of unanswered prayers?

**Applying it:**

18. Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane was not answered as He requested, yet God's ultimate plan brought salvation. Can you think of a time when something you longed for did not happen, but later you saw God working for good? Share.
19. In what ways can we maintain a strong relationship with God even when we don't receive the answers we're hoping for in prayer?
20. How can we encourage one another when prayers seem unanswered?

**CLOSING PRAYER** (Be sure to share any prayer requests or praises and have someone close in prayer.)

*God of mystery and mercy, we thank You for meeting us in our doubts and struggles. Even when our prayers seem to go unanswered, help us to trust in Your love and wisdom. Give us faith like Christ in Gethsemane, that we may surrender our will to Yours. Strengthen us with Your grace, and guide us in the path of hope and trust. Amen.*

**WAYS TO RESPOND (or challenges for you this week)**

1. Pair up with someone in the group to pray for each other daily this week.
2. Before praying for something important, take a moment to consciously align your will with God's, using Jesus' words "not my will, but yours" as a guide.
3. Each day this week, thank God for His presence and love, regardless of your circumstances or unanswered prayers.