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Why Doesn't God Answer My Prayer?

Read John 11:1-44

Do you have any unanswered prayers? Not just small, daily requests, but major heart-breaking, soul-wrenching, tear-soaking prayers that God has not answered? In fact, has He not only remained silent and not said anything to encourage you, but has He remained so still that you see no evidence of His activity on your behalf at all? That's excruciatingly hard, isn't it? Are you offended with Him? Have you stopped your private time of prayer and Bible reading? Is your church involvement simply a motion you are going through, instead of a heartfelt act of worship? I understand. My heart's cry, "Why haven't You answered my prayer?" has led me to John 11, and the unanswered prayer of Martha. But Jesus used her unanswered prayer to develop her faith and ultimately to display His glory in the most magnificent miraculous way!

I. UNANSWERED PRAYER DEVELOPS OUR FAITH

John 11:1-27

A. FOR THIS WE NEED JESUS

John 11:1-16

- From v. 1-2, describe the family in Bethany and the crisis that arose.
- In v. 1-5, what attitude of Jesus toward this family is specifically stated twice and implied four times? Give the phrases.
- Who or what is your Lazarus?
- From v. 3, put into your own words Mary and Martha's implied "prayer."
- How did Jesus answer? What did He do?
- After prayer, did Mary and Martha's situation improve?
- How long has Jesus delayed answering your prayer?
- Read v. 14-15. What is astounding about Jesus' attitude towards Lazarus' death?
- What insight does His attitude give us about our suffering?
- From the following verses, what are some of His purposes for us in our suffering? I Peter 1:6-7; 1 Corinthians 12:7-10; Hebrews 12:2; Revelation 1:9-13.

B. FOR THIS WE HAVE JESUS

John 11:17-27

- According to v. 17-20, what did Martha have in the midst of her suffering that the three Hebrew young men had in the midst of theirs from Daniel 3:19-25?
- Relate this to God's promise to you and me from Isaiah 43:1-4; Psalm 23:4-5.
- How did Martha greet Jesus in v. 21? Put it into your own words.
- What have been some of your "if onlys?"

- According to v. 23, what else did Martha have on which she could base her faith in the midst of her suffering?
- What promise has God given you in the midst of your suffering? Has your faith been based on “I hope so” or “He says so?”
- In v. 25-26, to what and to Whom did Jesus direct Martha’s attention?
- Do you think Martha would have become this focused if she had not been desperate? Could this be one reason Jesus allowed her to suffer?

II. UNANSWERED PRAYER DISPLAYS HIS GLORY

John 11:28-44

A. THE GLORY OF HIS LOVE

John 11:28-38

- While similar, what is the difference between Martha’s greeting of Jesus in v. 21-22 and Mary’s greeting in v. 32? Put it into your own words.
- How did Jesus respond in v. 33-34?
- When have you invited Jesus to “Come and see” your pain, your helplessness, your hopelessness, your despair?
- Knowing He was going to raise Lazarus from the dead within moments, why do you think Jesus wept? See Isaiah 63:9, Hebrews 4:15, Psalm 56:8.
- Why do you think we are told twice that Jesus was deeply moved? See v. 33, 38.
- Do you think He saw a reflection of His own death and burial that would take place within the week? Relate this to Romans 5:8; Hebrews 12:2.

B. GLORY OF HIS LORDSHIP

John 11:39-41

- What command did Jesus give Martha in v. 39?
- Why was obedience to this command unthinkable to Martha?
- What stone is God commanding you to remove that is keeping your “Lazarus” buried? . . . an unforgiving spirit? . . . anger? . . . pride?
Fill in the blank:_____.
- What was Martha’s response to His command?
- Did her resistance and argument speed or delay the deliverance of her loved one?
- When Jesus seeks to do a miracle in the life of your loved one, what argument have you raised about His methods? . . . or His timing?
- What blessing have you delayed because you are still arguing?
- What was Jesus’ challenge to Martha in v. 40? Put it into your own words. Relate this to James 2:26; John 5:8-9; 9:7; Mark 3:5.
- If Martha truly believed, did she have any option but obedience?
- What reason to obey did Jesus give Martha in v. 40?
- What reason do you need before you obey?

C. THE GLORY OF HIS LIFE-GIVING POWER

John 11:41-44

- Why did Jesus pray publicly before calling Lazarus forth from the tomb?
v. 41-42
- When had that same Voice been heard before? Compare Genesis 1:3 with John 1:1, Luke 8:24-25; v.49-55; Matthew 8:28-32.

- What was the response to His voice in v. 43-44?
- Do you think His power has lessened or weakened over time?
See Hebrews 13:6.

Based on your brief study of John 11:1-44, write out your own answer to Why? And remember . . . After the Cross comes the resurrection and the glory and the crown! Keep your focus on the big picture and the ultimate goal!