

SERIES: Reach
WEEK 2: When God Seems Silent
TEXT: Luke 18:1–8 (ESV)

BIG IDEA: Faith keeps praying when the answer hasn't come.

INTRODUCTION

"And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart." **Luke 18:1 (ESV)**

1. SOMETIMES PRAYER TAKES LONGER THAN WE EXPECT

"In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. And there was a widow in that city who **kept coming** to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.'" **Luke 18:2–3 (ESV)**

- a. **"Maybe my faith isn't strong enough."**
- b. **"Maybe I need to help God make this happen."**
- c. **Maybe I misunderstood God."**
- d. **"Maybe I've done something wrong."**
- e. **"Has God forgotten me?"**

Jesus isn't showing us what God is like, He's showing us what God's not like.

2. GOD'S DELAY DOESN'T TELL US WHAT GOD IS LIKE

"For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.'"

Luke 18:4–5 (ESV)

"Hear what the unrighteous judge says." **Luke 18:6 (ESV)**

Jesus is making a contrast, not a comparison.

“And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night?”
Luke 18:7 (ESV)

3. FAITH KEEPS PRAYING BEFORE IT SEES

“Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?”
Luke 18:8 (ESV)

How long am I supposed to keep praying when God seems silent? Jesus' answer is remarkably simple: **Don't lose heart. Keep reaching.**

REACH — WEEK 2

When God Seems Silent

Text: Luke 18:1–8 (ESV)

Big Idea: *Faith keeps praying when the answer hasn't come.*

INTRODUCTION

Week 1 established that prayer reaches beyond what we can accomplish ourselves. We saw the believers in Acts 4 face something beyond their control and instinctively reach for God.

But there is another side of prayer that almost every Christian eventually encounters.

What happens when you **have** reached for God? You prayed first. You asked honestly. You trusted Him with the outcome. And then you waited.

Nothing changed.

You prayed again.

Still nothing.

At some point, the struggle is no longer simply with the circumstance. The struggle begins to affect your faith. *Does God hear me? Does He care? Why should I keep praying when nothing seems to be happening?*

Jesus tells the parable in Luke 18 specifically for people standing in that place:

“And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.” Luke 18:1

Jesus knew there would be times when continuing to pray would become difficult. His concern isn't merely that His followers pray. It's that they don't **lose heart while they're praying**.

1. SOMETIMES PRAYER LASTS LONGER THAN WE EXPECT

Luke 18:2–3

Jesus introduces two people: an unjust judge and a widow who repeatedly comes to him asking for justice.

The widow has a legitimate need, but she doesn't receive an immediate answer. She has to come back.

And come back again.

Jesus doesn't tell us how long this continued. He simply lets us feel the repetition.

That resembles prayer more than we sometimes admit.

Some prayers are answered quickly. Others remain part of our lives for months or years. We pray for a child who has walked away from God. We pray for a marriage that remains troubled. We pray for healing while another appointment comes and goes. We pray for someone we love to come to Christ. We pray about something we've carried so long that we can barely remember when we began asking.

The danger isn't merely becoming impatient.

Jesus says the danger is **losing heart**.

The passage gives us permission to acknowledge something Christians sometimes hesitate to admit: **waiting can be exhausting**.

Persistence isn't pretending the waiting doesn't hurt. Persistence is continuing to bring the need to God when the waiting does hurt.

Possible supporting example: Abraham and Sarah waiting years for the promised son. Their waiting eventually became difficult enough that they attempted to produce an answer themselves.

Key thought: *Waiting becomes especially dangerous when we decide God's timetable requires our assistance.*

2. GOD'S DELAY DOESN'T TELL US WHAT GOD IS LIKE

Luke 18:4–7

The judge finally responds, but his character is terrible. He doesn't fear God. He doesn't care about people. He acts because the widow keeps bothering him.

Jesus isn't comparing God to this judge. He's contrasting them.

If even an unjust judge will eventually respond, **how much more can God's people trust the character of the God to whom they pray?**

The longer an answer takes, the easier it becomes to interpret God through what hasn't happened.

Maybe He doesn't care.

Maybe He isn't listening.

Maybe I've been forgotten.

But circumstances are a poor interpreter of God's character.

Lazarus — John 11

Mary and Martha send word to Jesus:

“Lord, he whom you love is ill.” John 11:3

Then John deliberately tells us that Jesus loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. Yet Jesus waits two more days before going to them.

The delay looked completely different from Martha's side than it did from Jesus' side.

By the time Jesus arrives, Lazarus is dead, and Martha says:

“Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” John 11:21

She knew Jesus could have intervened.

What she didn't know was why He hadn't.

Yet His delay wasn't evidence of diminished love. John had already established that Jesus loved them.

Daniel — Daniel 10

Daniel prays and then waits twenty-one days before he receives an answer. When the messenger finally arrives, Daniel learns something he couldn't possibly have known while he was waiting:

“From the first day that you set your heart to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard.” Daniel 10:12

From Daniel's perspective, there had been twenty-one days of silence.

From heaven's perspective, he had been heard from the first day.

Key thought: *What we experience as silence doesn't necessarily mean God is inactive.*

This point also needs an important guardrail: Lazarus eventually walked out of his tomb and Daniel eventually received his answer, but Scripture doesn't promise that every prolonged prayer will eventually receive the particular answer we want.

Week 1 established that sometimes God changes our circumstances and sometimes He gives us what we need to remain faithful within them.

The promise here is not that persistence eventually forces God to give us our preferred outcome.

The promise is that **God is nothing like the unjust judge.**

His apparent silence should never be interpreted as indifference.

3. FAITH KEEPS PRAYING BEFORE IT SEES

Luke 18:7–8

Jesus brings the parable to its real destination:

“And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night?” Luke 18:7

Then He ends with an unexpected question:

“Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?” Luke 18:8

Suddenly the parable isn't merely about persistence.

It's about **faith**.

Jesus connects continuing prayer with continuing trust in God.

Sometimes faith looks dramatic. Sometimes faith sees miracles.

But sometimes faith simply comes back tomorrow and prays again.

I keep praying because I still believe God hears me.

I keep asking because I still believe He's good.

I keep bringing this person before Him because I haven't stopped believing He can reach them.

I keep praying about the circumstance because what I cannot see has not changed what I know about God.

Persistence in prayer isn't a technique for wearing God down. **It's an expression of a faith that refuses to let unanswered questions become unanswered accusations against God's character.**

The widow kept coming because the judge was her only hope for justice.

We keep coming for an entirely different reason.

We know the One to whom we're coming.

CONCLUSION

Week 1 asked:

What do you do when something is beyond your reach?

Reach for God.

Week 2 asks the harder question:

What do you do when you've reached for God and the answer hasn't come?

Keep reaching.

There may be something you've prayed about so long that you've nearly stopped asking. You haven't necessarily stopped believing in God. You've simply grown tired of hoping that anything will change.

Jesus told this parable for exactly that moment.

“They ought always to pray and not lose heart.” Luke 18:1

You don't have to understand the delay to continue trusting the One you're praying to.

Faith keeps praying when the answer hasn't come.