

C3 LEADERS' QUESTIONS

S2022-WEEK 2

2/6/22

Getting Started with a Warm-Up:

- Briefly explain to the group a situation when you left a voice message or text message to someone, but never got a response? How did you feel? What were your thoughts?

- Share a time when you prayed strongly for something but felt that God was not answering you?

Getting Down to Business:

The following questions are following this format: Scripture/Observation, Application, and Prayer (SOAP).

1) Scripture/Observation:

A) Read Matthew 7:7-8 and James 4:2-3 (see commentaries below). If scripture demonstrates that God promises to answer prayer, then does it matter how we approach God in our prayers to him? Why?

B) Read James 4:4-6 (see commentary below). According to scripture, what would be some reasons God is silent in response to our prayers? Why ?

C) Read Habakkuk 1:1-17. Describe Habakkuk's prayer, and his response to God's answer.

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Matthew 7:7-11

V 7–11: **FAITH** Faith consists of asking, seeking, and knocking, with the sure promise that God will answer even more than any earthly father will answer the needs of his own children. (The Bible Panorama commentary, accessed 2/3/22, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+7&version=NLT>)

Matthew 7:7-8

In view of such rigorous demands and hard opposition, Jesus' disciples need to pray for God's help. He will always respond positively to their words, though others may reject them (v. 6). Still, their petitions must be for His glory rather than for selfish ends (cf. James 4:2-3). All that the disciple needs to serve Jesus Christ successfully is available for the asking...The force of each present imperative verb is iterative.⁴ We could translate them: "Keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking" (cf. Luke 11:9-10). However, no matter the level of intensity with which we seek God's help, He will respond to every one of His disciples who calls to Him as a loving Father who never makes a mistake. (Dr. Constable's Notes on Matthew, 2021 edition, accessed 2/3/22, <https://planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/matthew.pdf>)

James 4:2-3

4:2 you do not ask. That is, "you do not ask" from "God, who gives generously to all" (1:5). Envy is a sin against God. It flows from a lack of gratitude toward God who bestows gifts upon His people. It also results from a failure to seek one's own gifts from God rather than from the world.

4:3 wrongly. God refuses to grant our petitions when they proceed from evil desires. To pray from wrong motives is not to pray in faith (Rom. 14:23; Heb. 11:6). (ESV Reformation Study Bible, accessed 2/3/22, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=jas+4&version=NLT>)

James 4:1-3

V 1–3: WARS All wars and fighting come from wilful and wayward human hearts. How different is submission to God which seeks for what pleases Him, rather than what pleases us. (The Bible Panorama commentary, accessed 2/3/22, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=jas+4&version=NLT>)

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James 4:4

The real issue is: Which will I love, "God" or "the world"?... "The world" urges us to love ourselves, to put our pleasures before God's pleasures. If we agree with that idea, we are unfaithful as the Lord's spiritual brides, and become "an enemy of God." We have deliberately chosen to follow the world's philosophy rather than God's will. We cannot be on friendly terms with God if we follow the world's philosophy (Matt. 6:24).

James 4:5

In this verse, James gave scriptural support for what he just asserted (v. 4). However, he did not quote a particular verse, but instead evidently summarized the scriptural teaching on God's jealousy (cf. Exod. 20:5; 34:14; Ps. 42:1; 84:2; Zech. 8:2) in a new statement.²

It is very difficult to translate this statement, but the best rendering seems to be something such as the following: "God jealously longs for the spirit that He made to live in us."³ Another translation is: "The Spirit which He made to dwell in us jealously yearns for the entire devotion of the heart" (cf. Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 3:16; Gal. 4:6; Eph. 4:30; John 7:39; 16:7).⁴

Both translations fit the preceding context well. God's people who love the world have committed spiritual adultery against Him (v. 4), yet God (or His Spirit) "jealously longs for (desires)" their love (v. 5)...

James 4:6

God has set a high standard of wholehearted love and devotion for His people, but He gives "grace" that is "greater" than His rigorous demand. Proverbs 3:34, quoted here, reminds us that God opposes "the proud": those who pursue their own pleasures. However, He gives grace to "the humble": those who put God's desires first in their lives. He gives "grace" (help) to withstand the onslaughts of the flesh within and the world without. (Dr. Constable's Notes on James, 2021 edition, accessed 2/3/22, <https://planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/james.pdf>)

HABAKKUK 1:1-17

V 1–4: WICKEDNESS The prophet, Habakkuk, enters into a dialogue with God.

Habakkuk's first question is to enquire how long he must cry out in prophecy without an apparent answer. Wickedness of all kinds seems to proliferate in Israel.

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V 5–11: WATCH! God tells him to watch and see the amazing thing that He will do. He will bring up the 'terrible and dreadful' Chaldeans (the Babylonians) and judge Israel through them. Israel will be taken captive.

V 12–17: WHY? Habakkuk knows that God is eternal, and he does not think that Israel will die. He then asks why God proposes to use someone as wicked as the Babylonians to judge a nation which, though rebellious and sinful, is less wicked than the coming oppressors. Surely God is too pure to use someone so wicked and cruel? The rule of law and exercise of justice have gone. (The Bible Panorama, accessed 2/4/22, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Habakkuk+1&version=NLT>)

2) Application:

A) How will reviewing the reasons God seems silent change your approach to prayer?

B) How do you think reflecting on your day and discerning your thoughts before approaching God in prayer will change the way you pray to him?

C) How does reminding yourself that God is good change the way you understand His answers to your prayers?

3) Prayer: As you pray, thank God that He always hears our prayers and answers our prayers. Ask Him to help you to continue to grow in your understanding of and practice of prayer.