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From Problems to Praise

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HOW ARE YOU INCLINED TO THINK THAT BAD THINGS WON'T HAPPEN TO YOU?

The **POINT** >

Thank God and praise Him for how He answers prayer.

> ISAIAH 38:9-20

⁹ A poem by King Hezekiah of Judah after he had been sick and had recovered from his illness: ¹⁰ I said: In the prime of my life I must go to the gates of Sheol; I am deprived of the rest of my years. ¹¹ I said: I will never see the LORD, the LORD in the land of the living; I will not look on humanity any longer with the inhabitants of what is passing away. ¹² My dwelling is plucked up and removed from me like a shepherd's tent. I have rolled up my life like a weaver; he cuts me off from the loom. By nightfall you make an end of me. ¹³ I thought until the morning: He will break all my bones like a lion. By nightfall you make an end of me. ¹⁴ I chirp like a swallow or a crane; I moan like a dove. My eyes grow weak looking upward. Lord, I am oppressed; support me. ¹⁵ What can I say? He has spoken to me, and he himself has done it. I walk along slowly all my years because of the bitterness of my soul. ¹⁶ Lord, by such

things people live, and in every one of them my spirit finds life; you have restored me to health and let me live. ¹⁷ Indeed, it was for my own well-being that I had such intense bitterness; but your love has delivered me from the Pit of destruction, for you have thrown all my sins behind your back. ¹⁸ For Sheol cannot thank you; Death cannot praise you. Those who go down to the Pit cannot hope for your faithfulness. ¹⁹ The living, only the living can thank you, as I do today; a father will make your faithfulness known to children. ²⁰ The LORD is ready to save me; we will play stringed instruments all the days of our lives at the house of the LORD.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

FACT:

Research shows that people with a positive outlook tend to live longer, healthier lives compared to their pessimistic counterparts.¹



LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // GOD

God communicates to us through His Word and hears and answers when we pray, and our spiritual maturity depends on practicing these spiritual disciplines.

You've probably heard that teens think they're invincible. Of course, it's not that teens see themselves as indestructible, like the Hulk or Wolverine. However, teens do often underestimate risks and overestimate good outcomes in their own experience. This "optimism bias" says, "I know bad things happen, but they won't happen to me." This is why teens often engage in risky behaviors such as fast and aggressive driving, or illegal activities like trespassing or vandalism.

It's easy to live as if we'll never die. After all, death is not often a topic of conversation at the dinner table or when we're together with friends. However, it's important not only that we understand and accept our own mortality, but also that we make sure we're prepared, because we never know what our future holds.

When Hezekiah was young and in the prime of his life, he received a message from the Lord that he would soon die and needed to get his house in order (Isa. 38:1). He wasn't ready for this kind of news. Chances are, we might not be either. We can learn a few lessons from Hezekiah's experience.

ISAIAH 38:9-14

1 Do you always remember to thank God for His blessings, including answered prayer?

2 According to this passage, how did Hezekiah feel about his approaching death?



*Repentance isn't just about feeling sorry for what we've done—it's about changing.
#BSFLInterruptions*

ISAIAH 38:15-17

- 3 How can pain be a good thing?
- 4 What is repentance, and why is it so important in terms of our relationship with God?
- 5 How does it impact you to know that when we confess and repent, God removes our sins as far as the east is from the west?

ISAIAH 38:18-20

- 6 What are ways that we, in principle, keep God's Word tied around our wrists and head?
- 7 What did Hezekiah see as the purpose behind God healing him?
- 8 In what ways are you publicly proclaiming thanks and praise to God?



LIVE IT OUT



LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // GOD

God communicates to us through His Word and hears and answers when we pray, and our spiritual maturity depends on practicing these spiritual disciplines.

As Jesus's followers, we are invited to live in relationship with God. Relationships are built on communication, and we have the amazing privilege of not only hearing from God in His Word but also of sharing ourselves with God through prayer. When we pray, God hears and answers. He is a good Father who is happy to hear from His children, and He gives what we ask for when we pray in ways that align with His desires.

> CHRIST

God hears our prayers and He answers. At times, we might not feel like this is true, but we would do well to trust what the Bible teaches above our own feelings.

9 **Wherever you are in the discipline of prayer, commit to growing. Set aside time every day this week for intentional prayer.**

GOD

JESUS

HOLY SPIRIT

BIBLE

SALVATION

CREATION

CHURCH

PEOPLE

FAMILY

COMMUNITY
& WORLD

10 **Consider praying using the acronym ACTS: adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication. Pray that God would supply your needs, and pray also for the needs of others.**



> COMMUNITY

Most of the instructions in the New Testament are not only for the individual believer but for the entire faith community. Prayer is a team sport; choose your teammates wisely.

11 This week, invite someone to pray for you and with you.

12 Who will you invite?

> CULTURE

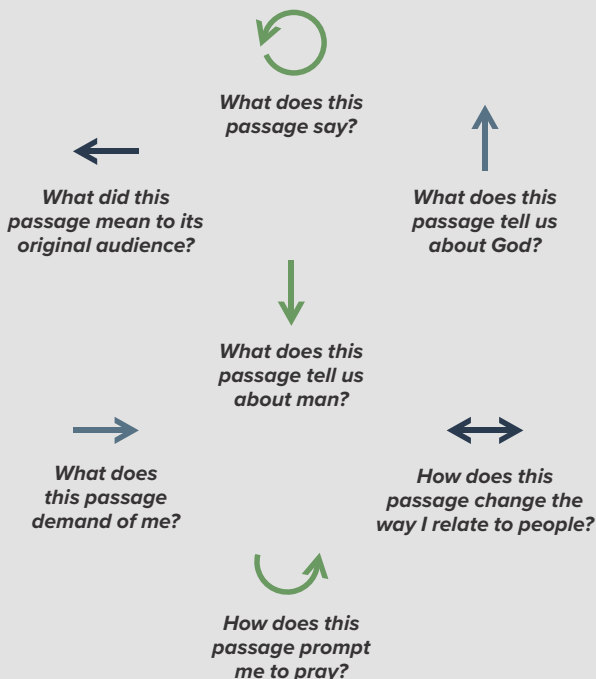
When God responds to our prayers, it's good to share it with others in our lives, especially unbelievers. Pay attention to ways God has answered your prayers.

13 Share about God's goodness with a non-believing friend.

DAILY DEVOTIONS



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Day One **MARK 11:20**

This story happens during the week that ends with Jesus's crucifixion. On the morning following His triumphal entry, Jesus was traveling back to Jerusalem and He was hungry (Mark 11:12). In the distance, Jesus saw a fig tree full of leaves, but it wasn't the season for fig trees to produce fruit. Nonetheless, all signs pointed to the tree having plenty of fruit. But when Jesus arrived at the tree, He found no fruit at all, and He cursed the tree. The next day, Jesus and the disciples passed by the same tree, and it was dried and withered. Had Jesus been impulsive or irrational in cursing the tree? Nope, not at all. Was the curse an expression of frustration or anger? Probably not. Instead, Jesus wanted the disciples to understand that it's not signs that seem to point to fruitfulness that matter in the lives of God's people but actual fruit. We are called to produce fruit, and there are serious implications if we do not.

➤ **What does the fig tree represent in this story?**

➤ **What are the kinds of fruit God's people are called to produce?**

Day Two

MARK 11:21



Peter had seen Jesus do some pretty amazing things, including walking on the water, feeding the five thousand, and calming the storm. Still, Peter seems to be captivated, or even caught off guard, at the sight of the withered tree: “Rabbi, look!” (CSB, ESV, and NIV). Notice the exclamation point. In the original language, *rabbi* meant not only teacher but more specifically “great one.” As a faithful Jewish man living in the culture of the time, Peter had likely encountered many rabbis. However, he’d never seen anyone like Jesus; no one had this kind of wisdom, authority, or power. And here before His eyes was yet another sign of why he needed to follow Jesus. This was especially important given what Peter would experience in the coming days.

- **Why do you think Peter might have been surprised to see the fig tree withered so quickly?**

- **How does Jesus fit the definition of a rabbi?**

Day Three

MARK 11:22

At Peter’s reply, Jesus addressed all the disciples and told them to have faith in God. Peter had demonstrated, despite all he’d seen in his years of following Jesus, that he still didn’t understand the power in Jesus’s words. Had he understood it, Peter would have fully expected the tree to be withered. After all, Jesus had cursed it. But Peter didn’t understand. This kind of weak and fragile faith had been enough to compel Peter to follow Jesus for the past three years. Peter had certainly faced some complicated and difficult circumstances; however, nothing would compare with the challenges Peter and the other apostles would face at Jesus’s crucifixion and their calling to lay the foundations of the church. Jesus’s command in this verse was a rebuke for the disciples’ lack of faith. It was also a challenge to grow, for very soon they’d need a strong faith to carry them forward. We also need the kind of faith that can stand firm. Receive Jesus’s command—have faith in God.

- **Why did Jesus rebuke the disciples?**

- **What does a strong faith look like today?**

Day Four

MARK 11:23

In first-century Jewish culture, wise teachers who could solve difficult problems (which some people saw as “impossible”) were described as being able to “root up mountains.” Jesus was the only rabbi who could truly move mountains. After all, He’s the One who created the mountains! Outside of Jesus, this saying was just a metaphor. Still, the disciples got the point. There’s a strong connection between faith and Jesus’s power at work in the lives of His people. Notice, Jesus didn’t say, “Just believe and *you* can move mountains!” Instead, He said it will be done for those who believe. God is the One who exercises His power in response to our faith. And the impossible problems the disciples would soon face weren’t literally moving mountains or turning tides. Their greatest challenges would involve preaching the truth of Jesus to a world set against God. Moving physical mountains simply requires picks and shovels (today, dynamite and big machines help) and a lot of grit. But changing hearts requires a supernatural act of God. Do we have the kind of faith that invites God’s supernatural power to work through us?

- **What kinds of impossible problems would the apostles soon face?**

- **How does God call us to face the impossible problems we encounter today?**

Day Five

MARK 11:24



It’s plain and simple: Prayer is central to the lives of God’s people. Where there is a lack of prayer, there is a lack of faith. And where faith is strong, God’s people pray. And it’s amazing to know that, for some reason we can’t fully understand, God chooses to respond to the prayers of His people in accomplishing His will. This verse doesn’t mean that we can ask for anything we might selfishly desire—like a lifetime supply of unlimited pizza—and expect God will give it. Instead, when we pray in faith and in accordance with God’s desires, God happily answers yes! God wants to use us to build the kingdom and make a difference in the lives of the people around us. Let’s pray. Let’s believe. And we’ll see God move mountains!

- **What kinds of things are we called to pray for?**

- **When have you seen God work powerfully in answer to your prayers?**