

Five Why's

Air Dates: May 1-5, 2023

Day One

Have you ever said: "Lord, it's enough! When are you going to do something about this? Why are you waiting so long?" Well, I don't know anyone who hasn't asked those questions of God at some time or another in their Christian walk. I certainly have.

When it looks as though God has waited too long to answer your prayers, you need to stop and realize that his purposes may be quite different from yours. Frequently before he responds to your need, he has to adjust you to the trouble and help you learn a much-needed lesson. Maybe he wants to teach you that you can face and endure trouble as long as he is with you in the trouble. Then he will take you out of it. But it will not happen until you have stopped being restless and fretful about it. He may be waiting for you to be calm and quiet. Then he can say, "It is enough."

Paul Billheimer wrote in *Adventures in Adversity*: "There can be no testing of character without delays...By this means, during delay, God is testing and developing character. It is easy to be impatient with God when we fail to understand the purpose of his delay. However, God is willing to be misunderstood in the universe he has made, in order to achieve his purpose of character development."

I recall a three-year delay God gave me, when I so wanted to leave a job I was in. And if I had left when I wanted to, I would have missed three years of personal development that have been essential to my walk with God and the ministry he has given me. The tough lessons I learned then molded my character like none others.

When it was finally over, I wrote in my journal: "I praise you that it is now enough. My time in this job is over, but I praise you that it did not end until you had completed your work in me." It's easy to say that at the end, but difficult to say it in the middle, isn't it?

If you're in that predicament, wondering why God hasn't done anything yet, try to remember that the day will come when you can look back and see how he was developing you in that time. Someday he'll say to you, "It is enough now." Until then, keep trusting and believing that he waits so that he can be gracious unto you.

Day Two

I'm quite certain that you know how important it is for Christ-followers to pray and yet not too many of us make it a priority in our lives. Why not?

Well, for one reason, we don't plan to pray. It's not on our to-do list; it's not part of our daily schedule. I can promise you that Satan will do everything he can to keep you from praying because your power comes through prayer. So, if you don't intentionally plan to pray, you probably won't pray very much. Do you have a certain time set aside to pray each day?

Another reason you may not pray like you should is because you don't really believe it makes any difference. You know God is sovereign, so how do your prayers change anything? And besides, maybe you've had many prayers that weren't answered according to your timetable or the way you wanted them answered. So, you may have lost faith in prayer. But can you remember that Jesus prayed while on earth—a lot! He knew that prayer was important in his life, so how can we question our need to pray.

But in my opinion, one of the main reasons Christians don't make prayer a priority in their lives is because they've never learned how to pray. The disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray. Have you ever asked God for the same thing? Have you ever looked at prayers in the Bible and patterned your prayers after them. Have you ever taken The Lord's Prayer—more accurately called The Disciple's Prayer—and used that as your format for praying?

Years ago I did that and it revolutionized my prayer life. In fact, I produced a journal similar to the one I use, and you can get one for yourself. It's available on our website, and perhaps it might help you learn to pray more effectively.

I hope you will get serious—if you haven't already—about becoming proficient in prayer—learning to pray more effectively. You will never regret it.

Day Three

In Psalm 19 David asked God to forgive him for his hidden errors, and I suggest that we need to do the same thing—to ask God to show us any hidden sins we just don't see. But what about those areas of sin that we try to hide? When we knowingly cover up sin in our lives, we are asking for trouble.

Proverbs 28:13 tells us that he who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy. I believe with all my heart that many Christians are floundering and ineffective for Jesus because they try to conceal their sins. It's one thing to have errors in our life that are hidden to us, but it's a far more serious problem for us to try to cover up our errors.

Think right now: Are you finding it difficult to prosper in what you're doing? Now, by prosper I don't mean get rich, but I mean find success. How's your job going? Are you prospering in your work? Are your relationships prospering, doing well? Is your ministry for Jesus going forward and making progress?

If not, check it out. If you're covering up some sin in your life, you are asking for failure. God cannot bless us when we cover-up. God will not be involved in cover-ups. God will expose our cover-ups if we continue to try to hide them.

Someone has said that rarely do any of us change without pain, and I guess that's true. But it shows we're not very smart, doesn't it? I mean, if you know that you can't prosper by covering up your sin, and you know that God will deal with it if you don't, doesn't it just make sense to confess that sin, renounce it and find God's mercy? The Bible says if we judge ourselves we will not be judged.

Do yourself one big favor: Uncover those cover-ups. Confess to God any areas of willful sin, and ask for his mercy. Commit to him that you are renouncing that sin and by his grace you will not return to it. When you do that, God is then able to prosper you in everything you do and in all your relationships. Just makes good common sense, doesn't it?

Day Four

Are you feeling anxious about something? Are you very disturbed over a situation in your life? Does it seem impossible to find any rest and peace right now? Recently a passage in Isaiah 48 gave me some insight into the reasons behind the anxiety and unrest that I was experiencing.

"This is what the Lord says—your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go. If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your well-being like the waves of the sea" (Isaiah 48:17-18).

How incisively the Word of God cuts through and exposes the real issues. I was reminded that anxiety and unrest are often a result of my failure to pay attention to what I know about God. Rarely do I need some new truth or principle to help me out; I just need to practice what I know already.

God's direction and commands are there for all of us to see and understand. We know the basics, don't we? And yet our feet tend to stray. We leave off something here and something else there, which we know we should be doing, and we fail to completely follow the commands of God which are clearly understood.

I find that I rarely make a deliberate decision to wander from God's principles. It's simply a failure to pay attention to what I know already. My focus becomes fractured. I move slightly off-center, simply because I haven't paid attention like I should.

And when that happens, the results are loss of peace, loss of rest, anxiety, frustration. When you start to dig underneath those outward effects, you often discover that the cause is failure to pay attention to God's commands. It may be something that seems very small, but if you walk away from doing it God's way, you can expect to lose the peace and rest you so need.

The Lord told his people, "If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river." If you're missing peace in your life, check out the obedience department and see if there's some area where you're not paying attention to God. Once you get that straightened out, that wonderful, marvelous, indescribable peace will return, like a river, flooding your heart and calming your nerves.

Day Five

I've learned that any time you talk about forgiveness, it resonates with almost everyone, because we all need to forgive, and it's really hard to do sometimes!

I want to explain why you can't afford *not* to forgive. Whether it's a small thing or some traumatic hurt that has left deep scars, you cannot afford *not* to forgive.

And here's the main reason: If you don't forgive, God won't forgive you. Jesus said:

"For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins" (Matthew 6:14-15).

If we forgive, we will be forgiven. And conversely, if we do not forgive people that have wronged us, we will not be forgiven by our Heavenly Father. I don't know how to expand or explain that any further. If we forgive, we'll be forgiven; if we don't, we won't.

Now, how important is it to you to be freely forgiven by God? Can you run the risk of not being forgiven regularly by the Lord?

Another reason we really must forgive is that if you don't, you will become bitter and bitterness will destroy you. And bitterness manifests itself in many ways, such as losing your temper, irritability, sleeplessness, depression, a constant negative perspective, and generally not feeling so good.

Forgiveness is probably the hardest thing we are asked—no, we are commanded—to do as followers of Jesus Christ. But you can learn to forgive; by the power of the Holy Spirit you can grow in your ability to forgive. That is, if you want to.

And one last reason you can't afford not to forgive is because you need the freedom that comes through forgiveness. You know, when you harbor unforgiveness and bitterness starts to grow in your heart, it's like drinking rat poison and then expecting the rat to die. The poison of your unforgiveness is keeping you a prisoner. You're in a self-imposed prison that is painful.

Galatians 5:1 says "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery." Forgiveness sets you free to enjoy the abundant life that Christ died to give you. There are many reasons you cannot afford not to forgive and God will give you the grace to do it.