

Both Isaiah and Mary had supernatural encounters revealing their closeness to God. Neither questioned nor hesitated to accept what God was calling them to do.

What are some reasons we might have to hesitate or question God when He calls us to do something? What can we do to address those reasons and enable us to wholeheartedly respond as Mary and Isaiah did?

As we individually respond to God, we will find that we are better able to join with other believers who also seek to do God's will. It is God who speaks to us individually, prompting us to pray. If the Holy Spirit is prompting a community of believers to pray together, the fruitfulness of their prayers is multiplied. When a group of believers pray together, the result is unity, humility, thanksgiving, confession of sin, intercession, and discovery of God's will.

WRAP-UP

Prayer is not a power struggle to convince God to give us what we ask for. It is not an apathetic acceptance of "whatever". The goal of our prayers is to see God's Kingdom come and His will be done. God created us to be co-participants with Him in that. The more intimately we know Him the better we can align our prayer to work with God to see His purposes accomplished. As we know Him more, our trust and faith grows so that we will enthusiastically, wholeheartedly follow His calling.

MEMORY VERSE

*38a Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true."
- Luke 1:38a NLT*

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life.

Challenge – As you read God's Word and listen to His voice this week, look for ways to align your prayers to what God is revealing about His nature and His will.

Designed to Participate

Teach Us to Pray #5

INTRODUCTION

When Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He did more than ask them to memorize words. He was teaching them how to approach God in prayer. He was defining their role as co-participants. It is worth taking a deeper look at the way He phrased this prayer. The verbs Jesus used are in the "middle voice". Most of us have long forgotten our grammar lessons, so let's refer to this as our instruction to participate along with God through prayer. The verbs are not indicating that prayer is so dependent on us that we force God's response. Nor is it indicating that God keeps Himself so far removed from us that our prayers don't affect Him. Rather, we were designed to participate with God in His work through our prayers. This is why it is so important for us to pursue an intimate relationship with God, so that we know His character, His heart, and His will as we align ourselves with Him through our prayers.

Ice Breaker

Is there someone in your life that you are so thoroughly acquainted with that you can predict what they are going to do or say even before they do it? Can you share an example?

Key Passage

Genesis 1:26a NLT – 26a Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us...."

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. In the Garden

We can see that God intended to involve humans in His work by looking at how we were created.

Genesis 1:26, 28 NLT - 26 Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground." ... 28 Then God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground."

In the garden, God made humans as a reflection of Himself, to be His image. In verse 28 we see several actions assigned to us- being fruitful, multiplying, filling the earth, governing, and reigning. That is a lot of responsibility. What was the relationship between God and man like when God gave us these assignments? How do you think that influenced man's ability to fulfill those responsibilities?

When Adam and Eve recognized God's authority over them, we enjoyed the relationship that God intended. Man participated with God in His work on earth, until sin distorted that relationship. But Jesus restored our relationship with God, enabling us to effectively join in His work once again.

What has God recently revealed to you about His character, or His will during your time spent in His presence?

2. Learning to Participate in God's Work

Matthew 6:12-13 NLT - 12 and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us. 13 And don't let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one.

In Matthew 6 Jesus was teaching us to be active participants in the prayers we pray. We not only make our requests known to God, but we also participate with God in those prayers.

In verses 12 and 13 we see that we have a part to play, and God has a part to play in our prayers.

For each verse:

What is God doing _____

What are we doing _____

How does our action demonstrate that we are aligning ourselves with God and His nature and will _____

Even after the Lord's Prayer ends in verse 13, Jesus continues to teach the importance of our actions as an indicator of our intimate knowledge and alignment with God.

Matthew 6:14-15 NLT - 14 "If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. 15 But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.

We know that our salvation is not dependent on our forgiving others. Salvation isn't based on our good work, but on accepting Jesus as Lord, and accepting His finished work on the cross in our place. So, what is this verse telling us? Our refusal and unwillingness to forgive is in direct opposition to the nature and will of our Father.

If our actions are directly opposed to God, can we really say we are following Jesus as Lord in our life? If there is anyone you have been unwilling to forgive, spend time asking the Father to shape your will to align to His and put a heart of compassion in you for that person.

3. Intimacy leads to fruitfulness

You might wonder what to expect as you draw nearer to God. We see two examples below in Mary and Isaiah's responses.

Luke 1:38 NLT - 38 Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true." And then the angel left her.

Isaiah 6:8 NLT - 8 Then I heard the Lord asking, "Whom should I send as a messenger to this people? Who will go for us?" I said, "Here I am. Send me."