

STUDY UNIT 6

John 16:23–24 / John 14:12–13

YOUR IMPOSSIBLE PRAYER LIST

This Unit regarding your impossible prayer list, is placed here in our studies to have you come to grips with the fundamental wonder of prayer, and your personal responsibility and amazing power with it to change lives, history, and the universe.

Intercessory prayer is asking God to intervene supernaturally in the world to do what neither you or anyone else can. You can share the gospel with someone, but unless God creates a new nature within them, they will never accept Christ as their Savior and Lord. Likewise, you can teach a saved child the truth and be a godly example to him or her, but unless they are transformed by the Spirit they will never be mature in the faith.

What then is on your prayer list? Hopefully you are asking God to do things—otherwise it will be true of you that “you do not have (*the things you could have had*), because you do not ask” (Jas 4:2b). This would mean your impossible prayer list is too short and that your prayer life is too timid. And hopefully neither is your list limited to those things that God would describe as things you would “visit on yourself.” It should include some things you need, but not just these.

What is left? You are invited to ask for **impossible things**, things that will never happen unless God supernaturally does them. Remember, there are only three prerequisites for God to answer your impossible prayer requests. We know these from our prior studies.

1. **They must be according to His will.** It may be His will, but not His timing or method. We will not always know.
2. **They must be consistent with His character and values**, which is what “in His name” means.
3. **They must glorify God.** The glory of something is the visible manifestation of it. What evidence do we have that our Father in heaven is a Being of self-denying love? He sent His Son to give His life for us. Jesus considered us more important than Himself and died in our place. He was the visible manifestation of the Father when He lived among us.

So, what is the major point here? Get to asking God to intervene in the world to glorify Himself! He delights in the requests of His children. He has chosen to wait for us to do some of the things He has planned, with Him.

Why did God pursue Elijah when he ran away from Jezebel in fear for his life? It was a time of him being a man of “little faith,” and that after being a man of incredible faith. It is interesting that Elijah’s weakest moment of faith and prayer came right after what appears to be his strongest moment. He had actually asked God to call down fire from heaven at a precise time, in a precise way, for a precise reason, according to God’s will, name, and glory.

But notice what God asked Elijah after he stopped running in fear and was hiding in a cave.

*“Then he came there to a cave and lodged there; and behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and He said to him, ‘**What are you doing here, Elijah?**’ He said, ‘**I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts.**’ [...] And behold, a voice came to him and said, ‘**What are you doing here, Elijah?**’ Then he said, ‘**I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; [...] And I alone am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.**’ [...]*

*“The LORD said to him, ‘**Go, return... and when you have arrived, you shall anoint Hazael king over Aram; and Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint king over Israel; and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel–meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place.**’”*

1 Kings 19:9–16

In effect God was saying this to Elijah:

“What are you doing here Elijah? Listen son, serving Me here in this awful war on earth is not all about you. It is all about OTHERS. I have more work for you to do, and when you get to doing this again, I want you to be asking Me again to change hearts and history by intervening in the world. Get back into the war and giving your life for others in My name. Put anointing these kings and prophets on your impossible prayer list.

“There are even more things to do that I have long planned, but I have waited to do them through you. I want you to share My glory when everything is finished and we are in heaven. I love you, My son.

“Let’s go now. There are some things that still need doing. They will be impossible for you in your own strength. But put your sandals on and get back out there in harm’s way. As you go, ask Me for what you need to do the job. Make an impossible prayer list of these things and then talk to Me about it.”

Now, God’s plan for Elijah is not His plan for you or me. But He does have a plan for us.

“You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.”

John 15:16

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we would walk in them.”

Ephesians 2:10

God wants us to get alone with Him and ask Him what He wants us to put on our impossible prayer list. And then, as we pursue His plan and do our part, we are to ask Him fervently for the things on our list. And watch.

Some Impossible Prayer Listings

1. On Paul's List After the Thorn

There was a time, early in his Christian life, when Paul probably did not have a significant prayer life. He was used to getting things done in his own strength. So, he kept doing this as he enthusiastically pursued God's plan for him of proclaiming the gospel. What did God do? He gave him that thorn in the flesh.

"For this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave from me. And He has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.'"
2 Corinthians 12:7–9

Paul soon learned to do the work God had prepared for him in God's strength, provision, and intervention, and not his own. His impossible prayer list was started and grew. The miracles that attended his ministry were seen as God's work through Paul, his prayers, and the prayers of others. Paul had also begun to ask his friends to add his ministry for the Lord to their impossible prayer lists.

"Pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak."
Ephesians 6:19–20

*"Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to **strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, 1) that I may be rescued from those who are disobedient in Judea, and 2) that my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints.**"*
Romans 15:30–31

*"Finally, brethren, **pray for us** that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you."*
2 Thessalonians 3:1

2. On Mandy's List (a true story)

Mandy's first child (of 5) was born with severe physical deformities and handicaps. The doctors said that few with his issues lived past their third year. He would never walk, talk, or be able to even feed himself. Raising such a child would consume Mandy's life and be nearly impossible itself, but doing so with joy, patience, and genuine love would really take—well, some amazing grace from God to do the impossible.

Why would God want such a thing? Well, He wanted Mandy to "Let her light so shine among men, that they would see **her** good works, and in so doing, glorify her Father, who is in heaven." She would be shining the light of God's character and love in the darkness of our fallen world. But, this would only happen if she could do the impossible.

If, sleepless night after sleepless night, diaper after diaper, meal after meal, month after month, year after year, she could shine forth with joy and even thankfulness, then God would do the impossible through her to reach many, many who would see the light of Christ. Some would be Christians who would be encouraged and challenged. Some would be lost but get saved.

But God's plan was that it would take years, consuming most of her time and life. The tasks and trials grew ever greater as other children were added to them. Mandy learned to make an impossible prayer list.

"Help me Lord to face today. Help me to be an example to others and encourage them to rely on You and Your promises. Bring conviction and even salvation to some who are lost. May they see You in me and my family. Bring salvation to my children. I ask these things in my Savior's name. Please glorify Yourself, and Your Son, in me and through me. Please give me Your strength and power to stand, and endure, and love selflessly. I cannot alone. Amen."

The Most Important Word in an Impossible Prayer List

*"With humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of **others**."*

Philippians 2:3–4

*"But I have prayed for **you**, that **your** faith may not fail; and **you**, when once **you** have turned again, strengthen **your** brothers."*

Luke 22:32

*"For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant **you**, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in **your** hearts through faith; and that **you**, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that **you** may be filled up to all the fulness of God."*

Eph 3:14–19

*"I thank my God in all my remembrance of **you**, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for **you all**, in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now. For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in **you** will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. For it is only right for me to feel this way about **you all**, because I have **you** in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, **you all** are partakers of grace with me. For God is my witness, how I long for **you all** with the affection of Christ Jesus. And this I pray, that **your** love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that **you** may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God."*

Philippians 1:3–11

*“Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You, even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that **to all whom You have given Him**, He may give eternal life. This is eternal life, that **they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.**”*

John 17:1–3

UNIT 6 STUDY SESSION #1:

In preparation for the group study, read and study the above material and then complete the following self-evaluation.

Evaluating My Prayer List And My Prayers

Regarding my prayers to God,

_____ I am convicted about what I am praying for. _____ Somewhat _____ No, I am not.
_____ I am convicted about how I am praying. _____ Somewhat _____ No, I am not.

I am making the following commitments regarding my prayer life:

Discussion Questions For Study Session #1

1. What would be the difference between just a prayer list, and an impossible prayer list?
2. If we have prayed fervently for the salvation of some we care about, for a long time, with no results—doesn't this discourage us from continuing to keep them on our prayer list? Doesn't it discourage us from praying for other impossible things? Should it? Why not?
3. Mandy's prayer list was primarily for herself just to have God's help in responding to what she faced in life. Praying for others took second place on her list. Is this ok? Is it right?

Prayer Together

UNIT 6 STUDY SESSION #2:

Our goal in these studies has been to grow in our relationship with God by the maturing of our prayer life. Our ongoing project through these studies is to set aside regular and special times to SEEK THE LORD IN PRAYER and to keep a PRAYER JOURNAL of our requests and God's answers. Given the focus of this particular study, consider doing one or more of the following this week in preparation for our time next week:

Preparation For Session #2: Application Project

1. Think through your family, friends, and church family and make a list of what comes to mind, of **the hardest things** some of them are facing or doing that are not God's will. Change will take a miracle, but God would be glorified. Put them in your journal and purpose to **spend time every day this week** asking God to intervene and change things.
2. There are some things you have not asked of God during the weeks of these studies. They have not been in your prayers or thoughts at all. Seek the Lord and ask Him who you should be interceding for that you have not been considering. Do some interceding every day this week if He gives you a list and **ask Him for some miracles**.
3. Sometimes God asks us to intercede for those we do not know and probably will not meet until heaven. He invites us to intercede for them, asking God to do impossible things. Read Eph. 6:18 and spend some time each week fulfilling this command.

Discussion Questions

If you have been able to pursue one of the projects for this week, can you share with us how it went?

Prayer Together