

How God Answers Prayer

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[0 : 00] Dear Lord, this morning we thank you for your presence. We thank you for this wonderful day that you have given us.

We thank you for this chance that we have to study your word together, together in a place without any fear. And we pray especially for all of our brothers and sisters around the world who do not have that privilege.

We pray for every group of people that gathers today to worship you, to honor you, to hear from your word, to praise you.

And we pray that your Holy Spirit be with everyone. And those persons that hear for the first time from you, that they might be drawn towards you and may accept you as their Lord and Savior.

And those that do know you already, that they might be built up in their faith. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. My name is Martin.

[1 : 05] I am from Paraguay. My wife Betty is there. We are married 30 years. Actually, that will be tomorrow. We have three sons.

The oldest is 26. The second 22. The third is 14. And except for 10 years that we lived in different parts of the world, we lived all our life in Paraguay.

Our parents were born in Paraguay, at least mine. And our grandparents were immigrants, Soviet Union refugees, that for some weird reason spoke German.

So, English is obviously not my first language, not even my second. So, please forgive my spelling mistakes and pronunciation and so forth.

This month we are talking about prayer. And last Sunday we had a wonderful explanation on how to pray. So, I thought I can't add anything to that. So, how are we supposed to pray?

[2 : 08] So, I was decided to focus more on what does God do in answer to our prayers. So, I don't know if the truth is correct there. How does God answer to our prayers?

Or how does God answer our prayers? Whatever. But I see from Psalm and from many other parts that people who pray to God expect an answer.

So, in Psalm 17 it says, I call on you, my God, for you will answer me. Turn your ear to me and hear my prayer. When I was much younger, we were taught at church that God has three ways to answer us.

He says, sometimes he says yes, which is what all of us want to hear. Sometimes he says no. And sometimes he says wait. So, I thought, well, that's good.

And when I tried to teach that to my sons, once they were smart enough to debate me, they said, well, that covers all the bases.

[3 : 13] So, you can, with that answer, you can always use something of that. Whenever you pray and you don't get what you want, okay, God said no or God said wait or whatever.

So, it wasn't very helpful for them. But I think God hears all our prayers. I think he answers. I found seven ways how God answers in the Bible.

There might be others, of course, but I want to share these ones with you. First, and that's what most people would like to hear, God speaks directly sometimes.

And I think all these parts that we have in the Bible are still, should work, or are working today. I know people who have heard God's word directly.

And one of these nice conversations that I find in the Bible, of course, we have to be very selective. We can't go over everything, is between Jonah and God.

[4 : 16] And it says there, it's in Jonah 4, but to Jonah, this seemed very wrong, and he became angry. He prayed to the Lord. So, let's use the word, he prayed to the Lord.

Isn't this what I said, Lord, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity.

Now, Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live. But the Lord replied. So, he speaks directly to Jonah. Is it right for you to be angry?

And then the conversation goes on. When the sun rose, God provided a scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah's head so that he grew faint.

He wanted to die and said, it will be better for me to die than to live. But God said to Jonah, is it right for you to be angry about the plant? It is, he said. And I'm so angry, I wish I were dead.

[5 : 18] But the Lord said, you have been concerned about this plant. Though you did not tend it or make it grow, it sprang up overnight and died overnight, and so on.

We know that conversation. So, there is a, we wish for this to happen. So that we pray and God speaks to us directly. At the end of our class, we will have some minutes that you can share the ways that God has spoken to you.

I know there are some people who have heard God's voice. In my case, it happened only once. And where you hear a voice, and you know it's God, but you don't know where it comes from.

But it is clear, and sometimes, in my case, it was not as long as this. It was just one sentence. So, that is one way.

Okay, here. Okay, there it goes. I'm not a good expert either on PowerPoint, so I had to do it myself. Before that, when my sons, the oldest were with me, they helped me always with that.

[6 : 22] God speaks through the Bible. That is, I think, what we are most familiar with. You know, we have some concern, and so we open the Bible, and look if the Bible tells anything to us.

And that's what the disciples did. After Jesus went to heaven, and they were together, and there were 11 of them, and then Peter says, so it's up and says, okay, we have to do something here. And then he quotes two scriptures, two verses from scripture, that today, theologians will be having a little problem, maybe saying, okay, this does not directly speak to the problem that they are having there.

But he says, may his place be deserted. For St. Peter, it is written in the book of Psalms, may his place be deserted, let there be no one to dwell in it.

That was one thing. And may another take his place for leadership. So, he says, therefore, it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was living among us.

[7 : 31] So, I don't know if you are one of those persons who says, okay, Lord, I need your direction. You close your eyes, you open the Bible, you put your finger on some verse and say, that must be the answer.

And, sometimes it works, but most often, not quite. There's one lady in our church who bought a house according to that one, because she didn't know if she should move closer to a church or not, but one day, she opened the Bible and read one of the Psalms, let us go to Jerusalem to the house of the Lord.

And she says, okay, that was the answer. So, okay. I wouldn't, probably not buy a house according to one of those verses, but she did.

It worked for her. This one, I think, we would be most uncomfortable with. God speaks through casting lots.

I mean, the same verse, portion that we were just reading, continues after that. When the disciples had decided, according to some Old Testament scriptures, that they needed a replacement, that there couldn't just be 11 of them, and then they chose, according to my opinion, the wrong guy, because there it is, oh no, here it is, yeah.

[9 : 02] They had one Joseph called Barzavos, also known as justice. So, that was a person, in my opinion, it sounds like a just person, when you go into Greek.

He has, he has, we say in Spanish, a curriculum, he has, he has built something up, and Matthias. We don't know anything about Matthias. But he got chosen. And after that, he never appears again in the whole Bible. So, we don't know if he did anything.

We would think, well, Paul, for instance, would fit much better with the apostles, or maybe Barnabas, or some of the guys who are really good, you know, who did lots of things.

But, it was Matthias, according to this. So, you just cast lots. I know two churches, one church and one seminary, who chose their leaders like that.

[10:07] When the board was divided, deadlocked, okay, they cast lots. In the case of the seminary, in the case of the church, it was the whole procedure from the beginning.

Everyone knew at the end, there will be two candidates and God will decide through lots who will be our senior pastor. And according to the members, God chose wisely.

You know, I tell you because it's in the Bible. I'm not suggesting anything. This was actually in Acts chapter 1.

God speaks through dreams. And what strikes me most is that God so often speaks to people in dreams who are officially not His people.

Or who officially don't acknowledge Him as the only God in heaven. God So we have a list from Abimelech, for instance, who through some lie on Abraham's side or of his wife's side got together with Sarah and then God had to intervene because before something happened bad, so He spoke to him in a dream and He said, that woman that you have there belongs to another man and you should not have anything to do with her.

[11:30] So that's the way He spoke to them. Laban or Laban, I don't know how you say it in English, he was the uncle of Jacob. He worshipped other gods and God speaks to him in a dream.

We know, of course, the story of the copier and the baker in the jail who met Joseph. The pharaoh himself had a dream. God spoke to him. A Midianite soldier had a dream where he dreamt about Gideon.

Nebuchadnezzar had several dreams, bad ones that made scared him very much. The Magi were people who had a job that was not allowed in Israel.

Observing stars and reading stars and interpreting stuff from that. In the Bible, the autonomy, God says people like that should be cast out of Israel, should be killed.

But then he reveals himself to them in a star, first one, but once they are in Bethlehem or wherever they went to find Jesus, that night he speaks to them in a dream.

[12:39] Not through stars or anything, he speaks in a dream to them. And even the wife of Pilate had a dream, seems not a pleasant one, because she says her husband, let him go, don't have anything to do with him.

But of course God speaks to his people, also, Jacob, Joseph, Solomon, Daniel, Joseph, the husband of Mary. It always is interesting to me that God speaks once to Mary, but three times to Joseph.

I can understand that. If he would ask me to marry my girlfriend who is pregnant from the Holy Spirit, I mean, he would have to talk a lot to me to convince me about that one.

But we must be aware also that not all dreams are from God. And we were together at a seminary in Europe with my wife a couple years ago, where every day in the morning, people were invited to share their dreams.

And the staff interpreted the dreams for us. and some of us participants also wanted to chip in and say, I think it means that, but we were not allowed to interpret, only staff could.

[13:58] So, that was rather an interesting experience, because we all dream a lot, and most of us don't think much about it. We think, okay, psychology says it's what you lived through the last days or hours or whatever is on your mind, that's what you're dreaming.

but maybe there might be more to it as we think. Jeremiah says, Indeed, I am against those who prophesy false dreams, declares the Lord.

They tell them and lead my people astray with their reckless lies, and yet I did not send or appoint them. They do not benefit these people in the least, declares the Lord.

So, those people who just tell their dreams and always say, I dreamt something about you and so on. Even God himself says, be a little careful with that.

But, there's a promise from Joel 2, and we know that promise got fulfilled, and afterward, I will pour out my spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy.

[15:04] Your old men will dream dreams. So, I think I'm almost in that category already, you know, of the dreaming dreams. Your young men will see visions.

And, Peter says, once the Holy Spirit falls on the disciples, and they all are speaking the gospel, and everybody who is there can understand, Peter says, this is the fulfillment.

This is what Joel spoke about. So, according to him, that happened in Pentecost already. God speaks also to visions.

Visions and dreams are not the same. They are often paired in the Bible, so they appear together in many verses, but vision is something that a person sees, and it can be in broad daylight.

It's not a dream while you are sleeping, and I know people who have seen visions. To me, it happened twice that I know that I suddenly see a picture in front of me, and then it disappears again, and you know exactly what it is, or you know most often what it's supposed to be.

[16:23] So I just took one from Isaiah, first verse of the whole prophet, the vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem, that Isaiah son of Amos saw during reigns of all these kings.

So of course, then it goes on 66 chapters. That's a very long vision, I should say a long list of visions that he saw there. God speaks to open and also to closed doors.

Some call this the situations or the opportunities and so on. So, from Paul, we know, and I like to ask my students, how did Paul know where he was going while he was led by the Holy Spirit?

When they did their first missions trip, because it's interesting, they start, they don't go just like, okay, now we are sent out by our church, let's go down to the port, take the first ship, and go where it goes.

Actually, they go first to the people of where Barnabas came from. He came from that island, Cyprus, in English, yeah.

[17:40] That's where he came from, so they went first to visit his people. But, normally, good students say, Holy Spirit. So I say, well, look at this, Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia.

So they wanted to preach in Asia, but the Spirit did not allow it. When they came to the border of Mesia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to.

So, again, they closed the door there. But then, in other parts, in 1st Thessalonians, Paul says, I wanted to go to you, but Satan did not allow me.

So I'm amazed how Paul could tell the difference. When is the Holy Spirit closing a door, and when it is Satan? I only know when the door is closed.

And, well, probably the difference isn't that much important, because if the door is closed, it's closed. But Paul had this capacity of discerning who had closed the doors.

[18:58] So, in this case, two doors got closed to Paul, and it was after that that he had this vision at night from this guy from Macedonia who were calling him come and help us there.

So, through these closed doors where he could not go in, he understood that he had to go somewhere else. and, when we wanted to go to the United States to study many years ago, it was very easy for God to close doors.

Because I told him, you know, we are so dependent on you, not just because of finances, because of visa. There isn't anything you can do as Paraguayan to get a U.S.

American visa. You depend completely on God in first place and on the mood of the person in front of you who does the interview with you at the embassy and so on.

So, we said, if you get us through that, we understand when the door is open, we can go in. If not, we go to some other place. And, the seventh way of speaking, God speaks through other persons.

[20:16] In the Bible, he did that often to prophets. But, it doesn't need always to be a prophet. And, I will speak to that in a personal short testimony.

I'm trying to refrain myself to give an example to each of those. So, I will just give one here. In Acts 21, we have this interesting experience.

After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea, coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it, and said, the Holy Spirit says, in this way, the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem will bin the owner of this belt, and will hand him over to the Gentiles.

So, that was very specific. But, the problem is, when we think that Paul said, okay, then I'm not going to Jerusalem, he said, well, thank you for the information.

I knew that all along, the Holy Spirit told me in every part that that will happen, so I will just keep going. Even though his whole entourage, his whole team told him not to go to Jerusalem, Paul didn't take this as an advice from God for not going there.

[21 : 29] For him, it was just a piece of information, you know, okay, or confirmation. Okay, we know what will happen there. So, often, I'm teaching at a seminary for, this would be if I was at a seminary, I started teaching 27 years ago, we married very young, so, these days, most people would not get married during college years, I think, but at that time, we were thinking, being poor alone and being poor together, what's the difference?

So, let's just being poor together and have fun while we are being poor and whatever. So, what I want to say, my two oldest sons are older than me at this point, when I got married and they are still single, I'm fine with that.

Just get your bases down and so on. Yeah, very, very, yeah, I'm the student, so I had the privilege for over 20 years, always having young students in classes who always want to know, how does God speak to me?

So, I tell them these seven things and often I, we end up at the seventh. I say, just go to some people that you consider mature, spiritual Christians and ask them for advice.

And God speaks through them. in the year 2011, I was taking my first sabbatical in Paraguay it is very unusual to take a sabbatical so that means you don't get paid.

[23 : 09] You have to find your own way to live during that sabbatical. In my case, it even meant I had to step down from the position I was director of a seminary because they said, well, we don't have sabbaticals, if you want to take a year off, you have to step down.

I did that because I was so convinced that God wanted me to take a sabbatical. So during that year, we had to decide what we will do next year.

In Paraguay, the appointments all run from January to December. I mean, everything starts with January, not like here because right now we have summer there.

So it's all just the way around it, like here. School year starts in February, ends in end of November and so on. So I got three proposals, three offers, job offers, very good ones, and people wanted me by the end of June to tell them which one I will have so that they had another six months to look for some other person.

So I was very thankful that the Lord didn't abandon me and say, okay, there's enough work to do. But I didn't feel very good with any of these offers.

[24 : 23] They were good, but not exactly what I was thinking would fit me and my concerns and so on. So I was invited to Colombia, Bogota, Colombia, for a big revival meeting.

There's a church that they claim that sits 25,000. It's a bunch of factories that they bucked together and threw out the walls and made. It's called the city of God because even the aisles are numbered and have names so that you don't get lost once you go to the bathroom and you find your way back again.

It's a huge place. I didn't count if there were 25,000 in it, but I believe it. So preachers were very charismatic and had this Pentecostal touch that I don't like very much during preaching when they always say, tell your neighbor, God is great.

Tell your neighbor, God made you beautiful and tell your neighbor this and tell the person next to you that and tell the person, I don't know what else. So I usually participate once or twice in that. I think it's ridiculous because the person heard what the preacher was saying and I think the preacher is just using that to think what he will say next. So usually I tell the person, God is great, you are great, and after that, after I have done it once or twice or three times max that I just, I mean, you heard what he said.

[26 : 00] But one of these occasions, I had prayed before the trip, it was at the end of June, I prayed to God, please show me on this trip which one of these offers I have to accept, which one would be the one that you want me to take on.

So suddenly the preacher says again, tell the person next to you, I show them my thumb up to my neighbor, and he turns to me and says, God says, don't move until I tell you so.

I don't know if that makes sense to you, but that's what I heard God saying. He didn't know me, I didn't know him, it was not what the preacher had said, of course not.

So, he didn't know if it made sense to me, I didn't tell him that it made a lot of sense to me, but it scared me also a little. I came back home and I called all the three places and told him I would not take it, which is very not responsible for a person who has a family.

So, you are six months short of your sabbatical, you don't have anything, July passed, all of it, half of August passed, and nothing, and then I was in, we have in Paraguay, we have every year a

national marathon of prayer, where the whole country, well, all the Christians in the country are invited to pray for 24 hours, and in that gathering, the president of the Pastors Association of Paraguay invited me for a meeting together with another guy who runs a foundation, a ministry, and they told me, you know, we have so many pastors in Paraguay who have never had a chance to go to a Bible school, and we need to do something with them.

[28 : 10] They didn't tell me anything new, I had done a survey, for a U.S. American university, so I knew the percentage, I knew that 90% of pastors in Paraguay never had any formal theological training.

So they are standing every Sunday before a church, not knowing what they are doing, basically, or not knowing what they should do. A church like this, that has at least three well-educated pastors would be a huge luxury in Paraguay.

It would almost be admirable to have that. You should split those pastors and send them somewhere else. But I know the situation is different.

So during the next month, the Lord gave me a vision for what we call the Aquila and Priscilla Institute. And you might ask, is there anything wrong with formal theological training?

I don't think there is anything wrong with it, but we know, at least in Paraguay, it's elitist, only a few, very few people can go there. It's expensive, it's geographically bound, you have to go to the capital city to go to that seminary, you are there confined for a couple of years, and it often doesn't produce the kind of leaders we wish for.

[29 : 33] At least that's what always the churches tell us, saying, you know, we had a pastor that went there and it's not quite what we were thinking and so on. So is there a need for an alternative?

When you have 90% of churches that don't have a pastor, there is a need for it. In 2016, there was a congress in Thailand that I was able to attend where it says that the number worldwide is at 85%. So Paraguay is a little worse than the average in the world. The United States is a lot better than the rest of the world because most of the churches have pastors who went to seminary.

So since most pastors don't have academic preparation to go to an institution of higher education, it means they never finished high school. We even have pastors who can't read or write and you ask yourself, so how do they preach?

preach. I discovered they preach by memory. They have some 50 or 100 or 150 verses in their mind that they heard and that's their whole repertoire what they are preaching by.

[30 : 45] And so you don't have to wonder if the sermons are repeating themselves regularly. They don't have the finances to pay for this excellent but highly elitist kind of education.

the possibility to relocate their families to one of the bigger urban centers leaving their church unattending during the absence, they don't have that. And on the other hand, 82% of pastors in Paraguay cannot live with what the church pays them.

So they have to have jobs besides the church. So that is when we founded the Aquila and Priscilla Institute. According to Acts 18, I like that so much, there came this guy Apollos who was a very good speaker, but he had limited knowledge.

And instead of exposing him before the whole church, laughing about him or discussing him and saying, you know, this guy is a good speaker but he doesn't have any knowledge, you shouldn't listen to him.

It says that Aquila and Priscilla took him beside and explained him the way and everything that had happened so far. And with that new knowledge, she got sent out to Corinth and he had a very successful ministry there, so that even the church in Corinth later on became known that someone said they were followers of Apollos and some of Paul and so on.

[32 : 09] You know, I mean, he had almost the same impact as Paul there. But I like what Aquila and Priscilla did and we have them together in the Institute because we always want, if a pastor gets training, that his wife comes with him and gets the same training.

Or if the woman comes, then her husband comes also. So we have a vision, mission, whatever you need for these things. We would like that every pastor in Paraguay could have, could get the tools that he needs to lead a church.

And that's our vision, that every church in Paraguay could have at least one person equipped for that task to do. So we offer a program of 15 modular courses that each one of those has 16 hours and is being taught during two months.

Normally we gather pastors of one place on one weekend and give them eight hours of classes. Next one, same weekend, so if it's the third weekend, it will always be the third weekend so that they get into a rhythm.

They get the next eight hours and then they complete one course. How did we come up with these courses? Well, I ran a survey among pastors and they gave me actually over 70 teams, but we got them down to 15.

[33 : 34] And so we are teaching things that are not in any seminary, for instance, the pastor and the law. Many pastors don't know anything about the laws in our country, so they can get in trouble because they know many secrets of their members.

And if they don't report certain things, to the authorities, then they can end up in jail as well. For instance, so I show you some pictures that on the left is our biggest prison in Paraguay, has 4,000 inmates.

We have a church there, we have classes there, sometimes we have them under a tree, some because it's too hot in the church. There are some places where we can only go with the airplane because there are no roads.

Of course, we don't have an airplane and we can't pay an airplane, so we have to ask businesses or big cattle ranchers if they can give us for free a ride.

And it's not always easy because in that part of the country where we have to go, there are lots of other airplanes that transport all our stuff, especially at night. So no one wants to be in the wrong list.

[34 : 45] they don't want to be in the list of the government or the Paraguayan DEA, they don't want to be in the list of some of the competing drug bosses there. So you have to figure out stuff like that.

Sometimes you have nicer classrooms, as I said, sometimes you do it outside. After three years, those that participate and stick to it for three years, at least 12 of those 15 courses, they get a graduation.

And to pretend to be humble, I only put a picture of the smallest graduation that we had, with three persons. But of course, it's much nicer if you have a graduation with 26 people, and so that means that they all, because perseverance is not a virtue in Paraguay.

It's very hard to continue for more than one year in any program. Where are we now? At the Akila and Priscilla Institute. Until last year, we had established 33 training centers.

That means where pastors gather once a month. In less than seven years, it will be seven years now, in May, we have trained almost 1,200 church workers, I call them, because not all of them are pastors, church leaders.

[36 : 08] The only requirement that we have is that they work at the church, that they have a ministry in church. We don't want to have any tourists there. Only people that really are working at church, including their spouses, have been trained at the Akila and Priscilla Institute.

And we all know this verse in 2 Timothy, two things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses and trust reliable people. That's what we try to do with where do we get our teachers from.

We have 47 teachers at this point and most of them were my students at the seminary. So once they get graduated, I invite them to become teachers themselves, two pastors and other people who never had the chance that they had to go to an accredited Bible school.

So we will skip this. Just to show you there's an economical reason for doing this as well. This is what I try to show our church leaders.

The yearly cost of college education in Paraguay is \$5,000. So if you consider that for your kids, you know, if you want to save big, you can send your kids to Paraguay.

[37 : 26] This includes room and board and everything. \$5,000. But training a pastor who is already in the field, it takes only \$400 for a whole year.

So the total cost of producing an official pastor is \$20,000 compared to \$1,200 for one that is already there at the church and we know that will be a pastor because unfortunately we also know that from all the graduates of our school of theology, which at this point is part of the evangelical university, so it has at least college level degree, only four from our graduates go into full time ministry, so in the other case, in Akila and Priscilla, we know everyone is already working there, so down there it's just 100%, 6% is the cost of the Akila and Priscilla Institute from the other ones.

thank you. We have seven minutes for questions and sorry Greg asked me to leave ten minutes but we have seven minutes for that you can share something how God spoke to you or that if you have any questions about our ministry, what we are doing, I'm still teaching at the seminary, I never left it, I think that God allowed me to get an education so that I can prepare other people and so my life is like this, during the week I'm doing high theology, at least in Paraguayan context and for the weekend we shift two gears down because in Paraguay we drive shift, stick shift, you know, we shift down, so then we go grassroots level with the people and it's very, I thank God for giving me that opportunity, it's just great, especially if you, after eight hours of teaching you want to go home and the pastor says wait, wait, wait,

I still have a question, you know, and at the seminary once it comes at 12 in the morning when it's lunch time, you know, everybody is packing up and you try to teach something but no one is listening because they are hungry, you know, hungry for other stuff, so.

Any comments? How does God speak to you when you pray? So are you employed by the seminary to do this project? No, the seminary employs me to teach at the seminary, I am employed by this independent ministry, which in Spanish is called Jesus Responde al Mundo de Hoy, Jesus Answers the World Today.

[40 : 11] It is an independent ministry that owns the Aquila and Priscilla Institute. And is that run by a board of pastors or just by you? No, it's a board of pastors is for the foundation, for the ministry.

Yeah. The school is pretty much, I'm the director and so no one, problem is I'm on the whole organization, I'm the only guy with a PhD, so no one wants to tell me how to do it.

They're all too respectful. I will need some people who would say, Martin, we need to do it that way or so. And how many are So until now I depend on the Holy Spirit and my wife.

How many are on your board? Six people. And do they come from different denominations? Yeah.

Yeah. That is the thing, the ministry is interdenominational while the Bible school belongs only to one denomination.

So that's, I think that's why we have so many open doors. Among our students, they are from all over, they're Pentecostals to Catholics.

[41 : 28] So how do you deal with interdenominational theological differences? We don't. Now we are, mostly it's just practical stuff, how to preach, how to interpret the Bible, I mean, of course, you know, how you interpret the Bible feeds into what you believe later on, yeah?

But how to handle finances at the church, your own finances, how to have your family, a Christian family, pastoral family, pastoral counseling, and many of these things.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I stepped out for a moment, and I think I missed at least one of the ways God answers prayer, but one of yours, while praying, a strong impression.

Can you repeat that? One? One way I believe God speaks to me. Yeah. is that while I'm praying, not hearing a voice, not seeing a vision, but having a strong impression that's almost like somebody speaking to you.

I used to pray a lot, Lord, show me what to do, and then hurry off and do something else, and not think about it again.

[42 : 53] Yeah. Of late, I feel like God, if I listen for a while, that sometimes it gives me a strong impression which, for me, seems like a clear message.

Yeah. from the Lord, including a while ago, Matt, do you really love the person you're praying about right now? Or do you just want to go away and go to hell?

And so God changed my heart, and he just called me through the Sunday school class. He's coming to the church this morning. Thank you, Lord. Amen. Yeah, I would describe it as a thought that I know doesn't hold me.

Okay. Yeah. So, it may even be an interruption or an antithetical thought. So, a friend who was praying that God would change her husband, and God said, he's not the problem.

You know, so this was an interruption in her thoughts because she was grinding her eyes was false. and God said, he's not the problem.

[44 : 08] So, I think sometimes when God speaks to us, it's in that different thought, a thought that obviously isn't coming from us, and it's consistent with Scripture, so you know it's God.

Yeah, yeah. And it's short and to the point, isn't it? Yeah, yeah. Yeah. You know, James said that the wisdom from above is peaceful, and it's gentle, and it's easy to be entreated or applied, and it's sown in peace by those who make peace.

And so, when God speaks to us normally, it makes sense, and it has a peacefulness about it, you know. And yeah, if the Lord asks you, do you really love this person you're praying for?

That's definitely God. Right. Right. Okay. Someone else?

Doesn't the fact that you're praying for somebody necessarily mean you have some love for them? Not always very much.

[45 : 12] Yeah. Yeah. Sometimes praying almost out of guilt, okay, now I've done it, I don't have to do anymore. You may have to be really sinful to be like that, but you're right.

Or worse, we have neighbors who always have very loud music, especially on the weekends. I have prayed a lot for them, but not out of love. Yeah.

Well, we have to get up to the main... Yeah. Yeah. Because I think this might really be helpful. One day I was praying to, and the Lord said to me, the person that you see when you're praying is you. And I said, what do you mean? He says, well, when you're happy, you see me as being happy with you. And when you're upset, you see me as being upset with you. You're really just seeing yourself. And I went, wow, that's true. Because Scripture is what describes how God feels about us. And it's not that harsh person that we tend to be.

[46 : 19] That's my phone. Oh. Like mine. Take it, my phone went. Anyway, yeah, hopefully that's helpful. Well, thank you, Martin.

Martin and his family are staying at the Overseas Ministry Study Center this year, so they'll be here until June, is that right? And it may be beginning of June. So I encourage you to get to know them, spend time with them over the next few months if you have an opportunity to do that.

Let's close in prayer. Father, thank you for the ways that you hear and answer our prayers, Lord.

Thank you for the ways that you guide us and lead us in the ways that we should go. Lord, we pray this morning that we would fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, and that we'd be encouraged to run the race that you have set before us with perseverance and endurance.

We pray for the Aquila and Priscilla Institute. We pray, Lord, that you would continue to strengthen the pastors and church leaders and their spouses and families in Paraguay.

Lord, that your church would be founded upon the solid rock of faith in Jesus Christ and the word of God, and that it would be empowered by your Holy Spirit and directed in the ways of righteousness and truth and peace.

[47 : 33] Lord, we pray that you would strengthen and guide Martin and Betty, and we pray for their time here in Connecticut, in the United States, that it would be refreshing to them, and that you would give them wisdom for the next steps that are ahead of them when they return.

We pray these things in Jesus' name, amen. Amen.