

onechurch

bigIdea

A *Christian Atheist* is someone who believes in God but lives as if He does not exist. Many of us act like Christian Atheists when we pray, not really believing that God will intervene. In Acts chapter 12, we see first hand how some prayers are answered and others are not. James is put to death by the sword and Peter is rescued from prison by angels, yet the church had prayed for both James and Peter. But God said “yes” to one prayer and “no” to the other. When we see this in scripture and in our own lives, we are forced to acknowledge the Sovereignty of a Holy, all-knowing God.



BIG IDEA: Are you more superstitious or spiritual when it comes to prayer?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- When you think of prayer, what do you think about?
 - Praying a formula
 - Talking to a friend
 - A good luck charm
 - Talking to someone who's far away
- Read Exodus 33:11.* If you talked to your best friend like you talked to God, you would your relationship be with your friend? If you talked to God liked you talked to your best friend, how would your relationship change with God?
- Read Acts 12:1-2.* How should knowing that God sometimes says “no” affect your prayer life? Why do we struggle so much when God says “no”?
- Read Acts 12:3-5.* Did the church actually believe that God would save Peter? Why are we slow to believe that God can do miraculous things?
- Read Acts 12:6-11.* Why do we sometimes pray for things instead of acting? When should we pray and when should we act?
- Read Acts 12:12-17.* Why were the church people astonished when Peter interrupted their prayer meeting? How do you react when God says “yes”? Why are we often surprised when God says “yes”?
- Read Hebrews 11:32-40.* Is our faith functional only when God answers our prayers just like we want?
- What causes us to think that God's character is determined by our circumstances?
- Why do we tend to think that God is good only when he does things that we think are good? Do you think God's definition of “good” is different than yours?

THINK ABOUT IT

We can all find things to pray about. Maybe we have a sick friend or a family member affected by the economy. The question is not, “Are we praying?” but rather, “How are we responding to His answer?”

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

Are we willing to praise God that He is in control despite how He chooses to respond to the circumstances in your life?

CHANGING YOUR MIND

“When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get. But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you. “When you pray, don't babble on and on as people of other religions do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. Don't be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him!”

Matthew 6:5-8