

Forty Weeks ~ Sacred Story



Week Six

Encouragements & Wisdom

E & W reflections are additional helps for your Sacred Story prayer journey. Reflect on them ahead of your prayer exercises for the week or outside of your fifteen-minute prayer windows during the week.

Does God Hear My Prayers?

When I pray, does God listen to me? Does God hear my prayers? How can I know?

These are good questions. We have testimony from Scripture that gives a resounding “YES” to this question. Jesus’ response, found in both Matthew 7 and Luke 11, says that we are to knock and the door will be opened to us—to seek and we will find. The most important part of these passages is that it is the Father, in heaven, who hears us and will respond to our prayers. How could the loving Father not respond to us?



We do know, however, that Love will always respond in the most loving way. We may place conditions on our requests or imagine how our prayers *should* be answered, that Love can’t fulfill—precisely because Love can only act lovingly. For how we anticipate what God *should* do, may not be the loving response we need. But God always hears our prayers, sees the true need—the deepest cry of our hearts—and WILL RESPOND!

Some years ago, I spent a sabbatical in Northern Ireland. I became close friends with a married couple who were both policemen with the RUC, the Royal Ulster Constabulary. The husband was Catholic and the wife Presbyterian. She became Catholic, joining her husband’s

Church. The woman's father refused to come to their marriage 7 years previous. He broke off all communication with his daughter, and now he was dying of cancer. Mind you, this form of intermarriage is still not very easy in Northern Ireland, especially when someone "joins" the other side. The history of violence is so personal and so deep and every family, in one way or another has been touched by the "evils" of the *other* side. Forgiveness is a high fence many can't, or won't, climb.

One night, the woman asked me to offer a Mass so that she and her dad would reconcile before he died. Folks always ask priests to pray for them and we always oblige. But this one was a very long shot indeed. I offered Mass that day but thought little about it. This fence was *too* high. I received a call from the woman the next morning. She said: "You won't believe what happened! My dad called this morning and apologized and asked me to come to his house so we could reconcile before he died."

This reconciliation was truly wonderful but it was the message God gave *me* that has been burned in my heart ever since. When I heard the news, I felt like I was hit in the forehead with a two by four. God's message to me was this: "Don't *ever* think your prayers go unanswered, Bill—NEVER! *No* fence is too high for me. I always hear your prayers and I *always* respond to them. Especially when you offer the Sacrifice of my Son for an intention—how could I not hear that prayer! Bill, I will show you *this one time* that I hear your prayers, especially when you offer a Mass for that prayer to be heard. You may never again be allowed to see this clearly that I hear and respond to your prayers, so BELIEVE, and always have faith in me, your Father."



I have never forgotten this message, and I never doubt that God hears my prayers, especially when I offer a Mass for some intention. I make an act of faith that the Father has heard me. If I feel frustrated because I can't see or believe, I turn the doubt on myself, not God. I tell God that if there is something blocking my ability to believe—some condition I have placed on how God *needs* to respond—like a specific time frame or a specific resolution I demand, then I ask God for help and give God permission to answer *when* and *how* God wants. This returns my calm. I activate my hope my THANKING God for hearing my prayer. I try to remember to thank God even more for the absolutely incredible way that my prayer will be answered.

I can say with absolute certitude every time I have cried to God for help, or mercy, or to rescue me from some bind—the Lord has ALWAYS responded. I am absolutely convinced that this will always be the case.

