

Let's pray. God is listening!

Blessings and favor always!

Part 12: Build Your Dream

Live the Life You've Always Wanted!

Texts:

James 4:14 (NKJV) - "For what is your life?"

Jeremiah 24:6-7 (NKJV) - "For I will set My eyes on them for good, and I will bring them back to this land; I will build them and not pull them down, and I will plant them and not pluck them up. [7] Then I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the Lord; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, for they shall return to Me with their whole heart."

Daniel 11:32 (NKJV) - "The people who **know** their God shall be strong, and carry out **great exploits.**"

A. We have been talking about the steps that make dreams a reality.

1. Those steps are: **See It! Say It! Pray It! Pay It! Play It! Stay It!** and **Sanctify It!**
2. No one wants an unfulfilled or mediocre life—nor is that God's desire! This is why scripture says, those who **know** God will be strong and do exploits, or extraordinary things.
3. For the last few weeks, we've discussed the **Pray It!** step of the dream building process and the direct impact that **knowing** God has upon your prayers.

4. As we conclude this segment, let's consider the power of prayer and the various ways God responds to our requests.
5. While prayer can often be very mysterious, we must not oversimplify it. That would be like what happened when Boudreaux went hunting.

Joke: Banded Waterfowl

The U.S. Department of the Interior had to change the wording on the metal bands used as tags for migratory birds. The abbreviation for Washington Biological Survey was: WASH. BIOL. SURV, until this letter arrived from a Louisiana hunter:

Dear Sirs:

Last week I shot one of y'all's birds. I followed the cooking directions on the leg tag. Let me tell you, it was AWFUL!

-Alphonse Boudreaux

The bands are now marked "U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service."

"Pray It!"

Five Ways God Answers Prayer:

Go, Grow, Slow, Flow, and No!

- B. At times, it may seem that God answers some prayers, but not others. But is that really true?
 1. Notice my selection of words—He **seems** to answer some prayers, but not others. But this is what Jesus said about our requests:
 - a. **Matthew 7:7-8 (NKJV)** - "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. [8] For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened."
 2. The truth is, God answers **every** prayer that we pray.
 - a. **Psalm 65:1-5 (NKJV)** - "Praise is awaiting You, O God, in Zion; And to You the vow shall be performed. [2] O You who hear prayer,

To You all flesh will come. [3] Iniquities prevail against me; As for our transgressions, You will provide atonement for them. [4] Blessed is the man You choose, And cause to approach You, That he may dwell in Your courts. We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Your house, Of Your holy temple. [5] By awesome deeds in righteousness You will answer us, O God of our salvation, You who are the confidence of all the ends of the earth, And of the far-off seas;"

- b. As the psalmist continues, he begins to consider and praise God for who He is, what He can do, and that He is the confidence of the far-off seas—which is a metaphor for 'multitudes of people.'
- c. **Psalm 65:6-13 (NKJV)** - "Who established the mountains by His strength, Being clothed with power; [7] You who still the noise of the seas, The noise of their waves, And the tumult of the peoples. [8] They also who dwell in the farthest parts are afraid of Your signs; You make the outgoings of the morning and evening rejoice. [9] You visit the earth and water it, You greatly enrich it; The river of God is full of water; You provide their grain, For so You have prepared it. [10] You water its ridges abundantly, You settle its furrows; You make it soft with showers, You bless its growth. [11] You crown the year with Your goodness, And Your paths drip with abundance. [12] They drop on the pastures of the wilderness, And the little hills rejoice on every side. [13] The pastures are clothed with flocks; The valleys also are covered with grain; They shout for joy, they also sing."

3. In Psalm 65, the writer makes several key observations:

- a. Verse 1 - Praise is awaiting You in Zion (or the church)
- b. Verse 2 - You, God, who hears prayer!
- c. Verse 3 – We humans face two types of problems: "**Iniquities** prevail against me." Iniquity refers to depravity or the evil done

against us by the wicked one and those he uses to harm us. The other type problem is the result of our own **transgressions**.

- d. His divine favor shields us from harm done by the enemy and others; His grace protects us from problems we have caused.
- e. Verse 4 – The solution for problems is when God calls us to approach Him in prayer.
- f. Verse 5 - What happens when we pray? God will answer!

C. Since God **always** answers prayer, we must recognize His five responses: "Go," "Grow," "Slow," "Flow"—and on occasion, "No!"

- 1. "Go" is how Jesus answered the leper and the centurion in Matthew 8, the man with palsy in Mark 2, the Syro-Phoenician woman in Mark 7, blind Bartimaeus in Mark 10, the ten lepers in Luke 17, and the word spoken to the nobleman in John 4: "Go your way; your son lives!"
- 2. We love it when our prayers are answered immediately and so effectively. I'm sure we have all watched God do that very thing!
- 3. (Testimonial of when my son, Jonathan, stopped breathing at age 3).
- 4. (Video of Ashley Adkins' testimonial: <https://vimeo.com/127116809>).

D. A second way God answers is when He says, "Grow!"

- 1. This response can also be qualified as a yes. When the answer is, "Grow," certain requirements are included.
- 2. Why ask for a pay raise if we aren't actively preparing ourselves for a higher level or developing skill sets that would make us a more valuable employee?
- 3. Should you ask God for a Kingdom business if you haven't created a workable idea, sought to outpace the competition, or bothered to invest in yourself?
- 4. Prayer should never be an excuse for laziness or a replacement for preparation; the two must work hand-in-hand. For Noah and his family to

survive while the rest of the world was drowning, he first had to spend many years building a boat.

5. Notice how often Jesus required doing what was **humanly possible** before He did the **impossible**:
 - a. Huge water pots had to be filled before Jesus turned water into wine. Since water was a scarce commodity, the servants had to make many trips from a community well before it could be delivered to the governor of the wedding feast.
 - b. For a blind man to be healed, Jesus spit on the ground to make mud and then smeared it on his eyes. But before his sight returned, he had to find his way to the Pool of Siloam and wash his eyes.
 - c. While the ten lepers were still weak and diseased, Jesus told them to walk a good distance to be examined by the priest. The healing came while they were on the way—doing their part.
6. In the Old Testament, God often included requirements before His people experienced miraculous answers to prayer.
 - a. In a time of famine (1 Kings 17), a widow was told to give the last of her oil and meal to the Prophet Elijah. As a result, the oil and meal supernaturally increased for a period of three years!
 - b. When Israel's water supply was depleted during a battle against Moab (2 Kings 3), the soldiers had to dig ditches before God supernaturally filled them with water.
 - c. For Israel to defeat Goliath and the Philistine army, a shepherd boy named David had to hurl a stone at the giant.
 - d. If you've been thinking God hasn't heard your prayers, He may be giving you time to "Grow!"

E. Sometimes, God's answer is "Slow!"

1. When He gives this command, it's still a yes, but not right now. You must wait until the timing is right.
 - a. **Galatians 4:4 (NKJV)** - "But when the *fullness* of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law."
 - b. **Habakkuk 2:3 (ESV)** - "For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end—it will not lie; it will surely come; it will not delay."
 - c. **Isaiah 40:31 (NKJV)** - "Those who wait on the Lord Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint."
 - d. **Ecclesiastes 3:1 (NKJV)** - "To everything there is a season, A time for every purpose under heaven:"
2. God may say "Slow" for a number of reasons.
 - a. **Deuteronomy 7:22-23 (NKJV)** - "And the Lord your God will drive out those nations before you little by little; you will be unable to destroy them at once, lest the beasts of the field become too numerous for you. [23] But the Lord your God will deliver them over to you, and will inflict defeat upon them until they are destroyed."
 - b. **Galatians 6:9 (NKJV)** - "And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart."
3. Ken Melancon, a long-time member of C.T., has faithfully served our community more than 30 years as a law enforcement officer. Recently he shared with me that earlier in his career, he could have been promoted to captain. However, certain people conspired against him to not only prevent the promotion, but to make him lose his job.
At church the following Sunday, the message Ken received from God was that this situation would be reversed, his enemies would be defeated, and the promotion would be granted. Of course, he knows now that the timing

was not right. God had special plans for Ken, but at that point, the answer to His prayer was, "Slow!"

Without becoming discouraged or giving up, Ken began to prepare himself with more education and community service. He became involved in an anti-terrorism task force, an anti-cartel task force, and other agencies and divisions. When the promotion finally came, those who had worked against him lost their jobs.

One incident that proved his integrity was an investigation about shots fired right in this neighborhood. When he arrived at the scene, no one was there. What he did find was \$1.2 million in cash. If some of the money had just disappeared, no one would have known. But he waited for other officers to arrive so he could make an accurate report.

When asked by other officers why he didn't take part of the money for himself, his answer was that it wouldn't be right. Even if no one else knew, God would know. Not only did he gain the experience he needed, he demonstrated that God and his fellow officers could trust him.

Since that time, hundreds of officers have been under his command with budgets in the millions. Now fully prepared, Ken is ready to serve as Harris County Constable for Precinct 3, which will be determined in the next election.

F. On other occasions, God may say, "Flow!"

1. It is important to understand that the end result of "Flow" is **always** better than anything we could choose for ourselves. God's "Flow" answer can always be defined as a yes--but with modifications.

- a. When David wanted to build a house for God in 2 Samuel 7, God agreed that this was a wonderful idea. But His choice was to build a house for David. The builder of the Temple would be David's son, with many generations of his descendants reigning as kings.

- b. God's modification of the plan was much more extensive than anything David could have asked!
- c. In Acts 16, Paul's plans were to travel east and preach the Gospel in Asia. But God said, "It's great that you want to preach to the unsaved, but flow with Me on this, Paul. Since you are so passionate for revival, I'm sending you to a people who are hungry to hear the Gospel!" Because Paul traveled west to Macedonia, Christianity began to spread into European nations. But in the east, Hindu, Muslim, Buddhists, and Shinto religions began to flourish.

G. The answer no one wants to hear, but at times is very necessary, is when God says, "No!"

1. (See kids telling the worst thing their mom has ever said: <http://youtu.be/emQTGwAZpa8>; begin at 20-:36; again at 58-1:12)
2. Parents say no for many reasons. It could be the cost or time involved, inconvenience, or they're just in a bad mood. But most often, it's because the parent knows the child's request is not the best decision.
3. When God sees the problems and pain our desires would create, in His infinite wisdom and love, He says no. I've lived long enough to understand that the worst thing that could have happened would have been for God to say yes to some of my prayers.
4. In fact, knowing the consequences, it would have been cruel for Him to have said yes to certain requests.
5. God responds to His children much as parents do to theirs. Even when He would rather say yes, to develop character, many of our requests are denied.
 - a. **Psalm 66:18-19 (NKJV)** - "If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear. [19] But certainly God has heard me; He has attended to the voice of my prayer."
6. If God says no to your prayer, trust His judgment.

- a. **2 Corinthians 12:7-10 (NKJV)** - "And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. [8] Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. [9] And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. [10] Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong."