

Session 1

God on Mute: Engaging the Silence



A note to leaders:

This is the beginning of an amazing journey. The Prayer Course II videos provide useful teaching, but it is in small groups that this information turns into transformation through the power of personal discussion and prayer.

These guides have been designed to provide you with all the content you could possibly need to lead five brilliant sessions, exploring the questions we all ask when confronted with unanswered prayer.

These discussions are designed to last an hour (plus 30 minutes for the video) but we have deliberately given you more content and questions than you will be able to get through in this time. Just choose the parts that you feel will work best for your group and don't worry if one or two questions sometimes take up the whole of the session. We recommend that you always make time for personal prayer ministry at the end.

1. Welcome and introduce the session

5 minutes

Key verses

“Blessed are the poor in Spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” – Matthew 5:3

Introduction

Welcome to session 1 of The Prayer Course II: Unanswered Prayer! Over the next five sessions we're going to process some of the painful and disappointing things we've probably all experienced as Christians – which we're not always good at sharing.

During these video sessions and small group discussions, the aim is to share together from personal experience and learn from one another, seeking God and asking how, together, we can learn and grow.

The aim of these sessions isn't to find all of the answers to our questions, but to share and care for one another. You'll find plenty of additional materials to go deeper in learning and understanding on the Prayer Course II website. The main objective of these sessions is to bind up broken hearts by fostering an atmosphere of honesty and openness together.

Leader's note

If possible briefly share a part of your own story that has caused you pain or disappointment, setting a tone from the start of honest vulnerability in the group. You might like to start with, "Personally I'm excited about this course because..."

Begin the session by asking someone to open in prayer

2. Watch the video

30 minutes

Bible passages from the session

Luke 18:9-14, Matthew 5:3-5

Key points

(for your reference in case people need a little prompting!)

- It's a sign of faith, not doubt, to wrestle with unanswered prayer
- We need to talk about unanswered prayer for three reasons:
 - Emotionally** – most of us have pain we need to process
 - Intellectually** – we may also have questions we need answered
 - Culturally** – sadly the church can be less honest than the Bible
- 'Grace groweth best in winter' (Samuel Rutherford) - Harsh winters are often the seasons in which we mature and become more fruitful

"Faith says, 'Even though I don't understand you right now, God, I love you. I believe your heart for me is good.'" – Bob Sorge

3. Discussion questions

30 - 45 minutes

- Q. What did you find most helpful, inspiring or challenging in what Pete Greig, Gemma Hunt and Bob Sorge shared?
- Q. Pete Greig said that we need to talk about unanswered prayer for three reasons: emotional, intellectual and cultural. Which feels most relevant to you at the present moment as you begin this series?
- Q. The words of Jesus in the book of Matthew teach us to expect blessing in the midst of challenges – how does this encourage (or discourage!) you in your faith?
- Q. Pete says that “there’s so much faking it” at church. If you could ask God one totally honest question about something you find difficult in your life, what would it be?

Leader’s note

This is potentially a deep and difficult moment. You may like to go around in a circle so that everyone is gently encouraged to participate. Do also make it clear that if anyone would prefer not to share, that’s fine.

- Q. When have you experienced a ‘winter season’ in your relationship with God? How did it affect your faith?
- Q. Bob Sorge seems to be able to love and trust God even though he’s lived with incredible disappointment for decades. How is this possible?
- Q. What, practically, do you think is needed for persevering in faith and prayer through the ‘winter seasons’ of life?

4. Small group prayer

15 minutes

Leader’s note

If your group is more than 3 people, we would recommend splitting into smaller groups of 2 or 3 to give everyone an opportunity to share and pray for one another. Explain how much time you will have for prayer, and roughly how much time each person will have for sharing and praying.

Ask one another

- Q. How are you feeling about the things we’ve discussed today? Are there any areas in which you’d appreciate prayer?

5. Closing comments

5 minutes

Share with the group what you've really appreciated about the session.

Next week's session will explore Maundy Thursday and the most basic heart questions we all ask when we suffer: "How am I going to get through this?"

To prepare for that, and to get the most out of the session, read chapters 1-6 of *God on Mute*. This is also available as an audiobook if you find that easier.

Closing prayer

A prayer for trust in Jesus, by Ignatius of Loyola:

*O Christ Jesus,
when all is darkness
and we feel our weakness and helplessness, give us the sense of Your presence,
Your love, and Your strength.
Help us to have perfect trust
in Your protecting love
and strengthening power,
so that nothing may frighten or worry us, for, living close to You,
we shall see Your hand,
Your purpose, Your will through all things.*

— taken from *God on Mute*, chapter 4

Further resources & reflection

Journaling question

As I begin this journey into unanswered prayer, what do I want to explore, unpack or contemplate?

Daily devotions

At the back of the book that accompanies this course - *God on Mute* - you will find "God UnMute" – a forty day devotional journey. You may like to begin using this resource each day while we are doing this course together, to help you process and pray at a much deeper level.

Reflect on...

Read the poem *Silent God* by Edwina Gateley ¹

*This is my prayer—
That, though I may not see,
I be aware
Of the Silent God
Who stands by me.
That, though I may not feel,
I be aware
Of the Mighty Love
Which doggedly follows me.
That, though I may not respond,
I be aware
That God—my Silent, Mighty God,
Waits each day.
Quietly, hopefully, persistently.
Waits each day and through each night
For me.
For me—alone.*

Books

- God on Mute, Pete Greig

¹ Edwina Gateley, *There Was No Path - So I trod one*, (1996)