



Hope for Brighter
Tomorrows

the mental health ministry of Kay Warren

When You've Prayed and Nothing Has Changed

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If you've prayed for your child's healing for years and nothing has changed, that doesn't mean your faith failed or that God stopped listening. God heals, and he doesn't heal everyone on this side of eternity. We can't understand why. But prayer can still change, moving from begging God toward praying what is already true.

My husband and I have four kids who live with serious mental illness. For many years, our life was one crisis after another. There were nights I was not sure my children would still be alive in the morning.

Prayer was a constant companion throughout those years. Most nights I prayed with my head on the pillow, begging God for my kids' actual lives.

Yet, so little of our circumstances actually changed.

If you're in the same place, I'm not going to give you a reason things haven't changed. I don't have one. But over time my prayers changed, and those prayers changed me.

Why Doesn't God Answer My Prayers for My Child?

Unanswered is not the same as unheard. When you've prayed for years with nothing to show for it, the silence can feel like evidence that God isn't there or isn't listening. Scripture says otherwise, even when your experience argues back.

When your child has an illness that torments their own mind, you cry out to God for healing. And you think: doesn't he want this more than I do?

So why the silence? Why does nothing happen? Why do my prayers seem useless?

I asked that for years. I still don't have a tidy answer, and I don't trust the people who say they do.

When God is silent, that doesn't mean he's absent

The Bible is full of people asking God why he isn't answering. [Psalm 13](#) opens with, "How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever?" (NIV) [Psalm 22](#), which Jesus prayed from the cross, begins with, "Why have you forsaken me?" (NIV)

Those prayers are in Scripture on purpose. Why is God silent sometimes? I can't tell you. But I can tell you he isn't nervous about the question. If anything, the silence is where faith gets exercised most, because you keep talking to him without proof in hand.

Why does God heal some and not others?

Nobody knows why God chooses to heal some and not others. I believe he is a healer, but I also know he doesn't heal every person on this side of eternity.

Paul asked God three times to remove something painful from his life, and [God said no](#). Paul wasn't lacking faith. He wrote half of the New Testament.

Trying to reason about why God does or doesn't heal has done so much damage to parents I love. Be careful with anyone who tells you they know why your child hasn't been healed. And if someone tells you the reason is that your faith isn't strong enough, that person is not speaking for God. I would put distance between yourself and that message.

Persistently Begging God Eventually Broke Me

The way I was disciplined, the answer to an unanswered prayer was always more. Pray longer. Pray harder. Want it more. People would point to [the parable of the persistent widow](#), the woman who wore down a judge by refusing to go away.

So I tried to beg and plead harder, but it continued to empty me out.

Pleading every night for my kids' lives spiked my anxiety. It ruined sleep that was already bad. It left me desperate, and not the healthy kind of desperate.

That desperation didn't help my kids either. What good am I to them if I'm an anxious mess?

What Changed for Me

Two things shifted, and they shifted everything else. I stopped anchoring my well-being to my children's healing, and I started accepting the life I actually have.

Hoping for healing without putting my hope in it

I will always hope for my children's healing, but I learned to stop *putting my hope in it*.

That distinction saved me. Hoping for something and anchoring your whole well-being to it are two different things, and I had them fused together for years.

You'll hear people say you can only be as happy as your least happy child. I believed that. I thought it was proof that I loved my kids.

It isn't love. It's codependency, and reading Melody Beattie's *Codependent No More* was a revelation for me. I had no idea there was another way to live.

Decoupling my well-being from an illness I cannot control does not mean I care less. It means I can keep showing up for years instead of burning down to nothing.

Acceptance and gratitude

I also had to accept that my children have chronic illnesses.

For a long time I was stuck in a loop. *This can't be my life. How can this be my life?* I had pictured family life a certain way since I was young. I would drive past a playground and burst into tears.

What eventually broke the loop was a simple thought. Plenty of people carry chronic illness in their families. Why would I be exempt?

Once I stopped resisting the reality, I could find things to be grateful for inside it. Small things, most days. But I could name them, and naming them changed where my attention lived.

To be clear, accepting what is happening doesn't mean pretending it's fine. My children still have chronic struggles and occasional crises. This is still hard. Acceptance just means I stopped spending my energy arguing with real life.

What I Pray Now Instead of Begging

Instead of asking God over and over to change what I can't control, I thank him for what is already true. He is with my kids. He sees them. He knows every hair on their heads. He is working in their lives in ways I cannot see.

Saying those words out loud puts me back in front of God, who is already at work. It strengthens my faith instead of draining it, which is the opposite of what pleading did.

I also stopped asking God only to change my kids and started asking him to change me. There is almost nothing here I can control. I can control myself. So I ask for long-suffering. Patience. Kindness that doesn't run out.

The fruit of that prayer isn't a changed diagnosis. It's a steadiness I did not used to have. When my son decompensated recently and was hospitalized with psychosis and catatonia, I noticed I wasn't coming apart the way I always did innumerable times before.

I still bring God my requests. I still ask for healing. I've just stopped treating prayer like a lever I have to pull correctly.

Prayers for your child's mental health

Some nights you don't have the energy to find your own words. Here are a few prayers for mental illness that can help. Use them any way you want, and swap in whatever fits your child. A prayer for a son works just as well for a daughter.

A prayer for my son's mental health

Father, you know my son better than I do. You made his mind, and you have not walked away from him. Thank you that he is not alone. Thank you that you're at work in him in ways I cannot see. Give him a moment of peace today. Help him be aware of your presence, comfort, and love. Give me the steadiness to keep loving him well. Amen.

A prayer for my daughter's mental health

Lord, my daughter is yours before she is mine. You see what this illness is doing to her, and you have not looked away. Thank you for holding her when I can't. Thank you that her worth has never depended on how she's doing. Bring people into her path who will treat her with dignity. Open her eyes to the reality that you are with her, you love her, and want to comfort and strengthen her. Help me trust you with what I can't control. Amen.

A prayer for someone with mental illness when you have no words left

God, I'm out of words. You already know all of it. Thank you that you are near to [name] today, help [name] to know you care and want to strengthen and sustain. Thank you that you are near to me in my brokenheartedness. Help me to experience your nearness. I'm trusting that you're doing something I can't see. Amen.

You Are Not Praying Into Nothing

Your prayers have not disappeared. Your child is not outside of God's reach. And the fact that nothing has changed yet says nothing about your faith.

If you've stopped praying altogether, start by telling God the truth about how hard this is. That's what lament is, and I wrote about that practice in our article about [Learning to Lament](#).

If you want one small step tonight, try this. Before you apologize to God for being distressed or asking for a solution, tell him one thing you know is true about what's happening in you, about his love, care, and kindness, or about your child. Stay there for a minute. Then say whatever deeply honest thing is in your heart.

I still pray for healing. I've just learned to pray for a lot of other things too, including my own heart.

You don't have to figure this out by yourself. Hope for Brighter Tomorrows is a community of parents who understand, because we've lived it. Whether your child is 13 or 53, there are people here who know the struggles of wrestling with God.

[Join Our Online Community](#)

Whenever you're ready, there's a place for you here.

Frequently Asked Questions

Does God hear my prayers if nothing ever changes?

Yes. Scripture never ties God's hearing to whether your circumstances shift. [Psalm 34:17](#) says the Lord hears when the righteous cry out. An outcome you can see is not the measure of whether you were heard, though that is cold comfort on the hard nights.

How do I pray for an adult child who refuses treatment?

You may control almost nothing about an adult child's care, and that is its own grief. Prayer often becomes less about directing the outcome and more about releasing them to God and asking for your own steadiness. Finding practical support for this situation matters too. Please check out Kay's interviews with Dr. Xavier Amador available [here](#) and [here](#).

Should I keep praying if I'm angry at God?

Yes. Anger brought to God is still prayer, and the Psalms are full of it. Walking away without saying anything is what ends the conversation. God can handle the honest version of what you feel. So just keep talking. He loves it when we bring him our whole selves, trusting him with our deepest thoughts and emotions.

If your loved one is in immediate danger or you are concerned about their safety, contact the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline by calling or texting 988. If there is an emergency, call 911 and let the operator know your loved one is experiencing a mental health crisis.

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