

Good morning! My name is Matt Chesney and I am the director of outreach and students ministries here at Eagle Ridge – and it is my honor to speak with you all this morning. I need you to know that this morning is a full work of God though. You see a couple of weeks ago, Pastor Bill asked if someone on the preaching team would be willing to preach this Sunday morning for him, as he would just be getting back from Florida a couple days beforehand – which would make it difficult for him to prepare. And after I prayed about it, I remembered that I would be going to the Exponential Conference in Florida with him – but coming back before him – and every year when I attend that conference God speaks to me in some powerful ways about what he wants me to do, and what he wants us to do as his hands and feet. So, I volunteered right away – knowing that God was going to prepare me at that conference to deliver some sort of message to you all today. And boy did he ever! I was convicted by some things there and then wrestled with those ideas and prayed about whether I should share them – and God answered that too – so here we are.

For those of you visiting today, I want to welcome you – genuinely – I am thrilled that you are here. I know that you're here today because God wanted you to hear this message too – and he has prepared you to do something incredible with it!

So, we have been going through the book of Acts and last week Peter Brooks, another amazing speaker on our team, shared with us a bit about chapters 10 and 11. And I can't do justice in a sentence or two to what he laid out over the course of his sermon – but I think if you walked away with just this one thought, then you are ready for today. And that thought would be that “All are welcome in this family.” ALL – for the apostles that had significant meaning for them related to the non-Jewish people of the time, called Gentiles. For us, that can mean anyone

different from us that we choose to push away. But, ALL are welcome in this family.

So, let's get right into the Scripture for today – we are in Chapter 12 – and if you have one of these journals you can follow along in your journal or on the screen. If you don't have one of these, just raise your hand, and one of our ushers will be happy to give you one as our gift to you.

Now we're going to be going pretty slow through these first 6 verses – because there is a lot there to unpack and understand for this context.

Verses 1-6

All of our prayers should be earnest prayers. Earnest - resulting from or showing sincere and intense conviction. Do you know what that means?!? Do you know what that looks like?!? (Examples. Umbrella Video reference)

BUT!

What if God doesn't answer our prayers?

First of all, he did! He heard you and he answered! It may have been a "No." It may have been that you need to wait... but he answered. So, the question you're asking isn't "What if God doesn't answer my prayers?" It's, "What if I don't like God's answer!"

And if that's the question you're asking – then you have a trust issue you need to work out with God. But I'm here to tell you. You can trust God. God is love. Love

does not harm. He has your best interest in mind in everything he does. He has plans to see you prosper! To see you grow! To see you fulfill his commission on your life! But, that does not mean that you will be comfortable.

We need to move away from this selfish idea of getting what we want. Of viewing God like some sort of genie in a lamp that exists to grant us wishes. He does not serve us – we serve him. But he is a good master and his yoke is light because he carries it with us.

Here's what I want you to practice: change your "What if's" to "Even if's". Instead of saying "What if God doesn't answer my prayer" Try "Even if God chooses to not deliver me..." – then what?

Let's look at the letter to the **Philippians** – Paul said, "For to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better!"

Ok, that's Paul – but what about Peter? I mean he's the one facing certain death. What does he have to **say?**

"Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you."

Oh, sure, it's easy for you to say after the fact... No! Peter was asleep in that jail cell. Between armed guards! Now, I don't know about you – but I would not be able to fall asleep when I knew I was going to be executed the next morning! See, for Peter, he knows that this is a win-win situation. Either God has more for him to do in this world and will deliver him, or he is going to go be with his father in heaven. All Gain, All Victory.

Do you have a faith and trust in God that allows you to pray in such a way that you KNOW God is going to answer you! And Even if he doesn't answer the way you want him to, you'll worship him anyway!

Phew! Guys... we're only 6 verses in... buckle in.. because we haven't even gotten to the good stuff yet!

Verses 7-17

Ok, so this is a bit crazy. Peter is miraculously freed from prison – a direct answer to the earnest prayers of his friends and family and believers in that town – walks up to the gate, knocks, and the people inside can't even believe it's him... Not just that – they start making up excuses for what it must be instead – “Oh, it's just his ghost...” “He must have died already...”

These people that were, a moment ago, praying **earnestly** for God to do a miracle had their prayers answered and they can't believe it. Why? Probably because it didn't happen in a way they could imagine. They forgot to consider the fact that God knows better than they do. They forgot to consider: **What if God answers your prayers in a way you didn't expect?** Maybe they hoped God would deliver a “Not-guilty” verdict through Herod during the trial the next day. Maybe they hoped the Jews in town that were begging for his blood would be convicted by God during the holiday weekend. Maybe they thought that Peter would die and be raised from the dead like Jesus. I don't know what they thought – but they sure didn't think Peter was going to stroll up to the front gate in the middle of the night. They weren't prepared for their prayers to be answered that way. And when they were – they started arguing about it! Peter is literally standing at the

gate waiting to be let in, and the people of this church are arguing about what Rhoda must have seen or heard instead. Just go check the gate!

Now, it's easy for us to laugh and criticize these Christians in this moment – because it is a little humorous and everything turned out ok for Peter. But can we take a step back and look at our own situation in light of this context.

We are Eagle Ridge Church of God. For those of you that have been here for years – you know our history. We've been praying, earnestly, for a very long time for a lot of change. We've prayed for relief from debt – but that didn't come until we stopped being inwardly focused with a scarcity mindset and started trusting God with our finances and focused on serving the community around us! And that miracle came! It wasn't how anyone expected, or certainly not how anyone wanted. But it came.

But here we are again. We've been praying about being disciple makers. Praying about being ambassadors. Praying about making a difference in our community as the hands and feet of God. And we pray earnestly each week that God would give us the opportunities to share our faith and serve him! And I need to tell you – he has answered that prayer. It just doesn't look the way you expected.

Did you know that each week teenage mothers that are eager and hungry for God come into this very building looking to build relationships with others and be disciplined?!? Did you know that the leader of that group, Young Lives, can't find a church for those same teenagers to attend where they will be welcomed?

Did you know that each week men and women who are struggling with addictions that have destroyed their lives come into this very building looking to build

relationships with others and be disciplined? And yet, they don't have a church home where they are welcomed?

Did you know that just around the corner from us is a day-treatment center for adjudicated youth that have been removed from their families, taken out of their schools, that are desperate for relationships and have a longing in their hearts to be disciplined?

Did you know that right next door Shelter House is building their new building where women and children, and families can come and seek safe housing when their lives are falling apart around them –when they need, more than ever, relationships with people that know and love Jesus!

Did you know that we built a coffee shop in the mall that has become home to the mentally and physically disabled as well as the poor and homeless. They are all desperate for relationships and discipleship!

Do you see how God has answered our prayers!?!? They are all around us. They are in our building. They are next door!

And now, maybe, you understand why the title of this sermon is “What if God answers your prayers?” Because he has! And now we just have to decide what we're going to do about it!

No, he didn't answer your prayers by giving you a bible study partner that looks just like you, that has the same family background as you, that has the same values as you. He sent you them! He sent us his broken, and hurting, and orphans, and widows. He sent us the sick. Because we are his church.

2 weeks from now 30 new people might walk through the doors – these people might be addicts, or homeless, or convicts, or fill in the blank with the type of person you fear the most. How will you react? Will you love them? Will you see them for who they are – children of God? Will you invite them to come back? Will you invite them to your home for dinner?

So, we're not done with the Chapter – because there's a warning at the end we need to read about.

Verses 18-24

Guys, did you catch that. Let me highlight some sections for you again. These people were asking for peace. They depended on this king for food. And how did Herod respond? He got comfortable – he put his fancy clothes on and sat down on his throne - and spoke down to them. He made himself like a god. And when that happened, it says, “Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him down, because he did not give God the glory.”

This foolish king, had two chief desires: 1. He wanted to be seen as great, and 2. He wanted to be comfortable. Pride and Sloth. We need to heed this warning. It is not about our comfort. It is about serving God humbly and recognizing that he has and will provide for us.

We just need to:

1. Pray **Earnestly**
2. Live out the **Even if** mentality
3. Be prepared for God to answer your prayers in a way **you don't expect**.

What if God Answers Your Prayers? Acts 12

Sermon Notes

All of our prayers should be _____ prayers.

What if God _____ answer our prayers?

_____ God doesn't answer our prayers!

"For to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better."

Philippians 1:21 NLT

"Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you."

1 Peter 5:7 NLT

What if God answers your prayers _____?

Steps of Obedience:

1. Pray _____
2. Live out the _____ mentality
3. Be prepared for God to answer your prayers in a way
