

David: Yes, if there's a particularly difficult problem that you've got to face, then yes, I do find that – whether you call it inner strength, or whatever – you do find that at times that's, that's given to you to approach the situation that you're facing, and ease your way through it, and to a successful outcome.

Judy: Yes, they're always answered – but not always in the way that I would want. But I accept that. Sometimes I can see answers to my prayer, as I said, not always the way – the answers I wanted. Sometimes I don't see an answer, but things do happen.

Ian: That is a very difficult question to answer. I believe that God hears prayer. And I believe that prayer makes a difference, because if Jesus bothered, why shouldn't I bother? Occasionally, yes, I can tell that things make a difference to situations. It certainly makes a difference to the way I react to situations. Yes, I do believe that prayer makes a difference. But it's really difficult to prove.

Rachel: That's a really difficult question. I think, I try and see God in the everyday things in life. So I do praise God for nice things around us, and the blessings that we see every day, and good things that happen. But there are some long-term things that you pray for that it's much harder to see the answers for.

Paul: Sometimes there's no answer 'cos there's no question. Sometimes it's a case of, I need to know what God – what you want of me, rather than what you want me to do for you. It's the other way round. It's me not demanding things of you, but me wanting to know what you demand of me.

[42] *We're thinking about expecting Christ in prayer. Are we to expect Christ as the answer to prayer?*

DW: He's a presence in prayer. People do ask for things in prayer and I think, well, it's a conversation – don't worry, don't put limits to the conversation, and see what happens. Jesus talks about a loving father. If a child asks for a loaf of bread, then the father doesn't give him a stone. And he asks for a fish, the father doesn't give him a snake! And so sometimes the answer to prayer can be, you know, sort of different from what we expect. I once was driving through the Lake District and talking with my family about my then bossy archbishop, who'd done a sermon about the stupidity of praying for parking places. How on earth could we expect the Almighty, Invisible God to waste his time providing a parking space for yours truly! And I said, I think I agree with the archbishop. But we just came to Buttermere, which was packed – it was a Sunday in August – and I said well, let's try it out: 'Oh, Lord give me a parking space' and at that moment a car drew out from before the church and we had the most perfect parking space in Buttermere! And it made me think again about, sort of, intercession and asking for things. And, well, if we love somebody, often we can share our innermost desires, even though we know we're never going to, sort of, win the lottery or get the dream house. But actually sharing those desires shares ourselves. So yeah, as our volunteers were saying, you know – sort of, don't restrict your prayers. And accept that sometimes the answers will be different from what you expect. Or a 'no' might be kinder than a 'yes.'

[43] *You quoted from the great Welsh poet R S Thomas earlier, and your last words for this session in the booklet are his: 'The meaning is in the waiting.' What does that mean for you?*