

**Prayer: Walking With God**  
**Hindrances to Answer Prayer**  
**1 John 3:18-22; 5:14-15**

**1 John 3:18-22**~ <sup>18</sup> Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. <sup>19</sup> By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; <sup>20</sup> for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything. <sup>21</sup> Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; <sup>22</sup> and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.

**1 John 5:14-15**~ <sup>14</sup> And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. <sup>15</sup> And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.

## I. Introduction

All of us want to have a robust prayer life. And if you ask any Bible-believing Christians, they will all acknowledge that prayer is critically central to experiencing a vibrant walk with Jesus and with the Father. It is CRITICAL ... for all godly, faithful, and blessed men and women of God have a profound practice of prayer in their life. And that is why when we ask any Bible-believing Christians about their prayer life, they all confess that they wish they could pray more.

But why don't we pray more? Why do we not develop a passionate and profound prayer life? We all know we should pray more. We all want to pray more. But why don't we? Well, there are endless reasons as there are endless responses.

However, one of the reasons why people of faith do not pray often is because we sometimes do not think prayer works. We sometimes pray, but there is no answer from God. So what is the point of praying?

The truth is that sometimes, if not many times, we do not have answers to our prayers is because there are hindrances in our life that make our prayer ineffective. And if we can remove these hindrances, we will find a vibrant and victorious prayer life.

## II. Hindrances for Prayers

What are some of these hindrances? Allow me to give you seven of these hindrances.

### 1. First, we do not Ask. (James 4:2)

One of the main reasons we do not have answers to our prayers is because we do not ask.

**James 4:2**~ <sup>2</sup> You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask.

Prayer is asking. Prayer is not thanksgiving, which is something else. Prayer is not singing. Prayer is not adoration or worship. Prayer is not even confession. Those are something else. Prayer is simply asking. One of the main reasons we do not receive answers is because we do not ask.

Sure, sure, we dabble a little here and dabble a little there to test the water. In our mind we wish and in our heart we hope. But we really do not ask.

And that is what James says. We desire ... that is we wish and we hope. But all those wishing and hoping never give us cause to bow our knees and ask. So what do we do? James says that instead of lifting up our hands to God in surrender to His will, we take matters into our own hands.

- we murder
- we covet
- we fight
- we quarrel

But we never ask. We do everything, but ask.

Why do we need to ask? The Bible says that the Father already knows what we need before we ask Him (Matthew 6:8), so why bother to ask?

Well, the Father knows, but we need to know that every good and perfect gift comes from above. It comes from the Father of Lights (James 1:17). It comes from Him. It is not by chance. It is not by coincidence (or as my wife likes to say "coinkydink"). It comes from the Creator. But we need to ask.

Many years ago when I was a young Christian in my college years, my church was having this revival meetings. It was about a 3 day long special meeting at church where they invited this special guest speaker to come and preach. It was a ministry.

This guest speaker brought along with him some red t-shirts. His intention was to get people involve. He would ask questions. The congregation would raise her hand. And if he picked you and you answered correctly, he would give you this nice, beautiful, blood red t-shirt.

Well, I wanted one of those shirts. But I was never picked because I had never raised my hand. At the end of the meeting, I just stood there looking at him as a few people gather around him to converse with him. And I just regretted not raising my hand. I really wanted that shirt.

The next day, I saw one of my church members wearing that t-shirt. I asked her, "How did you get that shirt? I don't remember he called you to answer any questions."

You know what she told me? She said, "I asked him if I could have one."

She asked him and he gave her one. So at the end of the second day meeting, I came to him and asked him for a t-shirt, but he ran out. I missed my chance to get this nice, blood-red t-shirt because I did not ask.

Brothers and sisters, many times we do not get answers to our prayer is because we don't pray. We don't ask.

There is a second hindrance to our prayer.

2. Second, we have the wrong Motive. (James 4:3)

We don't have because we have the wrong motive.

**James 4:3**~<sup>3</sup> You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

So we do ask. But the Father does not answer our prayer in the affirmative because we have the wrong motive. What we ask for is to fulfill our passion instead of God's purpose.

You see, the gifts that God gives us do benefit us for sure. But the reason He gives us gifts is so we can benefit others ... build others up ... be a Covenant Blessor as He is a Covenant Blessor. What I mean is that we are to bless people.

In 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, and Ephesians 4, the Bible says that God gives us gifts so that we can edify the Church. So we can lift up each other.

In Ephesians 4:28, our Father gives us the ability to work so that we can share with those who have needs. The Father gives to us so that we can give to others and not to spend it on our own selfish desires.

The story of Solomon's former years always moves me. The Bible says that Solomon loved Yahweh and walked in the statures of his father David (1 Kings 3:3). So Yahweh came to Solomon in a dream at night and said, "Ask what I shall give you."

**1 Kings 3:5**~<sup>5</sup> At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night, and God said, "Ask what I shall give you."

Solomon could have asked for anything. He could have asked for riches, wealth, popularity, strength, charming, lots of women, etc. And if that was you, what would you ask for?

Solomon, however, asked for wisdom. He asked if he could have understanding and discernment. He asked for wisdom not for himself, to take this wisdom and increase his

gains. No, he asked for wisdom so that he could lead and judge God's people righteously. Listen to Solomon's prayer.

**1 Kings 3:9~** <sup>9</sup> Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?"

Solomon's prayer for wisdom was not so he could spend it on his own passions but so he could provide for God's own people. His motive is just and pure.

Listen to the response of Yahweh in the Sacred Text:

**1 Kings 3:10-13~** <sup>10</sup> It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. <sup>11</sup> And God said to him, "Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches or the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, <sup>12</sup> behold, I now do according to your word. Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you. <sup>13</sup> I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that no other king shall compare with you, all your days.

You see? Because Solomon's motive was to take care of God's people ... to provide for them and lead them in righteousness and justice, God gave Solomon more than he asked for. The reason? Because God knows that Solomon would use these gifts of His to bless His people.

If our motive is to be a Covenant Blessor, God answers our prayers. But our prayers are hindered if what we ask for is to feed our lustful passion.

### 3. Third, we have unhealthy Relationship. (1 Peter 3:7)

This unhealthy relationship has to do with our spouse.

**1 Peter 3:7~** <sup>7</sup> Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

The wife is the "weaker vessel" not because she is weak physically or emotionally. She is the "weaker vessel" because her role is one of submission (based on 1 Corinthians 12), and us men are not to take advantage of that. Remember that our wife is an heir with us of the grace of life. Instead, honor her, or else our prayers maybe be hindered.

I will forever chuckle under my breath whenever I read this verse. One day, I was so angry with Dawn. Like this morning when I woke up early to go over my sermon and pray. I found out that she threw away my expensive, exported from Vietnam, green tea. I was angry. I remember exchanging words that were unbecoming of a Christian. Dawn

is a smart and wise girl. She waited a few minutes until I calm down and then she texted me this Bible verse from 1 Peter ... highlighted.

I remember laughing out loud because she was right. God would not honor my prayers if I do not honor my spouse. I jotted this thought in my journal that day to remind me. If you would humor me, I wrote:

If I have to choose between praying to God or taking care of my wife when we are having a dispute, I need to take care of my wife. The wife comes first, only then will God answers my prayer.

My conclusion:

- stop yelling
- be patient
- slow to speak
- slow to anger
- quick to love

Father, please help me. Amen.

Our prayers are hindered because of how we treat our spouse. And if I may add, it goes both ways. Yes, Peter is talking about husband honoring your wife or your prayers may be hindered. Even though Peter does not mention it here, in the same way, wives, honor your husband so that your prayers would not be hindered.

4. Fourth, we do not keep THE Commandment. (1 John 3:21-22)

**1 John 3:21-22**~ <sup>21</sup> Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; <sup>22</sup> and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.

For those who are in Oz's house church, we have examined and hammered out the meaning of this text. Without belaboring this text, let me just give you a quick conclusion.

The "his commandments" here is not talking about Jesus' commandment but the Father's commandments. And once again, we do not need to guess what the Father's commandments are. John spells it out for us in the next verse ... verse 23.

**1 John 3:23**~ <sup>23</sup> And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us.

This is the "doing" that pleases the Father: 1) believing in Jesus, and 2) loving one another. You want to please the Father? Right here. Do these two things - believe in Jesus and love one another. You want your prayers to be vibrant and victorious? Right here. Do these two things - have faith in Jesus and love your brothers and sisters.

Our prayers are hindered because we mistreat each other. So not only is our prayers hindered when we do not honor our spouse, but our prayers are hindered when we abuse our Christian brothers and sisters, whether verbally or physically or emotionally.

5. Fifth, we do not ask in God's Will. (1 John 5:14-15)

**1 John 5:14-15**~ <sup>14</sup> And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. <sup>15</sup> And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.

You and I can have confidence that our Father will answer our prayers if our prayers line up with His will. And God's will sometimes chooses not to allow something that would bring Him glory in order that something else might bring Him greater glory.

Let me give you one good way to pray. Pray the Scriptures. The Bible reveals God's will. So I pray the Bible. Learn to pray the Scriptures.

For example:

Dawn and I want to have children as well as a few other couples in our Church. I pray the Scriptures. When I pray, I quote Genesis 1:28.

Father, You commanded us to be fruitful and multiply. So bless the fruit of the womb of these daughters of Yours.

Or I would pray Psalm 127:3

**Psalm 127:3**~ <sup>3</sup> Behold, children are a gift of the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward.

I have been praying for Brother Mark and Keith. Both men have this pressing need to do some practical ministry, going out and feed our community at the same time sharing to gospel of Jesus our Lord. So I pray Matthew 9:37-38.

**Matthew 9:37-38**~ <sup>37</sup> Then he [Jesus] said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; <sup>38</sup> therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

You and I will discover that our prayer is made more effective when we pray the Scriptures ... when we pray in God's will.

6. Sixth, we do not ask in Jesus' Name. (John 14:13-14)

**John 14:13-14**~ <sup>13</sup> Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup> If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.

Not "I MAY do it", but "I WILL do it" when we pray in Jesus' name.

Praying in Jesus' name does not mean that we tag the phrase "in Jesus' name" at the end of our prayers as some kind of formula. We do not need to tag the phrase "in Jesus' name" at the end of our prayers for the Father to answer them. That is not what Jesus means. How do we know? Look at the book of Acts. None of the apostles' prayers end with "in Jesus' name."

What Jesus means is that we pray as Jesus' representative. The phrase 'in the name of Jesus' has the meaning of "by the authority of Jesus". In other words, we represent Jesus.

It is like in the old days in England where a representative of the king would make some pronouncement in the name of the king. The pronouncement is the will of the king and represents the king's desire.

Likewise, when our prayers continue Jesus' ministry or Jesus' desires, Jesus answers those prayers.

#### 7. Seventh, we have unconfessed Sins. (Psalm 66:18-19)

**Psalm 66:18-19**~ <sup>18</sup> If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. <sup>19</sup> But truly God has listened; he has attended to the voice of my prayer.

The word "cherished" sins in this Psalm is talking about loving sin. The psalmist is referring to clinging on to sin or reveling in sin. It is about rationalizing sin or making excuses for sinning.

Sins separate us from God. So it is natural that if there is continuous, habitual sins, the Lord does not listen to our prayers. The solution is simple. Confess our sins.

### III. Conclusion

Take a look at this list. Do we want a vibrant prayer life? Work on removing these hindrances so that our prayers can be lifted up to God.

### IV. The Blessing

**Presider:** May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. May the love of our Lord Jesus Christ be unto you.

**Congregation:** And also to you.

## V. Forgiven Life

Look at each point in today's sermon. There are seven points. Take some time to reflect on these points.

1. Look at some of your prayers. Are these prayers for selfish motive or are they for the building up of God's Kingdom, God's people, and God's glory? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. How is your relationship with your spouse. Cultivating your relationship with your spouse goes hand in hand with cultivating your relationship with God. How have you been treating your spouse this week? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. Examine your attitude and feeling toward your brothers and sisters in Christ. Are there any tension or unresolved conflict you have with them? If so, why not follow Jesus' instruction in Matthew 5:23-24 and go and reconcile with your brothers and/or sisters this week? Write down those who you need to make right with and why here. \_\_\_\_\_

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4. It is important to pray in God's will. Take a look at some of your prayers and find if they are mentioned in the Scriptures. Write down those verses here. \_\_\_\_\_

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