

## **EMPOWERING PRAYER : REMOVING HINDRANCES**

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Prayer is the essence of the Christian life. Jesus taught his disciples to pray with the expectation that their prayers would be answered. So when we pray, expect to receive the answer.

But sometimes we pray and nothing seems to happen. What do we do then? Wait in faith? Or presume God just doesn't hear or doesn't want to answer? Sometimes we pray and the answer that comes isn't what we expected.

What we do can cut the effectiveness of our prayer off. Sometimes we get in the way of the answer, or sometimes demonic forces may block them.

Some hindrances:

### **1.Unforgiveness** Mark 11.25

This is a major prayer killer.

John 13.3-11 tells the story of Jesus washing the disciples' feet. In verse 10, he says 'One who has bathed does not need to wash except for the feet but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you.' Yet the disciples continued to sin, as we do. Daily they needed to be forgiven and to forgive. If we are unforgiving, there are spiritual and social consequences.

What consequences can you think of?

One consequence is that if we are unforgiving, God can't do what he wants to do for us – we are stopping him.

### **2.Lack of perseverance** Luke 18.1-8

When the answer doesn't immediately come, what should we do?

Jesus says, keep on praying. God tests our perseverance and sincerity. If we give up, was this something we really needed? Were we half-hearted about it? Are we willing to keep on praying until we get the answer?

Daniel 10.12. Daniel was overwhelmed by a vision he had, he prayed and fasted for three weeks. When did God hear?

Why had Daniel not received his answer? 10.13-14

Demonic forces are a reality. Satan will try to stop the answer if he can, Notice how difficult it was for the answer to get through, Is there anything Daniel could have done to help? I guess the lesson is that God will get the answer through no matter what, but it may take time, and we need to persevere.

### **3.Lack of faith** James 1.6-7

Hebrews 11.6. How important is faith?

Remember Abraham, who was promised a son and many descendants, but he got older and older, and so did Sarah. It wasn't until it was physically impossible that his son Isaac was born. (He and Sarah had tried to help God out, but only succeeded in creating problems for his descendants that still exist today. Maybe that's a lesson for us, to let God do things his way?)

Genesis 18.13-14. What question is asked of Sarah? The answer is found in Luke 1.37.

Faith empowers prayer – like petrol in a car. Right?

### **4.Marital disparity** 1 Peter 3.7

Marriage for Christians involves a spiritual as well as physical oneness. We are a unit. Prayers are hindered if we don't treat each other with respect. This is a spiritual battle which Satan often wins. We can pray and pray, but if our relationship is not right, the answer is hindered,

### **5.Ignoring God's will** 1 John 5.14

Do we pray for what God wants or for what we want?

Our lives need to be aligned with his word, which reflects his will. How do we know what his will is, and what we should pray for?

When we ask according to his will, we will receive what we ask for. Do you have any instances you can share about how your prayers have had to change?

### **6. Lack of discernment** 1 Thessalonians 2.18

Satan stopped Paul from returning to Thessalonica. The Greek word for 'stopped' means to block. How did Paul know it was Satan blocking the way?

He had spiritual discernment – he knew it was a demonic force. How can we have such discernment?

Paul wrote a letter instead, and God turned the blockage to good. This letter has blessed the church through it for 2000 years. It gives us details about Jesus' second coming and many other things we wouldn't have known if the letter hadn't been written.

What can we learn from this?

**7. Unconfessed sin** 1 Peter 1.15-16

If we live in intentional sin, our answers to prayer are hindered. Jesus tells us, in John 15.1-7, how we are to live.

If we remain in sin, his life can't flow into us, but when we repent, his life will flow again.

Psalm 66.18-19 is David's experience of this.

**8. Selfish motives** James 4.3

We need to check our motives for what we ask. Am I the focus of my requests, or is God's glory the reason for asking?

We can change the world through prayer when our focus is on God's honour, Psalm 17.6-7 is David's prayer of confidence in his God.

Have you experienced any of these hindrances in your Christian walk?