

# Prayers Falling Flat?

## *Discover Simple Strategies to Reignite Your Prayer Life*

James 5:16 says, "Confess your trespasses to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."

Effectual, fervent prayer—this is what we seek. We all want our prayers to be effective, knowing that God is listening and responding and that we will receive the answers we seek. This morning, I want to share seven hindrances to an effective prayer life.

### **1. Wrong Motives:**

In Matthew 6:5, Jesus said, "When you pray, you should not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray while standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward." Their prayers were applauded by men but not accepted by God. God knows the motives behind our prayers. Jesus said we ask and do not receive because we ask with wrong motives, seeking to spend it on our own pleasures. Prayer should honor God's name, establish His kingdom, and accomplish His will. Every prayer should aim to glorify God, not ourselves or our circumstances.

There's a story about a minister who helped a little boy ring a doorbell that was too high for him. The boy danced with delight each time the bell rang, but when the minister asked what to do next, the boy said, "Run like crazy!" The minister had misjudged the boy's motives. Similarly, God always understands our true motives and expects sincere prayer.

### **2. Unconfessed Sins:**

Unconfessed sins can cause your prayers to go astray. Isaiah 59:2 says, "But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He will not hear." Sin creates a barrier to answered prayer. It doesn't matter whether the sin seems big or small; any sin can hinder your communication with God. Psalm 66:18 states, "If I regard iniquity in my

heart, the Lord will not hear." Confession is vital for a powerful prayer life. As Spurgeon said, the best beginning for prayer is confession.

### 3. Idol Worship:

Ezekiel 14:3 tells us, "These men have set up their idols in their hearts and put before them that which causes them to stumble into iniquity." God asks, "Should I let myself be inquired of at all by them?" If your heart is set on idols, God will not listen. Idols are anything that dominates our thoughts and affections, taking our focus away from God. John warns in 1 John 5:21, "Little children, keep yourself from idols." Idols block our view of God and prevent us from worshiping Him wholeheartedly.

You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart—not just a portion or a little, but with your whole heart. It's a wholehearted pursuit when you pray to God, requiring total commitment and effort.

### 4. Pride:

In Matthew 6, Jesus advises, "When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites." Instead, go into your room, shut the door, and pray to your Father, who is in secret. Your Father, who sees in secret, will reward you openly. This passage teaches two principles:

1. **Keep Public Prayers Short:** Avoid turning it into a sermon when asked to pray publicly. Public prayers should be brief, focusing on talking to God rather than addressing the audience.
2. **Keep Private Prayer Times Secret:** Avoid boasting about your prayer life. Your private prayer time is between you and God and should remain that way. God, who sees in secret, will reward you openly. Don't seek recognition or approval for your spiritual practices. Humility in prayer is crucial, as it paves the way to being heard by God. Begin with humility, and seek to connect with God in a quiet, personal space.

Consider your private prayer time as a space for honest communication with God. Just as Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice," spending time in prayer helps you recognize His voice among many others.

A young officer, proud of his new promotion, tried to appear important by barking orders into the phone when a knock came at his door. The enlisted man revealed he had come to connect the officer's phone. The story highlights the need for genuine connection in prayer. Make sure your lines of communication with God are open and effective. Pride can create a disconnect in your prayer life.

## **5. A Lack of Generosity:**

Proverbs 21:13 says, "Whoever shuts his ears to the cry of the poor will also cry himself and not be heard." Generosity is crucial in a Christian life because it reflects the heart of God. Refusing to help those in need when you have the means hinders your prayers. Share what God has blessed you with, and be a conduit of His blessings. Don't hoard your blessings; let them flow out to others.

## **6. Mistreating Family Members:**

1 Peter 3:7 advises husbands to dwell with their wives understandingly and honorably as the weaker vessel. This verse might not be politically correct, but it is biblically correct. Treating your spouse with understanding and honor can impact your prayer life significantly. If you want your prayers to be effective, start by respecting and valuing your spouse.

## **7. Unbelief:**

We used to sing, "Prayer is the key to heaven, but faith unlocks the door." A prayer without faith is like a boat without an oar—it won't go anywhere. If you pray but lack faith, your prayers may feel ineffective. Belief is essential for effective prayer; without it, your prayers may seem like they're just hitting the ceiling.

Comforting, isn't it? But sometimes, it feels like God doesn't hear our prayers. Maybe He doesn't. It's essential to evaluate our relationship with God and our approach to prayer. What are you praying for? How are you asking? What's the outcome if God answers your prayer? Prayer without faith lacks power. You can speak into the air all day, but you're not truly praying to God without believing in him. Prayer is the key to heaven, but faith unlocks that door.

Some say prayer itself doesn't change things, but believing prayer does. When you pray, believe God has placed the request on your heart. Especially when praying for others, you're merely a conduit through which God works. Ensure there are no obstructions in your communication with Him. Jesus said, "According to your faith, be it unto you." So approach God with faith in your prayers.

Make faith your prayer partner. Present your request with the confidence that it aligns with God's will and will contribute to His kingdom. Check Jesus' prayers in the Gospels—they consistently focused on glorifying the Father and bringing people to Him. Prayer is not a shopping list but a heart-to-heart connection with the Creator.

Unbelief is a significant barrier to effective prayer. For God to hear you, ensure your prayer is grounded in His Word and anointed by the Holy Spirit. As we talk about anointed sermons, God wants to anoint your entire life, not just Sunday mornings. Your prayer life should be continuous and meaningful.

Some view prayer as a chore, struggling to find words even after a brief period. That's why it's crucial to enter your secret place, confess, and seek God's help to connect deeply. Picture this: you have a private meeting with God, free from distractions. Make it a scheduled part of your day and approach it with anticipation.

Finally, the key is to pray sincerely and effectively, whether you write a detailed prayer or jot down a few lines. Don't let distractions or pride hinder your prayer life. Approach God with an open heart and let your prayers flow.