

Announcer

Welcome to transformed by the word, a podcast about discovering how to live your life with gratifying purpose. God created you for a reason and the Bible contains the keys to unlock your transformed life. Now, here's your host, Debora Barr

Debora 0:27

Thanks for joining me for Episode 18 of transformed by the word.

Today, we are exploring hindrances to effective prayer. When we call out to God in prayer, we want to know that he hears us and that He will answer our prayers. But the Bible tells us that there are a number of sins if they're present in our lives, that essentially prevent God from answering our prayers. And it is vitally important that we learn what these things are, and do everything possible to remove them from our lives.

Today, I've invited a special guest to the show to talk about how to remove some of these hindrances to effective prayer. Her name is Reverend Michele Williams, and I met her nearly 10 years ago when I began serving under her leadership in our prison ministry with a team from our church.

Reverend Williams is a professional certified life coach and mentor, a Bible teacher and a preacher of the good news. She is also the founder and owner of In His Own Image Outreach Ministries, which ministers holistically to people who've experienced various types of abuse in their lives. She holds an annual conference called Scarred But Healed. And with her humble approach, her goal before Jesus returns is to reach as many people as possible with the truth through the good news that provides freedom and deliverance.

One of her favorite scriptures comes from John chapter eight, verse 32. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

Stay tuned. We'll be back in just a moment.

Music Interlude

Hi, Reverend Michelle, thank you so much for coming on the show today to share with our listening audience. It is such a pleasure to connect with you even on zoom.

Rev. Michele Williams 3:22

Thank you so much for the invite, and it's an honor.

Debora 3:26

Now, before we jump into our topic today, would you share a little bit about how God served called you to serve as a prayer intercessor and to serve in prison ministry, which are the areas where I first got to know you.

Rev. Michele Williams 3:41

Amen. Well, I'll start first with prison ministry. When God began to talk to me, or, in fact, getting me ready for my next I was on an overseas missions trip in the Ukraine. God began to speak to me about

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leaving one particular ministry that I love so much to make room for what he wanted me to do next. So I wrote a letter to the director of that ministry. I hand delivered it to her, and with tears in my eyes saying goodbye to her. That's how that conversation went.

A few days later, I received an email stating that my pastor was going to be preaching at a local prison. In fact, it was lorton prison and invited some members to come to serve with him. So that particular experience changed my life and on the way home from that particular experience on the church van. I began to talk to the Lord about my next.

Then I got another invitation to visit a women's prison in Jessup, Maryland. And once I had a privilege to minister to this woman who murdered her spouse, she received Jesus. Then after that, I was convinced this is where God wanted me to minister, Minister to incarcerated people. So I've been there ever since.

Debora Wow.

So that's prison ministry and concerning intercessory prayer, while this happened, probably, well, I know it was over 20 years ago, I received a burden to pray for my church, and for my pastor, and the Lord placed a mentor in my life. And that mentor just happened to be over the intercessory prayer team at the time, over 20 years ago. And the rest is history. I'm still there.

Debora 5:56

Yeah, that's so cool. When God calls us into areas of ministry that we never really even considered prior to that just by exposure. That's pretty cool. Now, in today's lesson, we're talking about how to remove hindrances or blockages to effective prayer. When you're counseling, someone that maybe says they don't believe that God's hearing them or they don't believe that God's answering their prayers, what are some of the things that you ask them about to kind of help them figure out what's happening?

Rev. Michele Williams 6:33

Well, first, I would ask questions to see if that person has accepted Christ, I would do that first, to see if they have accepted Christ as their personal Savior and Lord.

Debora 6:46

Why is that important?

Rev. Michele Williams 6:48

Well, because a person who has not accepted Christ to make it plain, they don't really belong to God, they're not in the family of God, and God won't hear them. The only way that God will hear that person is if they decide to repent, ask for forgiveness of their sins, and accept Jesus Christ. And so that's why I asked that question first. And that's very, very important.

Debora 7:23

What other questions do you try to ask them?

Rev. Michele Williams 7:27

Even if they're backslidden, if they're, if they have made mistakes, their behavior has caused them to become separated from God, or they have unforgiveness in their heart. I'll just ask those questions. You know, just to determine if those are the cases, and then I will lead them into a prayer of repentance.

Because once we go through, examining our own hearts, you know, and find out what's in our hearts. And God will show you and just repent before him ask for forgiveness, in the basis of not doing those things ever again, that will open up the door for God to Hear our prayer and to answer them and Psalm 66:18. I like the way it reads in the New Living Translation. It says, If I had not confessed the sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. Hmm, though, it's very, very important that we, as I said, come clean before God before we ask him for anything, because he's not going to answer. He's not going to hear he's not going to answer.

Another thing is if we don't have God, or if we don't hold God as preeminent meaning first in our lives, and we have other things on the altar of our heart. Those are considered as idols. You know, we don't have God in the center of our heart. And God won't, he won't listen, he won't answer. And another scripture I have is Ezekiel eight, verses 15 through 18. And this is also I like the New Living Translation.

Debora 9:34

Yeah, I do too.

Rev. Michele Williams 9:35

Yeah, I know some people use the King James version of the New King James Version, but in this particular with this particular subject, the New Living Translation is great. And Ezekiel eight verses 15 through 18. It says, Have you seen this, he said, but I will show you even more detestable sins than these. Then he brought me into the inner courtyard of the Lord's temple. At the entrance to the sanctuary, between the entry room and the bronze altar. There were about 25 men with their backs to the sanctuary of the Lord. They were facing east bowing low to the ground worshipping the sun. Have you seen this son of man, he asked, isn't nothing to the people of Judah, that they commit these detestable sins, leading the whole nation into violence, thumbing their noses at me and provoking my anger. Therefore, I will respond and fury, I will neither pity nor spare them. And though they cry for mercy, I will not listen. So, yeah, that's a powerful, powerful verses of scripture there. But it depicts, you know, the people of Israel, practicing idolatry worshipping the sun, not worshipping the true and living God. So I would ask that question, you know, it is God first in your life.

Debora 11:12

And that's powerful, because some people think that idolatry is something that just happened in the Bible days, that that's not something for today. But really, anything, anything in our lives that's more important than God is idolatry. And he's not inclined to listen to us when we are not making him number one, that's powerful.

Rev. Michele Williams 11:34

Absolutely, absolutely. I do have one more example. If the person constantly seeks their own will, you know, living their life as to what they think is right in their own eyes, instead of using the word of God, to lead and guide them or not following God's personal instructions. This, oh, this is considered as disobedience. And that will hinder them from being hurt by God. In Deuteronomy, chapter eight, verses

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19, and 20, in the New Living Translation, is another very powerful scripture, it says, but I assure you of this, if you ever forget the Lord your God and follow other gods worshipping and bowing down to them, you will certainly be destroyed. Just as the Lord has destroyed other nations in your path, you also will be destroyed if you refuse to obey the Lord your God. Now, that was really kind of direct from God. But, you know, if we really, really take heart to this will get the picture that we have to purpose, you know, to be obedient to God's word and the instructions that he gives us.

Debora 13:01

Yeah, that's really good. How do we know that we're praying in accordance with God's will? I know recently we had the lotto was super high. In fact, I think somebody won like a billion dollars, which is mind boggling. But you know, a lot of people I'm sure, when they were buying those tickets, we're praying that God would help them get the numbers. But you know, the Bible does not condone gambling, which is what that is, essentially. So how can we know that we're praying in accordance with God's will?

Rev. Michele Williams 13:34

You know, I was thinking, as you were asking that question, and one, Well, a couple of scriptures came to my mind, and one in particular is in First John five, verses 13 through 15. And it says, I've written this to you, who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know you have eternal life. And we are confident that he hears us whenever we ask for anything that pleases Him. And since we know he hears us, when we make our request, we also know that he will give us what we asked for.

And so since playing the lottery, or playing the number that some people say, it's not biblical, and it's not something that God really condones. It is against his will. And so if we asked to win the lottery, he's not going to answer that. Because it's not something that's according to his will that he would condone for us to do. One thing that we have to understand is that God hears us and he moves when believe him as who he is. And that's what the scripture says. He says these things I have written to you, meaning the scriptures, that you may know that you have eternal life, that you may know that he is the Son of God. And so if we don't believe him as the Son of God, God Almighty, the one who created the heavens and the earth, in fact, some 24 says, The earth is the Lord's and all its fullness. If we don't believe that, and we go to seek other methods to get what we need, then God is not in that.

Debora 15:48

Yeah, I guess if, if we just really get into the Word and know what the Word says, then we get to know God's heart, and we get to know what is in accordance with his will. And what's not?

Rev. Michele Williams 16:01

Absolutely, absolutely, Hebrews 11 six, it says, and it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists, and that He rewards those who sincerely seek Him. Yeah,

Debora 16:20

That's powerful. What are a few examples of specific things that the Bible says will hinder our prayers? And what can we do to eliminate those things from our lives? I know we talked about some but what are some more specific things that the Bible says about this?

Rev. Michele Williams 16:38

Well, what the Lord has been speaking to me, for the past 10 months really direct it to the Universal Church of the body of Christ is Second Chronicles, chapter seven, verses 13 through 15. And he is speaking to the people of God, the body of Christ, to know and to do several things specifically, in verse 14, it says that God is calling us, God is calling us. And that we're calling means he is summoning us, He is calling us together, inviting us to make peace to himself, he is calling us how by his name.

So when you look at the words by his name, it actually means that he has placed a mark on us to identify us as His. And so when we look at verse 14, if we really, really look into it, we see that there are things that he wants us to do. Number one is humble ourselves. The word humble means to bend the knee, he really wants us to submit ourselves to Him. be submissive to him. And when we do that, it's a sign of choosing to be vulnerable, vulnerable, getting out here, before God, stating to God that we need him, and that we respect him, we give him reverence. And so when we do that, then God is open, really, to speak to us and to give us whatever we need, whatever answer we're looking for, when we choose to bend our knees to be humble.

The next thing he says, is for us to pray. So humility, in humility, that will also show us exactly the position of our hearts. Whether we are prideful, or arrogant, or whatever is in our hearts, humility will show us that and cause us to put us into the direction of where we need to be in order to repent, but he said, Pray, to intercede, to intervene, to just talk to God, about what's going on. And the word pray and seek my face is connected, is connected in the words seek my face. It actually means to draw closer to God. And so when we approach this thing called prayer, praying to God, it's not just talking to God, like you mentioned the lottery. It's not just talking to God, just get a quick fix, and then you go on your way doing your own thing. It's a purposeful concentration of purposeful commitment to seeking God to humbling ourselves before God to see exactly what's on God's mind. And

Rev. Michele Williams 20:07

Those are some of the things. And then the last, the most important thing, he said, is to turn. And when I looked up the word turn, it meant several things. And, again, he's speaking to us individually concerning what's hindering our prayers, but the universal Body of Christ. As we go through the things that we're going through every day in our nation, this is what's hindering our prayers, we need to turn back to him. And the word turn means to turn back from evil, meaning, making life's choices without him. Turning back to God, recognizing that, you know, God gives us new mercies every day, that certain Lamentations 3:22 and 23. I mean, every morning he gives us fresh and new mercies, treating our fellow man with the lack of mercy and kindness of that, that they don't deserve. God wants us to treat them with mercy and kindness, because God gives us fresh new mercies every day. To return that's what the word turn means to return. And that's referring to the citizens of Zion, meaning the people of God, to return back to God. And then to turn from the face of idols. That's what the word turn means.

And you know what our idols we talked a little bit about that earlier, money, people our own way, whatever is placed above God, God really, really wants us to do that. And when we do those things, then

Then God said that he will listen to us. But it also says turn from our wicked ways. And when I looked up wicked ways, it actually means those things that are displeasing to God, they're evil, they're hurtful, they're unkind. It's having a vicious disposition. It's people who are ethically and morally wrong. It refers to their thoughts and their deeds, their path of life, their direction, their habits. God says, when we turn from those things, then he will listen to us. But if we have other things on our agenda, then he's he's not gonna hear us, he's not gonna listen to us. And he's not going to heal the land. That's one thing that I wanted to really, really share. Yes, it talks about us individually what we need to do. But as the universal church, the body of Christ, that's what God is looking for.

Debora 23:13

Yeah, that's powerful. And even as you were speaking, I was thinking about the area of ministry that I minister in, and there's a lot of people that are living a homosexual life. And they keep saying, you know, why pray that God would take this away, but he doesn't take it away. And I always tell them that, in order to get freedom from any persistence in our lives, we have to surrender absolutely every aspect of our lives to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. And so and that turning is so key. We have to not just pray away things that we don't like in our lives, but we actually have to do something about it ourselves. And that is surrender and turning that turning.

All right, for those listeners that are listening to us. And they, maybe they have a pretty decent prayer life, but they're really interested in deepening that prayer life with the Lord. Do you have any specific recommendations for them on how to get even closer to God?

Rev. Michele Williams 24:22

Yeah, just a few simple things. Nothing too extravagant. The first thing is do a self-examination, by asking God to reveal to them their own hearts. And if he brings anything to their minds, concerning their actions or behaviors, or even ways of thinking, he may have previously spoken some things to them, that they surrender that to God so I'm glad that you, you know, mentioned that earlier, but that's the key. being open to God self-examination God, what are you showing me in my heart? What if I've been doing that's not pleasing to you, and then choosing to surrender that to God.

The next thing is practice each day, going to God and having a conversation with him, concerning your heart. So we can do that more than once. If we have a regular practice of that, then God, you know, will regularly show us where we have made a mistake. And then we can build up that habit of confessing to him daily, to stay clean before him next week in purpose to allow his leading in our lives every day. God, what would you have for me to do today? That's basically, for that particular point, just allowing his leading,

I was talking to someone the other day. And she said to me, Well, God has been speaking to me to be quiet and to be still. And immediately God spoke to me and said, the common theme is be. And be means you don't really have to do anything. But you have to allow God to do everything. Because you're just be in Scripture, he says, Be my disciples. So if you would just allow your life to just walk out as a disciple. You don't have to think about what what do I need to do next, you will just be his disciples. And then the last thing is the most important thing I believe, is reading and studying God's word daily. This is how we get to know God. This is how we get to know every aspect of the Godhead God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we will be able to understand why he calls us Beloved. And then we will gain a deeper

understanding of his love for us. Because there are a lot of believers that don't really understand the love of God, that He loves us in a vast way. Because, you know, we have experience with human beings as far as human beings loves how they love us, but God loves us in a different way. That won't cause harm.

Debora 27:40

I like that to be - it's such a freeing thing, because you don't have to do you just be and allow God to minister to you in that way? That's, that's awesome.

Well, I want to just thank you so much for sharing with us today about some of the ways to hint to remove these hindrances to effective prayer and to deepen our relationship with God. Before I let you go, would you mind praying for our listening audience?

Rev. Michele Williams 28:07

Sure. Let's pray. Father, we thank you so much. We thank you so much, God for who you are. God, we thank you for being our father, and we thank you for caring for us. We thank you, Lord, for your grace in your new mercies that you have given us today. Lord God, we thank You, Lord God, that you're concerned about every aspect of our lives, Lord God, we thank You, Lord God, that you have saved us by your grace, Lord God, and through our faith, Lord God, it is nothing that we could ever do in order to earn your salvation, Lord, and so we thank you for the free gift of salvation for God. And so Father, I thank you and I, and I honor you Lord God and I lift up to you every listener Lord God that as they determine, to seek your face, Lord God and to examine your word, Lord God, that you will manifest your presence to them like never before. God that you would begin to build their relationship the way you intended to build it, Lord garden, and that you will open up their understanding to your love that the way that they need to understand who you are Lord God. So Father, I thank you so much for what you're going to do in the lives of every listener, Lord God, and I pray and ask that you would seal up your word in their hearts right now. In Jesus name, amen.

Debora 29:58

Amen

Don't go away. We'll be back after this short break.

Music Interlude

We just heard from Reverend Michelle Williams, about how to improve the effectiveness of our prayer lives. The Bible says in Second Chronicles, chapter seven, verses 14 and 15. If my people who are called by my name, will humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land. Now, my eyes will be open, and my ears attentive to the prayer made in this place.

As Reverend Michel pointed out, if you do not have a personal relationship with Jesus, your prayers to God will not be heard. Because you're not a child of God.

If you've never surrendered your life to Jesus Christ, you can do that right now. For it is by faith, that we believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sins. And if you're ready to place your trust in the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and receive that forgiveness of your sins, would you pray this prayer with me?

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God, I confess that I'm a sinner, and I need Jesus in my life. I repent of my sins, and I turn to you. I believe that Jesus died on the cross for my sins. He was buried, and he rose from the dead. I accept this by faith, and invite Jesus to be Lord of my life, to reign and rule in my heart. Thank you, God, for forgiving me, and saving me. Amen.

And if you want accepted Christ in your life, but lately, you've not been walking with Him, you've gotten off track, but you would like to be restored to him. 1 John 1:9 says that if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. All you need to do is pray a prayer of repentance and ask Jesus to forgive you and to restore you.

Now, if you just made a decision for Christ, I would love to hear from you. Visit my website at TBTWpodcast.com. And click the link letting me know that you made a decision for Christ because I would love to follow up with you and encourage you and support you in the next steps of your faith.

Now my prayer for you today is that you will humble yourself and turn towards God seeking his face every day. asking him if there's anything in your life that's not pleasing to Him. And be willing to turn away from those things that he reveals to you, spend time in His Word, and your prayers will be effective. And you will be able to experience the amazing, unconditional love that He has for you. It is like nothing in this world.

Now may the Lord bless you and keep you may he make his face shine upon you and give you his peace. Amen.

Stay tuned for our next episode of transformed by the word where we will discuss the Holy Spirit's power for personal healing.

Announcer 34:39

Thank you for listening to transformed by the word with your host Debora Barr, be sure to subscribe to our podcast on iTunes or Google Play and connect with us at TBTWPodcast.com. Until next time, be blessed.