
LESSON 3

Lesson Text: Psalm 66:18; Matthew 5:23, 24; 1 John 5:14, 15;
James 1:6,7; James 4:3; 1 Peter 3:1,7

HINDRANCES TO PRAYER

LESSON AIM

The aim of the lesson is to help the believer recognize and acknowledge the areas in his or her life that may cause their prayers to be hindered.

MEMORY VERSE:

"Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear."

Isaiah 59:1,2, KJV

"Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear."

Isaiah 59:1,2, NIV

INTRODUCTION

Daily communion with God and getting positive results to our prayers are two of the greatest assets in a Christian's life. We're told through the promises of the Bible, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive;" "Whatsoever ye ask in my name, that will I do;" Ask, and it shall be given unto you... WHAT A TREASURE OF PROMISES for the believer.

However, there are times when we, as Christians, may not be able to receive these promises. There are times when God cannot, in righteousness, answer positively the requests of His children, whom He loves so dearly. He does not leave us in the dark concerning this matter but has shown us in His Word the things that grieve Him and make it so He cannot fully answer our prayers. Here are perhaps some of the most significant.

DISCUSSION

A Sinful Life (Psalm 66:18)

We must not live in sin. We must not hold any particular sin in our hearts, make excuses for it, and cover it up. If we do, our unconfessed sin clogs the channels between heaven and us. For God hates sin, but "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 JOHN 1:9). However, if we choose to nourish them and cover them up, our prayers will be HINDERED.

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Wrongs Unrighted (Matthew 5:23,24)

Our relationships with others need to be dealt with before we can have a clear line to the heavenly Father. Many of us cannot get our prayers answered because the cries of others we have wronged have already been heard by God. The Word tells us that Cain tried to talk with God, but the blood of his slain brother, Abel, had already cried out of the ground to God against Cain. Do you then, dear sister and brother, think that God will hear your prayer when there are wrongs against others that you have not tried to make right? Certainly not!

Praying Outside God's Will (1 John 5:14,15)

Have you ever bought an item you thought you would always treasure but later found it did not meet approval? Have you ever given your child, a friend, or relative a gift simply because they wanted it and said it would be beneficial; however, it was to their detriment rather than their good. When we pray, we should seek things in our lives that will please and honor God. God knows what is best for His children. So, if you want your prayers answered, seek to pray in the will of God, not contrary to His will.

Unbelief (James 1:6,7)

God wants us to believe His Word. When we question it, we make Him a liar. Do we go to God and ask for something that is absolutely promised in His Word, but by our actions, show that we don't really expect it? If so, we need to ask Him to increase our faith so that we can bring our request to Him without doubting.

Wrong Motives (James 4:3)

We should examine the motives behind our prayer requests. Selfish motives rob prayer of its power. Sometimes we may ask God for something that is proper and, in His will, but if the motive is wrong, that prayer will be hindered. The purpose of prayer is to glorify God; if we ask for something merely for our own pleasure and gratification, we ask amiss. For example, if a congregation prays for a larger church, the motive should be for the purpose of accommodating more souls to hear the Gospel rather than a "show off" for fellow brethren. Remember, God knows the intent of our hearts.

Family Disharmony (1 Peter 3:1,7)

Constant discord in the home grieves God. Many times, the prayers of husbands and wives are not answered because lack of commitment to each other. Many women may be devoted to religious duties but are cross, neglectful, and contemptuous toward her husband, so she wonders why her prayers are without power. On the other hand, many men, while very active in Christian work, show little consideration in honoring their wives. Often, they are unkind and sometimes even cruel. Does a man of this nature expect God to answer his prayers? Husbands and wives must remember that to surrender to the plan

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of God for the home is much more important than any duties of citizenship or public worship.

CONCLUSION

While this is just a partial list as to why our prayers will not always be answered, the spiritual truth to be learned from this lesson is: When our lives and prayers are in accord with what the heavenly Father's plan and purpose are for us, our prayers will not be hindered, but will be answered (John 15:7).

QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to 'regard iniquity' in 'your heart'?
2. Why does our relationship with others need to be right before God can answer our prayers?
3. Is there any way we can always be sure that we're praying in God's will?
4. Can you give Bible Scripture for some other hindrances to prayer?
