

UNANSWERED PRAYERS

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"Ask and it shall be given you, seek, and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you: For everyone that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" Matt. 7:7-8.

Biblical prayer is the key to blessing, provision, peace and the power of God. It builds a sweet relationship with Him, becomes a blessed tool of service; revealing our true relationship with God. In prayer we first cry out in faith for salvation. From there we build a living relationship of asking and receiving with thanksgiving. We can touch the heart of God with our cry and affect the entire scope of spiritual things with faithful praying. Is it any wonder Paul encourages us to "pray without ceasing" I Thess. 5:17.

The Bible clearly urges us to pray in Jesus' name (John 14:14). The one who prays should know God's word (John 15:7). We are also told to place God's will above all (I John 5:14). There will be times when the Lord will say no, or sometimes His timing will be later. In this chapter I want to deal with the problem of the person praying when it comes to unanswered prayer.

First examine the need for **CLEANLINESS**. Throughout the Bible God displays His hatred for sin. The death of Christ was necessary to provide a way of cleansing. God simply does not use dirty vessels and requires clean lives on the part of His followers. The Psalmist warned "If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me" Ps. 66:18. It could not be clearer. Often unanswered prayer is the fault of the person praying. Those who watch the "soaps" dash to pieces their prayer hopes. Lovers of rock and roll cannot pray from the soul. Immoral actions destroy your interactions with God. Worldly Christians lose out in effective praying, soon become discouraged and answers are few and far between. Your body, mind, heart and relationship to others must be pleasing to God.

Effective praying is the result of great discipline, strong standards, and a daily pursuit of purity.

Then remember **RESTITUTION IS REQUIRED**. Your personal relationships to others are vital. A great lesson on prayer is given in Matthew 5:24. We are encouraged to bring gifts and to make petitions, but cautioned if we "have ought against our brother" we must first "be reconciled to our brother". In Colossians 3:13 we are commanded to "forgive one another, if any have a quarrel." Churches filled with cliques, divisions, hurt feelings and constant member warfare can never be powerhouses of prayer. Endless grudges, constant gossip, angry words, dislike and wounded feelings all destroy the power chain of the church. Individual slights, personal peeves, ugly arguments and sinful transgressions against others must be made right. Cheating, lying, and all immorality involving others must be confessed to the ones wronged before effective prayer can be made. Heart searching and confession will lay a great foundation for effective praying. Right the wrong and your prayer life will soon be strong. If not, you will find "your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear" Isa. 59:2.

Further movement toward answered prayer will result from **VITAL SUBMISSION**. A child soon learns the best path to parent-child relationships is found in obedience and parent-pleasing living. We are told in Ephesians 5:21 be "submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God". We each need to discipline ourselves to accept what each has to offer. Our true relationship to others affects our relationship to God. Submission must be toward law and order, (I Peter 2:13); toward our pastor, (Heb. 13:17); toward parents, (Col. 3:20); a wife to her husband, (Eph. 5:22) and consistently toward God, (James 4:7). We are instructed by God to "obey my voice and walk in all the ways that I have commanded thee" Jer. 7:23. Stubborn willfulness, careless disobedience, half-hearted service and deliberate rebellion foster a pride and hardness that will stifle your prayers. The clay cannot refuse to be formed by the potter. We too must submit to one wiser than ourselves. He will know what is best and will work out all things as

we trust Him. Thus we must willingly pray, "not my will but thine be done".

Certainly we must believe, **FAITH IS NECESSARY**. God's word is filled with promises that hinge on this truth. The faithless who pray are wasting time and energy in a fruitless exercise. Notice "whatsoever things ye desire when you pray; believe that ye receive them and ye shall have them" Mark 11:24. In fact "without faith it is impossible to please Him" Heb. 11:6. True faith is simply taking God at His word. Again and again in our meetings I have seen the faith of a child overcome the doubts of older Christians. Don't paint yourself into a corner of your own making and give up hope. God is pleased in the admission of our weakness and our believing cry for help. Your faith in His provision can get you through college. Your faith in His power can smash some binding habit which you feel powerless to overcome. All things are possible to those who will have faith and believe. So lift up tired hands and flagging spirit and have faith in the God who has promised nothing is too hard for Him.

Prayer can be also hindered by a **LACK OF PERSISTENCY**. In Luke we are told of the man who came late at night to borrow some bread from a friend. The man was already in bed and begged off. The man continued to ask and Jesus said "because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many loaves as he needeth" Luke 11:8. Once you are impressed to pray for something you should never stop. Most believers give up too easily. Jesus once told His followers some things will not happen without prayer and fasting. Don't give up on the unsaved friend or loved one. Keep bombarding heaven with your requests. Remember "the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" James 5:16. Nothing is too hard for God. Sometimes He will test the one asking as He awaits the time of His response. Even a "no" can be rethought and returned in a different manner and state of heart and mind. Keep praying until you are sure the door is shut. Once again, we often give up too easily and relegate the task too hard and the cause hopeless. We simply must go on trusting and asking the best we know how.

We also must remember to **PUT FEET TO OUR PRAYERS**. I think God will not do what we can do for ourselves. He wants us to be "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" I Cor. 15:58. If you ask God to bless your church, then dig in and get to work doing all you can in faithful service and attendance. If your cry is to save lost souls; then open your mouth and be an aggressive witness everywhere. The request for God to prosper the church must be followed by faithful tithing and sacrificial giving. Prayer battle against sin in the neighborhood must include voting and working for that which is right. The petition for greater love must be watered by the giving of your love to others. A sob for better relations must include asking others for forgiveness and genuine attempts to get along with everyone. Don't expect answers to prayer if you are not willing to do your part. We are to be "doers of the word" James 1:22.

Lastly, one must maintain **GREAT VISION**. "Where there is no vision the people perish" Pr. 29:18. The promises of God are eternal and sure. He will not change His everlasting promises nor go back on His word. Many believers live in poverty while God's riches are waiting to be claimed. The end-time church will lose its vision. It will major in social reform, entertainment, recreation and outward service to the needy. Today most churches have strayed from their main purpose; that of winning souls. The same happens to individuals that lose the true heart of God. I urge you to get on your knees in a quiet place and get the flame of soul winning rekindled in your heart. There is nothing God cannot do if we will call down His power and rely on His strength. Has He not promised "call unto me and I will answer thee and shew thee great and mighty things thou knowest not" Jer. 33:3. The electric generating station cannot send power if there is trouble in the lines. Although radio waves can rush unseen through the air, the equipment to receive it must be in order. God is the sound and power of the universe but He chooses to work through His own who must be usable. Carefully check the thoughts of this chapter and apply them to your heart. The fault is never with God but with us who sputter and hesitate in this needy time. Remember, much prayer much

power, little prayer little power, no prayer no
power.