

Uproot These Unsightly Weeds From Your Prayers

Often believers are discouraged because their prayers seem unanswered. But God has graciously enlightened us concerning effective prayers. James assures us that “the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man accomplish much” (James 5:16). Jesus instructed His disciples, “whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them” (Mark 11:24). The writer of Hebrews penned the invitation for God’s children to “come with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:16). Therefore, it is evident that God desires to answer prayers.

Instead of responding with discouragement when prayers are delayed or unanswered, we can benefit from observing the gardener’s meticulous and consistent approach as he or she cultivates the seeds they have planted. Nurture your prayers with regular increments of faith (James 1:6, 7), persistence (Luke 18:1), and obedience (John 15:7) all the while uprooting weeds of doubt and rebellion.

Faith and persistence are well-known practices that result in answered prayers. An often-ignored yet equally important factor is obedience to the Word of God. Obedience to Scriptures brings transformation and greater propensity to pray God’s will. James emphasizes that praying with wrong motives yields zero result (James 4:3) while John affirms the believer’s confidence in answered prayer when praying according to God’s will (1 John 5:14).

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SOS-type prayers seem to be readily answered. One morning while driving in busy traffic I sensed the Holy Spirit prompting me to pray for the traffic, so I simply began to pray for safety for motorists. Less than five minutes later, an SUV heading in the opposite direction lost control, jumped the median and headed toward the driver's side of my vehicle. I called out with intensity, "Jesus!" It was enough! The SUV stopped abruptly only a few inches away from me.

At other times, like Daniel, we may experience delay in an answer to prayer (Daniel 10:12-13). Delay in itself is not an indicator of God's decision (if we are living according to biblical standards). The delay should motivate us to persevere in prayer, anchor our request on the promises of the Word of God and develop deeper trust and faith in God. I continued to pray for the salvation of my sister for 40 years. Without notice, she and her husband both received Christ as their Savior. Both have completed INSTE Level I discipleship training and now serve in their church.

Isaiah reminds us that God's ways and thoughts are vastly different from ours (Is. 55:8, 9). A point to bear in mind is that God answers prayers for His glory and not merely for the individual's comfort. Paul is a prime example of a devoted Christ follower who suffered all manner of evil including ill health, persecution, poverty and assaults. Yet he demonstrated unwavering faith and trusted God's grace (2 Cor. 4:7-11; 2 Cor. 12:7-10). God's lack of response to prayer does not diminish His love and compassion for us. Rather, God's loving eyes and heart are ever on His children to do good to those that walk uprightly and are pursuing His purposes.

So just like the attentive gardener, carefully nurture your prayers as you would seeds planted in the ground. Anchor those prayers on God's promises, offer them from a cleansed heart, water them with large doses of faith and perseverance and be careful to remove weeds and pests of doubt and discouragement. Finally, remain expectant for God's answers. The gardener

plants seed for its fruit. {eoa}

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