

10 Reasons Why Your Prayers May Go Unanswered

We all face dry spells when prayer feels like a waste of time. Every Christian experiences times when God seems a million miles away. Then we must walk by faith and not by our feelings. When we can't trace God's hand, we must trust His heart.

Excluding Psalms, the Bible records over 650 prayers, of which at least 450 have recorded answers. So, we should expect God to answer our prayers. However, we should also identify and remove any hindrances. Consider 10 common reasons for unanswered prayer:

1. **Unconfessed sin.** Sin separates us from God and is a big barrier to prayer (Isa. 59:1-2). David wrote, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Ps. 66:18, KJV). God can't look upon iniquity with favor or approval (Hab. 1:13a). Instead of running from God, we should run toward Him. Confess sin swiftly, repent of it and ask God to remove it, and He will restore you (1 John 1:9). Either prayer will keep us from sinning or sin will keep us from praying.
2. **Asking amiss.** "You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss" (James 4:3a, NKJV). The Living Bible reads, "And even when you do ask you don't get it because your whole aim is wrong." Prayer is like archery, and the target is God's will. Jimmy Carter said, "God answers every prayer. Sometimes God says 'yes,' sometimes God says 'no,' and sometimes He says, 'you've got to be kidding me.'" Some prayers are so far outside of God's will they are absurd. "This is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us" (1 John 5:14, MEV). As the song says, "Some of life's greatest gifts are unanswered prayers."

How many times have we prayed for things that we later thanked God for not granting? God gives us what we need instead of what we think we want.

3. **Lack of faith.** A man brought his suicidal son to the disciples for help. They tried to cast demons out in vain. Finally, Jesus set him free. The disciples asked why they couldn't deliver him. Jesus answered, "Because of your unbelief. For truly I say to you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. And nothing will be impossible for you" (Matt. 17:20). Someone said, "Faith sees the invisible, believes the incredible and receives the impossible." Faith is an essential ingredient in prayer. Bold faith pleases God and is a catalyst for miracles. Unbelief limits God and short-circuits our prayers. An engine can have maximum power but, without a sparkplug, it's useless. Faith is the sparkplug that releases the supernatural power of prayer.
4. **Lack of persistence.** Jesus told the parable of the unjust judge so "men always ought to pray and not lose heart" (Luke 18:1, NKJV). The desperate widow repeatedly appealed to a corrupt judge for justice. Reluctantly, he ruled in her favor just to get rid of her. Then Jesus added, "And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him ... ?" (Luke 18:7). If persistence pays when dealing with a crooked judge who has no interest in your case, how much more so when dealing with the just judge of all the earth who has a supreme interest in your case? We should adopt Jacob's tenacity who said as he wrestled with the angel, "I will not let You go unless You bless me!" (Gen. 32:26b). Persistence pays and will eventually be rewarded (Heb. 11:6).
5. **Wrong motives.** "You ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures" (James 4:3b). We should petition God for personal needs (Matt. 6:11), but we can easily stray

into pure selfishness. The Lord's Prayer guards against it by using the pronouns "our," "us" and "we" (Matt. 6:9-13). When we focus on others' needs, God will move for us too. Spiritual blessings are like boomerangs—if we send them out, they will return to us (Prov. 11:25, Eccl. 11:1). Remember, "The Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends" (Job 42:10, KJV). Motives matter to God. Doing good works for the wrong motives cancel their value (Matt. 6:1-18). Jesus chided the Pharisees who prayed, fasted and gave alms publicly as a religious show to impress people (Matt. 6:5, 23:14). If we do them privately to please God, He will reward us openly.

6. **Wrong methods.** Jesus told another parable to illustrate the right and wrong way to pray (Luke 18:9-14). A proud Pharisee bragged to God about how he was better than sinners. One author noted, "He asked for nothing, confessed nothing, and received nothing." In contrast, a publican uttered a simple, sincere prayer as he stood "afar off" feeling unworthy. Publicans weren't allowed in the temple and were treated as vile sinners. In humility, he wouldn't even "raise his eyes to heaven." Beating his chest in repentance, he cried, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" Jesus said he went home "justified" (acquitted of guilt and reckoned righteous by God). Like Cain's and Abel's offerings, one prayer was accepted, the other was rejected. It all hinged on their method and motive.
7. **Wrong timing.** My mom had a saying, "God passes up a lot of opportunities to be early." He's never late either; He's always right on time! When Jesus heard Lazarus was sick, He deliberately delayed until he died, so He could perform a bigger miracle (John 11:6). Mary and Martha couldn't understand why Jesus didn't come sooner (John 11:21, 32). Have you felt like God was delaying an answer to your prayers? Remember, a delay does not mean a denial! Paul, you recall, prayed three times for God

to remove a thorn in his flesh. God didn't respond immediately, but He gave Paul grace to endure it (2 Cor. 12:7-10). If God delays answering your prayers, there's a reason. Trust Him and His timing.

8. **Satanic hindrances.** Daniel experienced a three-week blockade to his prayers. Gabriel explained, "For from the first day that you set your heart to understand this and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard ... But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me for twenty-one days. So Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me" (Dan. 10:12-13a, MEV). The prince of Persia was a demonic being who controlled that evil empire. Michael, the archangel, has fought Satan through the ages (Jude 9, Rev. 12:7). Delays to prayer answers can be caused by satanic hindrances. As a result, they can be removed by spiritual warfare (Matt. 18:18-19, 2 Cor. 10:4-5, Eph. 6:11-13, Rev. 12:7-11).
9. **Unforgiveness.** Unforgiveness is poison to our soul. Grudges usually hurt the person holding them more than the ones they are held against. Jesus instructed, "If you bring your gift to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go on your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matt. 5:23-24). Unforgiveness blocks the flow of God's blessing in our lives and hinders our prayers (Matt. 6:12, 14-15).
10. **Mistreating people.** If we mistreat others, it will adversely affect our walk with God. To love God is to love people (1 John 4:20-21). How we treat people is indirectly how we treat Christ (Matt. 25:40). Peter wrote, " Likewise, you husbands, live considerately with your wives, giving honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they too are also heirs of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered" (1 Pet. 3:7). Here we see a direct link between honoring our spouse and our prayers being unhindered. If we truly

love God, we won't abuse people who are made in His image. If people have mistreated you, don't retaliate: "Overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:21b). Keep your prayer channels open by treating people with love and respect.

If your prayers have hit the ceiling lately, take inventory. God promised to answer our prayers, but we must approach Him on His terms. "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man accomplishes much" (James 5:16). In the words of William Carrey, let's "Expect great things from God, and attempt great things for God!" {eoa}

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