

The Most Common Reasons For Unanswered Prayers

One of the greatest benefits afforded to every Christian is the privilege of answered prayers. In the Bible, Jesus made this tremendous promise, “*And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive*” (Matt 21:22). However, despite the Lord’s willingness to answer prayer, it is obvious that some prayers have gone unanswered. Why is this? The following are some of the most common reasons why some prayers do not get results:

1. Lack of Fellowship with God and His word

John 15:7 “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.”

Unanswered prayers are sometimes a result of absence from fellowship with the Lord and His Word. Jesus promised that if we would remain in His fellowship, and allow His Word to remain in us, this would produce results in prayer.

2. Not seeking to Please the Lord

1 John 3:22 “And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.”

Answers to prayer come when we seek to keep His commandments and please the Lord with our life. This is not to suggest that we “earn” answered prayers, any more than we can earn salvation which comes only by faith (Eph. 2:8-9). He answers our prayers from his “grace” and “mercy” (Heb. 4:16), not merely from our good deeds. However, keeping His commandments and pleasing the Lord is a product of our obedience to His word, which is faith in action (James 2:20).

What are His commandments? He commanded that we are to love the Lord with all our

heart, mind, and soul, and to love our neighbor as ourself (Mark 12:30-31). Further, Jesus said we are to love our brethren as He has loved us. “*This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you*” (John 15:12). Lack of love, bitterness, unforgiveness is the root of many unanswered prayers, since faith works by love (Gal 5:6).

3. Unconfessed Sin in One’s Life

1 Peter 3:12 “For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil.”

There is no doubt that sin will disrupt the flow of God’s blessings and answers to prayer. The psalmist, David wrote, “*If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear*” (Psa. 66:18). All acts of rebellion and disobedience to God is considered sin. Sins of “commission,” are those overt acts which are done in disobedience. However, sins of “omission,” are those things we don’t do in obedience, but know we should (James 4:17). The remedy for all sin is to confess it to God, forsake it, and ask Him to forgive you (1 John 1:9).

4. Improper Motives

James 4:3 “You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.”

Our motives in our prayer requests are of concern to the Lord. He wishes to help us in our time of need, but is not obligated to answer prayers which will merely feed our carnal, worldly appetites and (lustful) pleasures. Our motives and desires can be corrected by humbling ourselves, and drawing near to God (James 4:8-10).

5. Not asking in God’s will

1 John 5:14-15 “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.”

God will only answer those prayers that are in “His” will. When we ask anything that is in His will, we can have assurance that those “petitions” (requests) are granted to us. God’s will is revealed through His Word, the Bible. Anything promised by His Word is His will, and we can be confident that He’ll honor our prayers based on His Word.

6. Don’t know how to Pray

Luke 11:1 “...Lord, teach us to pray...”

Some lack effectiveness in prayer simply because they don’t know what the scriptures teach about prayer. Jesus gave His disciples an outline for prayer in Matthew 6:9-13. Take the time to study it. Other passages teach that prayer is primarily to be a private, intimate time with the Lord (Matt. 6:6), to be intermingled with praise and thanksgiving (Acts 16:25, Phil. 4:6). Times of fasting with prayer are beneficial to strengthen our faith and power in prayer (Acts 14:23, 1 Cor. 7:5). Jesus often went to secluded places to spend prolonged periods in prayer (Luke 6:12, Matt. 4:2).

7. Lack of Faith

Hebrews 11:6 “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”

We cannot please God without faith. Prayer is not merely “begging” from God. It is “believing” God and His Word! Faith will come forth and grow as we devote our attention to the Word of God (Romans 10:17). Our faith can also be “built up,” by praying in the Holy Spirit (Jude 1:20).

8. Misunderstanding of Faith

Mark 11:24 “Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.”

Many do not understand that faith is believing in the reality of things, even though we cannot see

them (*Heb. 11:1*). Jesus said that “when” you pray, you must believe that you “receive” your answer at that moment. The word, “receive” comes from the Greek word, *LAMBANO*, which means “to receive now” (present tense). He then says we will “have” them. “Have” comes from, *ESOMAI*, which means “to possess later” (future tense).

So, when we pray we must believe in the finished results of our prayer, and we will eventually experience the tangible results sometime later.

9. Wavering faith

James 1:6-7 “*But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord...*”

There are those who allow every “wind” of feelings or circumstances to influence or discourage their faith. They vacillate back and forth, like the waves tossed about in the sea. One day they believe, but the next, they’re ready to give up, and so forth. Such persons usually base their faith on their feelings or emotions instead of God’s Word. They who waver in their faith cannot expect to receive “anything of the Lord.” Our faith must become stable, steadfast, and consistent to receive from God.

10. Failure to Apply Spiritual Authority

Mark 11:23 “*For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, Be removed and be cast into the sea, and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says.*”

There are times that some prayers may not get far until we incorporate the spoken authority of the name of Jesus. The reason for this is that the problems we face may sometimes be a product of an evil spiritual origin. As Paul writes, “*For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the*

darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (*Eph 6:12*). In such cases, our prayers may need to engage in what we call “spiritual warfare” to obtain results.

The need for this type of prayer is most obvious whenever Christians deal directly with demonic activity. For this evil operation to cease, our prayers need to include the exercise of spiritual authority against the devil in the name of Jesus, commanding him to leave (*Acts 16:18*). Therefore, as Jesus indicated, there will be times that we may need to literally speak to mountains (symbolic of obstacles and problems) and tell them to move in Jesus’ name.

11. Lack of Perseverance

Galatians 6:9 “*And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.*”

Probably the greatest reason that some prayers go unanswered is because many give-up praying and believing before they receive their answer. As long as you have the promise of God’s Word, be patient and persistent - keep believing, and don’t quit, no matter how long it takes! God has a “due season” when He will bring the answer to pass.

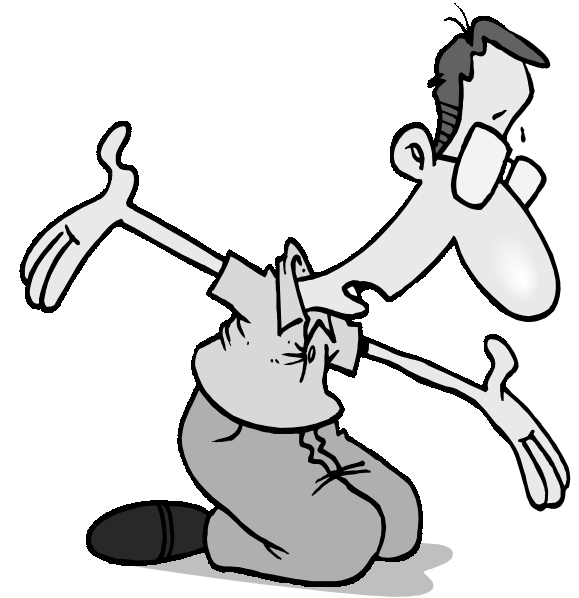
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