

WEEK 6 - WHAT KEEPS PRAYERS FROM BEING ANSWERED?
DAY 1

From what we learned last week, we know that praying is not an easy thing. And it is not something we do in whatever way we like. We learned that praying should be done in certain ways.

Pray with the whole heart

1. Write five ways in which we should pray.

- (1) _____
- (2) _____
- (3) _____
- (4) _____
- (5) _____

But sometimes even though we try to do all these things, and pray in just the way God wants, we do not see answers to our prayers. Why is this? Perhaps you were sick and you asked God to heal you. But you did not get well.

2. Have you sometimes been tempted to think that God does not answer prayer? _____

But the Bible tells us that God always keeps his promises. The Bible says he never changes. So then, why are our prayers sometimes not answered? That is what we want to learn this week.

The Bible gives us some very clear reasons why our prayers sometimes are not answered.

Psalm 66:18:

If I had cherished evil thoughts, the Lord would not have heard me.

3. By this verse, what is it that keeps God from hearing our prayers?

Isaiah 59:1-2:

The Lord's arm is not so short that he cannot save nor his ear too dull to hear; it is your iniquities that raise a barrier between you and your God, because of your sins he has hidden his face so that he does not hear you.

4. Is it God's fault if our prayers are not answered? _____

Proverbs 15:8:

The wicked man's sacrifice is abominable to the Lord; the good man's prayer is his delight.

5. What kind of man makes God happy with his prayers? _____

In all of these verses we see that it does not help to ask God for things if there is sin in our hearts. God does not even want our offerings if we have sinned and we refuse to confess it. What kind of sins does this mean? We all know the sins which most people think of like lying, stealing, killing. We know that God will not hear our prayers if we hide these things. But the Bible tells about other sins which keep God from hearing us. Read this verse and find the thing which can hinder prayer.

1 Peter 3:7:

In the same way, you husbands must conduct your married life with understanding: pay honour to the woman's body, not only because it is weaker, but also because you share together in the grace of God which gives you life. Then your prayers will not be hindered.

6. In this verse, what is the thing that can hinder prayer? _____

Yes, the bad way a man acts toward his wife may keep his prayers from being answered. Sometimes we hear men saying big things about prayer, but when we see how they speak to their wives, we know that God does not hear them.

7. Is it an important thing to God how we live in our families? _____

So if our prayers are not being answered it may be because of the way we are living. When we pray, we must think about our lives and ask God to show us if there is anything that is not good. Perhaps we are not careful in the way we talk to other people. Or perhaps we are wanting too many things for ourselves. Or perhaps we are not working for God as he wants us to do. These things are also sins.

8. Write some other kind of sin which you think can hinder our prayers.

These things may seem small, but they keep our prayers from being answered. God will show them to us if we ask him. Then by his help we can take them out of our lives.

9. What is it that we have learned today which keeps our prayers from being answered?

ANSWERS

4. No.
1. Go back to page 75 for the answer.
6. When a man does not treat his wife in the proper way.
9. Sin, or the way we live.
2. Answer as you feel.
5. A good man.
8. We will talk about this in class.
7. It is very important.

**WEEK 6 - WHAT KEEPS PRAYERS FROM BEING ANSWERED?
DAY 2**

Yesterday we learned that sin in our hearts keeps God from hearing us. Even a little bit of disobedience is sin and it closes the way for God to answer our prayers.

In the Bible there is one sin especially that is talked about which hinders our prayers. Jesus talked about it when he was teaching the disciples how to pray. Mark 11:24-25:

I tell you, then, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it and it will be yours. And when you stand praying, if you have a grievance against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you the wrongs you have done.

Matthew 6:14-15:

For if you forgive others the wrongs they have done, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, then the wrongs you have done will not be forgiven by your Father.

1. What happens if we do not forgive the things which people do against us?

But it is hard to forgive. Sometimes people do very bad things to us. These things trouble us. They give us sorrow or pain. And should we just forgive these things? That is what Jesus said. Remember what he told Peter.

Matthew 18:21-22:

Then Peter came up and asked him, 'Lord, how often am I to forgive my brother if he goes on wronging me? As many as seven times?' Jesus replied, 'I do not say seven times; I say seventy times seven.'

2. If people go on wronging us, can we stop forgiving them after awhile?

If we stop forgiving, then it is sin, and God cannot hear our prayers. Then what can we do? Jesus said, "When you stand praying. . . forgive." We can pray for whatever we need, but as we pray we must forgive. This is not easy to do. Sometimes we cannot forgive by our own strength. As we are praying, we can ask for God's help and he will help us forgive.

3. When other people do wrong to us, what must we do if we want our prayers answered?

Even failing to love other people can keep our prayers from being answered.

1 John 4:20:

But if a man says, 'I love God', while hating his brother, he is a liar. If he does not love the brother whom he has seen, it cannot be that he loves God whom he has not seen.

4. Will God hear the prayer of a liar? _____

Will he hear the prayer of a man who does not love his brother? _____

This thing goes very deep. Sometimes we may think we have forgiven, yet there is still a bad feeling between us and someone else. Then what should we do?

Matthew 5:23-24:

If, when you are bringing your gift to the altar, you suddenly remember that your brother has a grievance against you, leave your gift where it is before the altar. First go and make your peace with your brother, and only then come back and offer your gift.

Bad feelings between people hinder their prayers. Before trying to pray, I must have a good understanding with my brother. I must not only forgive him, but I must try to help him if he has bad feelings against me.

5. If I am still angry about my neighbour's cattle which got into my garden, will God hear my prayers? _____

6. Will God hear my prayer if my cattle have gotten into my neighbour's garden and I have not fixed up the matter? _____

7. From this lesson, what sin keeps God from answering our prayers?

ANSWERS

6. No
2. No
7. The sin of unforgiveness or having bad feeling between us and other people.
3. We must forgive them
5. No
1. God will not forgive us of our sins.
4. No. No.

**WEEK 6 - WHAT KEEPS PRAYERS FROM BEING ANSWERED?
DAY 3**

We have seen a very big thing which keeps God from hearing our prayers. Sin in our hearts closes the way for our prayers to be answered.

1. In yesterday's lesson what sin did we learn keeps God from hearing us?

Another thing that hinders our prayers is that we ask for the wrong things. We remember that Jesus said we can ask for anything and it will be done. But we forget that he said this is only true if we remain joined to him.

John 15:7:

'If you dwell in me, and my words dwell in you, ask what you will, and you shall have it.'

2. If I really live in Christ and his words live in me, will I want most of all to make myself happy?

But many times we live for ourselves. We love ourselves. We want to make ourselves happy. We want to have an easy life. So we pray for many things for ourselves.

James 4:2b-3:

You do not get what you want, because you do not pray for it. Or, if you do, your requests are not granted because you pray from wrong motives, to spend what you get on your pleasures.

3. If I ask for money so that I may have an easy life, will God hear my prayer?

Sometimes the reasons why we want things hinder God from answering even good prayers. Let us say a woman is praying for her husband who is not a Christian that he may repent. This is a good thing, isn't it? Yes it is. But, why is the woman praying for this thing? Is it so that God may have glory,

or is it because she wants to have an easier life after her husband becomes a Christian? This is a hard question. Surely she would like to have her husband praying with her and agreeing with her. But how will it be if God then calls her husband to leave his home and go and preach? Perhaps she will have to spend many days at home alone. Or perhaps she will have to go and live in a very hard place. Perhaps God will ask her husband to give much money to the church and she will not have as much money to buy things. Is she willing for this as she prays for her husband to repent? When we pray we must ask ourselves, "Do I really want God to be pleased, or do I just want to be happy myself?"

4. If I pray to please myself what happens to my prayers? _____

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Sometimes we do not know that our prayers are selfish. We begin to pray for something which we think is very good. As we pray, God shows us that this thing is not for his glory. In one way we can say that this is God's answer. This time he is saying, "No."

5. Why does God sometimes answer No to our prayers? _____

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Moses was a great man of prayer. He had wonderful answers to his prayers. But one time God answered No to Moses' prayer. Moses had become angry when the people cried to him for water. He disobeyed God and beat the rock for water, instead of speaking to it, as God said he should. Then God said that because of this Moses could not go over into the land of Canaan. Now I want you to read in your Bible what happened. Open your Bible to Deuteronomy 3 and read verses 23 to 26.

6. What did God do when Moses prayed that he might go into the land of Canaan?

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Notice in verse 26 that God refused Moses' prayer for the sake of the people. Moses was a leader. He had disobeyed God. The people needed to learn the lesson that when we disobey God we are punished. God would not be hon-

oured if Moses went into the land of Canaan, so God said No to Moses' prayer. He even told him not to pray that prayer again.

7. When we see that something we are praying for is not God's will, should we keep on asking for it?

Paul was also a man who prayed very much. We always read in his letters that he prayed for the Christians everywhere. One time Paul had a problem. He said it was a pain in the flesh. We do not know what this was, but we know that it was something which troubled Paul. I want you to read in the Bible what happened. Open your Bible to 2 Corinthians 12 and read verses 7 to 9.

8. How many times did Paul ask God to take this trouble away? _____

God said, "No, I will not take this trouble away. I will give you strength to bear it. You will see my strength because of your weakness in having this trouble."

9. Did God give Paul what he asked for? _____

Did God give him an answer? _____

Jesus taught us much more about prayer than anyone else did. He told us how to pray and he showed us the way. Can we learn anything from his life about why we do not get answers to our prayers in the way we like? Remember how it was on the night before Jesus was crucified. He took his disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane. There he prayed in great pain. Let us read from the Bible what happened. Open your Bible to Matthew 26 and read verses 36 to 44.

10. When Jesus said, "Let this cup pass me by," what did he mean?

If Jesus had not died on the cross we could not have our sins forgiven today. Would God have been happy with this? No, his great plan from the beginning of the world was to save man from his sins.

11. Did God say yes to Jesus' prayer that the cup of death should pass him by, so that he would not have to drink it?

But notice that each time Jesus asked to be saved from death, he said, "Yet not as I will, but as thou wilt." Jesus wanted God's will to be done most of all. And that is what God did.

12. In today's lesson, what keeps our prayers from being answered?

ANSWERS

11. No
7. No
3. No
1. Unforgiveness
12. Praying for selfish things, or things to please ourselves.
8. Three times
4. God will not answer them
9. No. Yes, God's answer was no.
5. Because we ask for things just to please ourselves.
2. No, I will want to make him happy.
6. He refused to hear Moses' prayer.
10. It seems he was wanting to be kept from being crucified.

WEEK 6 - WHAT KEEPS PRAYERS FROM BEING ANSWERED? D?
DAY 4

We have seen that our prayers are hindered by (1) sin, (2) unforgiveness, (3) asking for selfish things.

1. How does God answer our prayers when we ask for the wrong things?

Now I want you to find another hindrance to prayer. Read these verses and see what it is.

Hebrews 11:6:

And without faith it is impossible to please him; for anyone who comes to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who search for him.

Matthew 17:19-20:

Afterwards the disciples came to Jesus and asked him privately, 'Why could not we cast it out?' He answered, 'Your faith is too small. I tell you this: if you have faith no bigger even than a mustard-seed, you will say to this mountain, "Move from here to there", and it will move: nothing will prove impossible for you.'

James 1:6-7:

But he must ask in faith, without a doubt in his mind; for the doubter is like a heaving sea ruffled by the wind. A man of that kind must not expect the Lord to give him anything.

2. According to these verses, if we want answers to our prayers, what must we have?

In Hebrews 11:6 we have read that we cannot please God unless we have faith. When we come to him we must believe that he answers prayer.

3. Do you sometimes pray, but you do not think God is going to give you what you ask?

In Matthew 17 the disciples tried to cast out an evil spirit from a boy. They failed to do it. Then Jesus cast him out. In verses 19 and 20 which we read above, the disciples asked Jesus why they were unable to cast the demon out.

4. Read the verses again and tell what Jesus answered the disciples.

He answered _____

Unbelief keeps our prayers from being answered. Jesus said so. In the book of James, the same thing is said again. Read James 1:6-7 again.

5. What does the man who wavers in his faith receive when he prays?

But this is not new to us. We know that we should have faith when we pray. But sometimes we do not have faith and we do not know what to do about it. How can we get faith? Next week we will spend some time learning about this.

6. In this lesson, what hinders prayer? _____

7. What are the other things which hinder prayer?

(1) _____ (2) _____ (3) _____

ANSWERS

4. "Your faith is too small."

6. Unbelief.

1. He answers no.

3. Only you can answer this question.

5. He receives nothing.

2. We must have faith.

7. (1) Sin, (2) Selfishness, (3) Asking for selfish things.

WEEK 6 - WHAT KEEPS PRAYERS FROM BEING ANSWERED?
DAY 5

I think by this time we are not so surprised that many prayers are not answered. We have seen many things which hinder prayer. Can you remember them?

1. If you need to, look back over the past four days. Then write the hindrances to prayer here.

(1) _____ (2) _____

(3) _____ (4) _____

When we were learning about how we should pray, we found that one of the necessary things was to keep praying on and on. What happens if we do not continue to pray? We learned that prayers are not answered if we stop praying. So then, here is another thing which hinders prayer.

2. What new thing do we see here which hinders prayer? _____

One of the verses which we like very much about prayer is this one from Matthew 7:7:

‘Ask, and you will receive; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened.’

In the language which Jesus used when he spoke these words, he said, “Keep on asking; keep on seeking; keep on knocking.” Then in the next verse he said that when we do this, then we get answers to our prayers.

3. What happens if we stop praying too soon? _____

But why should we have to pray for such a long time about some things? If God is ready to answer our prayers, why does he delay? It is because sometimes God can only answer our prayers by changing us. Sometimes God knows we are not ready to receive the answers to our prayers.

4. Does it take time for God to change us? _____

Think about the woman who prays that her husband will become a Christian. It is true that she has already repented, but perhaps she does not yet have the fruit of the Spirit in her life. God sees that if she prays for her husband for a time, she will love God more and herself less. In this way she will grow in her spirit. She will not just want her husband to repent so that her life will be easy, but she will really want him to repent for God's glory.

5. Will God give this woman the answer to her prayer just as soon as she starts praying?

Sometimes God delays in answering us because he wants to give us more than we are asking for. He wants us to say bigger prayers. As we continue to pray, our prayers change and become more according to his will. Remember Hannah in the Bible. She did not have any children. She was troubled by this thing for many years. Every year she went to the tent which was God's house and prayed, but God did not seem to hear her prayer. At this time the children of Israel were not following God well. Even their leaders were bad. God wanted to raise up a new leader who would lead them well, so he delayed to answer Hannah's prayer. Then Hannah changed her prayer. She told God, that if he would give her a son she would give him back to the Lord. God answered her prayer, and her son Samuel, became a great leader of Israel.

6. What would have happened if Hannah had stopped praying after a few years?

Prayers do not change God so that he is ready to answer, but prayers change us. They change us so that we pray the prayers God wants. They change us so that we are ready to receive the answers. Sometimes this takes a long time. Perhaps you have been praying for something for a long time. Do not stop praying. God may be trying to work on you.

7. Are you willing for God to change you in order to answer your prayer?

There is another reason why our prayers are not answered if we stop too soon. Satan has power to keep our prayers from being answered for a while. He cannot keep our prayers from being answered if we keep on praying, but he can stop them for a while.

8. Do you need to be afraid that Satan will hinder your prayers if you keep on praying?

Notice what happened to Daniel. We read in Daniel chapter 10 that Daniel began to pray about a certain need. He prayed and ate little food for three weeks and the answer to his prayer did not come. Then at last an angel came to him.

Daniel 10:12-13:

And he said, 'Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the very first day that you applied your mind to understand and to mortify yourself before your God, your prayers have been heard, and I have come to answer them. But the angel prince of the kingdom of Persia resisted me for twenty-one days, and then, seeing that I had held out there, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me against the prince of the kingdom of Persia.

The prince of the kingdom of Persia was not a man or one of God's angels. He was one of Satan's spirits who was fighting to keep God's angel from coming to answer Daniel's prayer. But Daniel kept on praying until the answer came.

9. If Daniel had stopped praying after one or two weeks, do you think his prayer would have been answered?

Many times our prayers are hindered because we stop praying too soon. God wants us to keep on praying. Sometimes it is because praying changes us. Sometimes it is because that is the only way Satan can be defeated. There are many things which cause our prayers not to be answered, but if we will pray as God teaches us to, we can receive answers.

10. Write five things which keep our prayers from being answered.

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

(4) _____

(5) _____

ANSWERS

9. I accept your answer, but I do not think his prayer would have been answered.
2. Not continuing in prayer.
5. No, it will take time.
10. Sin, unforgiveness, asking for selfish things, unbelief, not continuing in prayer.
8. No
1. Sin, unforgiveness, asking for selfish things, unbelief
4. Yes, sometimes it does.
7. Answer as you feel.
3. Our prayers are not answered.
6. She would not have received the answer to her prayer.