

## “What Are the Things That Hinder My Prayer-Life?”

Most of us know how to pray and take to heart the need to be “devoted to prayer” (Col. 4:2). However, we need to honestly identify the roadblocks that keep us from being effective in prayer. As we admit, confess and turn from these many hindrances, God will restore to us the joy and habit of talking to Him often as our Heavenly Father.

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### Introduction:

Hebrews 12:1-2 “...let us lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith...”

“encumbrance” = Greek word: ogkos (pronounced onkos) = a heavy weight, a major hindrance — a roadblock

“Lord, teach us to pray.” (Luke 11:1)

P.R.A.Y.E.R. = • Praising • Repenting • Asking • Yielding • Entreating • Rejoicing  
Colossians 4:2 “Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving.”

### Roadblock #1. Unbelief hinders prayer

#### A. The Principle: I must be a born-again child of God in order to be effective in prayer

Apart from the prayers that come from a truth-seeking heart open to salvation in Jesus Christ (Jer. 29; Mt. 7, etc.) God does not necessarily hear the general prayers of an unbeliever.

#### B. The Biblical Proof:

Job 27:8-10: “For what is the hope of the godless...will God hear his cry?” (The implied answer is: “No!”)....will he (i.e. the unbeliever) call on God at all times?” (The implied answer: “Most likely but God will not answer the call!”)

Proverbs 15:8b “The sacrifice (i.e. meaningless worship) of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord but the prayer of the upright is His delight.”

Proverbs 15:29 “The Lord is far from the wicked. But He hears the prayer of the righteous.”

Psalms 145:18-19 “The Lord is near to those who call on Him in truth.”

In Matthew 6 refers to God as our Father some 8 times! Yet no one can come to the Father except through Jesus Christ who is the way, the truth and the life (Jn 14:6)

### Roadblock #2. Sin hinders prayer

#### A. The Principle: I must be dealing with sin in order effective in prayer

#### B. The Biblical Proof

James 5:16b “The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much”

#### (1) The SIN of disobedience hinders my prayer-life

Proverbs 28:9 “He who turns away his ear from listening to the law, even his prayer is an abomination.”

Psalm 66:18 “If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear.”

Psalm 109:7 “And let his prayer become sin.”

**(2) The SIN of idolatry hinders my prayer-life**

Colossians 3:5-6 “Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire and greed, which amounts to IDOLATRY. For it is on account of these things that the wrath of God will come.”

**(3) The SIN of pride hinders my prayer-life**

Job 35:12-13 “There they cry out, but He does not answer. because of the pride of evil men. Surely God will not listen to an empty cry. Nor will the Almighty regard it.” (cf. 2 Chronicles 7:14)

**Roadblock #3. Hypocrisy hinders prayer**

**A. The Principle: I must be dealing with the inconsistencies in my life in order to be effective in prayer.**

**B. The Biblical Proof**

**(1) Not being honest with myself hinders my prayer-life**

cf. Isaiah 1:10+ speaks of how much God hated all the offerings, sacrifices and religious observances of hypocritical Israel.

**(2) Not being honest with others hinders my prayer-life**

**(a) The dishonesty of praying to be seen by men**

Matthew 6:5 “And when you pray, you are not to be as the hypocrites, for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners, in order to be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.”

**(b) The phoniness of refusing to admit and confess our faults to one another**

James 5:16 a “Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed.”

**(3) Not being honest with God**

cf. Ps. 10:1; 22:1; 22:2; 42:6 and the honesty of Hannah, Moses, David, and Job etc.

**Roadblock #4. Asking with wrong motives hinders prayer**

**A. The Principle: I must evaluate my motives in order to be effective in prayer.**

**B. The Biblical Proof**

**(1) Pleasure-seeking hinders my prayer-life**

James 4:3 “You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures”

**(2) Not wanting God's will hinders my prayer-life**

1 John 5:14-15 “And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked of Him.” cf. John 14:7ff.

Jesus said “If you ask anything in My name...” (i.e. anything consistent with His will)

**(3) The love of money hinders my prayer-life**

Mt. 21:12-17; Lk. 19:45-47 — a House of Prayer vs. Den of Thieves

1 Timothy 6:10-11 “For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil...But flee from these things, you man of God; and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness.”

**(4) Selective praying hinders my prayer-life**

1 Timothy 2:1 "...I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of ALL MEN..."

1 Samuel 12:23 "Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you..."

Matthew 5:44-45 "But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven..."

### **Roadblock #5. Mistreating people hinders prayer**

**A. The Principle: I must not think that I can hurt people and still be effective in prayer**

**B. The Biblical Proof**

**(1) Mistreating the needy hinders my prayer-life**

Isaiah 1:15-17 "So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you, yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are full of bloodshed.

Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from My sight.

Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice; reprove the ruthless; defend the orphan, plead for the Widow."

James 1:27 "This is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father, to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world."

**(2) Mistreating workers hinders your prayer-life**

James 5:4 "Behold the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, and which has been withheld by you, cries out against you; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth"

This matter of mistreating workers also applies to paying what we owe.(e.g. Romans 13:8)

**(3) Mistreating the flock of God hinders your prayer-life**

cf. Ez. 34 speaks of the spiritual shepherds who were abusing the flock by not taking proper care of them. (cf. 1 Peter 5:1+ )

### **Roadblock #6. Mistreating my spouse hinders prayer**

**A. The Principle: I must honor my spouse in order to be effective in prayer**

**B. The Biblical Proof**

Malachi 2:13ff. "And this is another thing you do: you cover the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping and with groaning, because He no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. Yet you say, 'For what reason?' Because the Lord has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant..."

1 Peter 3:7 "You husbands, likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow-heir of the grace of life, **SO THAT YOUR PRAYERS MAY NOT BE HINDERED.**" (My emphasis)

### **Roadblock #7. Anger and bitterness hinder prayer**

**A. The Principle: I must deal with my anger and bitterness in order to be effective in prayer**

**B. The Biblical Proof**

**(1) Anger hinders my prayer-life**

1 Tim. 2:8 "...I want men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissention." cf. Col. 3:5; Eph. 4:26

**(2) Lack of forgiveness hinders my prayer-life**

Mark 11:25 “And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that you Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your transgressions”

Matthew 6:12 “And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”

Ephesians 4:32 “Be ye therefore kind to one another, forgiving each other just as God, in Christ, has forgiven you.”

### **(3) Lack of thanksgiving hinders my prayer-life**

Philippians 4:6 “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication WITH THANKSGIVING let your requests be made known to God.”

Colossians 4:2 “Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving...”

## **Roadblock #8. Laziness hinders prayer**

### **A. The Principle: I must be diligent in order to be effective in prayer**

#### **B. The Biblical Proof**

##### **(1) Lack of devotion hinders my prayer-life**

cf. Colossians 4:2 speaks of being devoted (Greek = to strongly continue) the practice prayer

2 Timothy 1:3 “...as I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day...”

##### **(2) Not persevering hinders my prayer-life**

Luke 18:1 “Now He (Jesus) was telling them a parable to show that all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart...”

Luke 11:9-10 “And I say to you, ask (lit. keep on asking)...seek (lit. keep on seeking)...knock (lit. keep on knocking), and it shall be opened to you”

1 Thessalonians 5:17 “Pray without ceasing”

Luke 6:12 — Jesus spent the whole night in prayer to God ...rising up even before daybreak to do it. (Mk. 1:35)

James 5:17-18 speaks of Elijah who “...prayed earnestly “ ....and then...”...prayed again...”

1 Samuel 1 — Hannah cried out to the Lord in what is described as “multiplied prayers.”

##### **(3) Vain repetition hinders my prayer-life**

Matthew 6:7 “And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition, as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words.” Note: The key here is not repetition but empty, meaningless repetition.

## **Roadblock #9. Doubt hinders prayer**

### **A. The Principle: I must pray with confidence in order to be effective in prayer**

#### **B. The Biblical Proof**

James 1:6 “But let him ask in faith, without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. But let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”

Matthew 21:22 “And everything you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive.”

Mark 11:24-25 “Therefore I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and cast into the sea’, and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it shall be granted him. Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they shall be granted you.”

## **Roadblock #10. Lack of physical rest hinders prayer**

### **A. The Principle: I must be rested if I am going to be effective in prayer**

#### **B. The Biblical Proof**

Colossians 4:2 speaks of keeping alert in prayer.

Luke 22:45-46 “And when He (Jesus) rose from prayer, he came to His disciples and found them sleeping from sorrow, and said to them, “Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation.”

ANYTIME of the day is a good time to pray....

Mark 1:35 speaks of Jesus rising up to pray “a great while before day”

Psalm 5:3 “In the morning, O Lord, Thou wilt hear my voice. In the morning I will order my prayer to Thee and eagerly watch.”

Psalm 141:2 “May my prayer be counted as incense before Thee; the lifting up of my hands as the evening offering.”

Psalm 119:55 “O Lord, I remember Thy name in the night.”

Psalm 119:62 “At midnight I will rise to give thanks to Thee.”

Psalm 119:164 “Seven times a day I will praise Thee.”

### **Roadblock #11. Discouragement hinders prayer**

**A. The Principle: I must not let my weakness in prayer keep me from being effective in prayer**

**B. The Biblical Proof**

Luke 18:1+ — Jesus wanted His disciples to pray and not lose heart!

Jeremiah 29:11-14 “For I know the plans that I have for you,” declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. And I will be found by you...”

Jeremiah 33:3 “Call to Me, and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know.”

**Concluding Challenge:** Isaiah 56:7 “Even those I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer...for My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples”

**“Lord, may our lives...our homes...and our church be a House of Prayer for all peoples. Give us the strength to remove the hindrances...and restore to us the joy of talking to You as Our Heavenly Father.”**

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