

WHAT CHALLENGES AND HINDERS PRAYER?

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1. No Personal Relationship with the Living God → No Basis for CONFIDENT ACCESS

- ▶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:6)
- ▶ For through him [Jesus] we . . . have access in one Spirit to the Father. (Ephesians 2:18)
- ▶ Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. (Eph. 3:11-12)
- ▶ Christ Jesus . . . who is at the right hand of God, . . . is interceding for us. (Romans 8:34)

2. Confusion Due to IGNORANCE, Inadequate or Wrong Instruction:

- ▶ But how are they to call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? (Romans 10:14)

a. Don't Know Who GOD Is: Don't Really Know the One to Whom You are Praying

- ▶ he makes . . . a god, his idol, He prays to it and says, "Deliver me, for you are my god!" (Isaiah 44:17)
- ▶ You worship what you do not know . . . (John 4:22)
- ▶ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. (Acts 17:23b)

• Lack of CERTAINTY about the Nature and Attributes of God

- ▶ The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. (Psalm 145:18)
- ▶ But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. (John 4:23)

• Convinced You Need a MEDIATOR, such as Mary or Other Saint

- ▶ Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. (Eph. 3:11-12)

• FEAR or Insecurity in the Presence of Religious Authority Figures

- ▶ And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account. (Hebrews 4:13)
- ▶ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Hebrews 10:31)
- ▶ There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1)
- ▶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:16)

b. Don't Know Who You Are: Uncertain about your Own Identity

• Who are You? – The World's Standard (the "PECKING ORDER") or God's Standard

- ▶ For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. (Romans 10:12)
- ▶ But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. (John 1:12)
- ▶ See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. (1 John 3:1)

c. Don't Know What You are Doing: Prayer as MECHANICS, MAGIC and MANIPULATION

- ▶ they . . . called on the name of Baal from morning until noon saying, “O Baal, answer us.” But there was no voice and no one answered. And they leaped about the altar which they made. 27 It came about at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, “Call out with a loud voice, for he is a god; either he is occupied or gone aside, or is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and needs to be awakened.” 28 So they cried with a loud voice and cut themselves according to their custom with swords and lances until the blood gushed out on them. 29 When midday was past, they raved until the time of the offering of the *evening* sacrifice; but there was no voice, no one answered, and no one paid attention. (1 Kings 18:26-29 NASB)
- ▶ And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. (Matthew 6:7)

d. Never Taught How to Pray or Choose to Ignore Instruction: “I’ll do it MY way.”

- ▶ Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long. (Psalm 25:5)
- ▶ Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.” (Luke 11:1)

3. Not Serious About Discipleship: Lack of Commitment to Obedience → TOLERANCE of Sin

- ▶ Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; 2 but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear. (Isaiah 59:1-2)
- ▶ As I called, and they would not hear, so they called, and I would not hear, says the Lord of hosts, (Zechariah 7:13)
- ▶ . . . whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. (1 John 3:22)
- ▶ And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one’s deeds, conduct yourselves with fear... (1 Peter 1:17)

a. GRIEVES the Holy Spirit, Who is our GUIDE in Prayer

- ▶ Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and give no opportunity to the devil. 28 Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. 29 Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. (Ephesians 4:26-32)

b. Results in a CONDEMNING Heart, Taking Away Confidence Before God

- ▶ . . . whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything. 21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; 22 and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. (1 John 3:20-22)

c. INTERFERES with Prayer According to God’s Will

- ▶ I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—which is your spiritual worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. *Then* you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:1-2 NIV)

d. Requires Being INTENTIONAL About Obedience and Accountable to Others

- ▶ Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid. (Proverbs 12:1)
- ▶ Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you? (Luke 6:46)
- ▶ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works . . . (Hebrews 10:24)

4. Pressures of Modern Life:

a. Compartmentalization: “God only cares about SACRED things.”

- ▶ Husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered. (1 Peter 3:7)

b. Lack of DISCIPLINE in Maintaining a Personal Time with the Lord

- ▶ . . . praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints. (Ephesians 6:18)
- ▶ O Lord, in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you and watch. (Psalm 5:3)

5. Trust Issues: Misunderstanding and Lacking FAITH

- ▶ And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief. (Matthew 13:58)
- ▶ Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. (Mark 11:24)
- ▶ Jesus said to him, “. . . All things are possible for one who believes.” Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, “I believe; help my unbelief!” (Mark 9:23-24)

6. Sinful MOTIVES: Selfishness

- ▶ You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. (James 4:3)

7. Conflicted RELATIONSHIPS and Sinful Attitudes Toward Others

- ▶ So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. (Matt. 5:23-24)
- ▶ I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; (1 Timothy 2:8)
- ▶ You cover the Lord’s altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. 14 But you say, “Why does he not?” Because the Lord was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. 15 Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth. (Malachi 2:13-15)
- ▶ Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered. (1 Peter 3:7)

8. A Bitter or UNFORGIVING Spirit Toward Others

- ▶ And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. (Mark 11:25)

9. DISCOURAGED Due to Unanswered Prayer: “I just *can’t* risk it any more. God doesn’t care.”

- ▶ How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? 2 How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me? (Psalm 13:1-2)

10. DEPRESSION and Fatigue: “It’s all useless. My effort is pointless. I want to die.”

- ▶ If you [God] will treat me like this, kill me at once, if I find favor in your sight, that I may not see my wretchedness. (Num. 11:15)
- ▶ All in vain have I kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence. (Psalm 73:13)
- ▶ I said, “I have labored in vain; I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity . . . (Isaiah 49:4a)

11. Failure to REMEMBER God’s Faithfulness in the Past

- ▶ Take care lest you forget the Lord your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today, 12 lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, 13 and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, 14 then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, 15 who led you through the great and terrifying wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water, who brought you water out of the flinty rock, 16 who fed you in the wilderness with manna that your fathers did not know, that he might humble you and test you, to do you good in the end. 17 Beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.' 18 You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day. 19 And if you forget the Lord your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish. (Deuteronomy 8:11-19)
- ▶ I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your wonders of old. (Psalm 77:11)

12. Questions About God's GOODNESS: Bitterness Due to Evil, Injustice and Suffering

- ▶ Does it seem good to you to oppress, to despise the work of your hands and favor the designs of the wicked? (Job 10:3)
- ▶ O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you "Violence!" and you will not save? (Hab. 1:2)
- ▶ You have wearied the Lord with your words. But you say, "How have we wearied him?" By saying, "Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delights in them." Or by asking, "Where is the God of justice?" (Malachi 2:17)

13. Lack of Conviction that God RESPONDS to Prayer ➔ Not Praying at All

- ▶ You do not have, because you do not ask. (James 4:2)

14. Failure to Pray In Jesus' Name: According to God's Will

- ▶ Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. (John 14:13)
- ▶ And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. (1 John 5:14)

15. Conflict with God's SOVEREIGNTY: Not God's Will at the Time You are Praying

- ▶ But the Lord was angry with me because of you and would not listen to me. And the Lord said to me, 'Enough from you; do not speak to me of this matter again. (Deuteronomy 3:26)
- ▶ "Therefore do not pray for this people, or lift up a cry or prayer on their behalf, for I will not listen when they call to me in the time of their trouble. (Jeremiah 11:14)
- ▶ . . . they soon forgot his works; they did not wait for his counsel. 14 But they had a wanton craving in the wilderness, and put God to the test in the desert; 15 he gave them what they asked, but sent a wasting disease among them. (Psalm 106:13-15)
- ▶ Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. 9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." (2 Corinthians 12:8-9)

16. Resistance by the Forces of SATAN

- ▶ Then he said to me, "Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words. [13] The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days, but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia, (Daniel 10:12-13)

17. Praying to Reduce Risk . . . When We Should be Exercising Faith and Taking ACTION

- ▶ The Lord said to Moses, "Why do you cry to me? Tell the people of Israel to go forward." (Exodus 14:15)
- ▶ The Lord said to Joshua, "Get up! Why have you fallen on your face?" (Joshua 7:10)

18. Failure to RESPOND to the cry of the poor . . .

- ▶ Whoever closes his ear to the cry of the poor will himself call out and not be answered. (Proverbs 21:13)