

Why are my prayers not answered?

The following article by Dr. Kenneth Boa has been reprinted from **Reflections**, the monthly newsletter of Reflections Ministries. Our thanks to Dr. Boa for his gracious permission.

The Scriptures describe and illustrate a number of hindrances to answered prayer. Here are ten:

1. *Wrong motives* -- "You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures" [James 4:3]. Selfish indulgence [Matt. 20:20-22; Luke 12:13-15] is a common hindrance to answered prayer. See 1 Corinthians 10:31 for a proper motive.

2. *Unconfessed sin* -- "If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear" [Psalm 66:18]. "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 59:2; cf. Proverbs 28:9].

3. *An unforgiving spirit* -- "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 transgressions" [Mark 11:25]. An attitude of self-righteous condemnation of others will hinder our prayers [see Matt. 6:14-15; 18:21-25; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13].

4. *Trying to impress others* -- "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" [Matt. 6:5]. When praying with others, there is always a danger of being more concerned with what they think of our prayers than being concerned with the One to whom our prayers are directed.

5. *Lack of faith* -- "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. For let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord" [James 1:6-7]. Instead, our attitude is to be one of expectant belief: "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" [Mark 11:24].

6. *Disobedience to God* -- A failure to keep His commandments will interfere with our prayers. "Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight" [1 John 3:21-22; cf. John 14:21]. See Isaiah 1:15-17.

7. *Stinginess in giving* -- "He who shuts his ear to the cry of the poor will also cry himself and not be answered" [Prov. 21:13; cf. Luke 6:38; 1 John 3:17-20].

8. *Improper treatment of mate* -- "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" [1 Peter 3:7].

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9. *Idolatry* -- Anything that we revere more than God (e.g., career, material possessions, personal plans) is an idol, and idolatry hampers effective prayer. "Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their hearts, and have put right before their faces the stumbling block of their iniquity. Should I be consulted by them at all?" [Ezek. 14:3].

10. *Not abiding in Christ* -- An improper relationship with God means that our aspirations, attitudes, and actions will not be aligned with Him. "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you" [John 15:7].