



THE FOREST HILL NEWS

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6 Reasons Why Some Prayers Are Never Answered

Wayne Jackson

When the apostle Peter penned that first epistle which bears his name, it was directed to “the elect who are sojourners of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia” (1 Pet. 1:1). The basic design of this divine narrative is to encourage saints who are **suffering persecution**. In times of hardship, prayer—the blessed privilege of communicating with Almighty God—becomes precious indeed. It was in view of suffering and the power of prayer as a source of strength during the same, that Peter cautioned Christians to conduct their lives that their “prayers be not hindered” (1 Pet. 3:7). The term “hindered” translates the Greek word *enkopto* derived of two elements: *en* (in) and *kopto* (to strike or cut). It has an interesting background. The meaning hinder arose out of its military use. During a retreat the road might be cut into (i.e. broken up [sabotaged]), in order to delay the pursuing enemy (Brown, 220). Surely no child of God would want to **sabotage** his or her own prayers!

How to Avoid Hindering Your Prayers

As our prayers are aimed heavenward, we ought to determine to do all that is humanly possible to see that their path remains unobstructed. Let us give consideration to some possible hinderances to prayer.

Faithless Petitions Flounder

A lack of faith can certainly hinder one’s prayers. James declares that we must pray “in faith, nothing doubting” (Jas. 1:6). He describes the doubter as being like the restless sea. He has two minds—one of faith and the other of doubt. Hence, shall not receive his requests from the Lord. Elsewhere we read that true faith requires us to believe that God “is a rewarder of them that seek after him” (Heb. 11:6). In a world of doubt and confusion, how can we have confidence that God is truly listening and responding to our prayers. There are at least two reasons. First, since God is **almighty** (Gen. 17:1) and can **do all things** (Job 42:2) consistent with his nature and will, he is obviously **able to answer prayer**. Second, we should be so glad to have a God who is, at his very nature, **a loving God** (1 Jn. 4:8). He is, to put it in our crass colloquialism, loaded rich in mercy (Eph. 2:4). Because of his love and abundant mercy, he longs to answer his children’s requests in harmony with their **genuine needs**. Paul forcefully reasoned in Romans 8:32 that: [If God] spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things? But here’s an important thought to remember. The Lord answers prayer according to our **eternal needs**, not necessarily according to our **immediate or temporal wants**. And so, he may answer, “No,” as in the case of Paul who petitioned for the removal of his thorn in the flesh (2 Cor. 12:8, 9). Or God may delay an answer. Paul had repeatedly prayed that he might be enabled to visit the saints in Rome (Rom. 1:9, 10). But it wasn’t until several years later that his request was granted (Acts 28:15, 16). The point is this. Just because our prayers are not answered exactly when or how we want should never cause us to lose confidence in the heavenly Father. So one of the greatest things we can

(continued page 2)

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Ministers:

Barry M. Grider,
Pulpit Evangelist
Matthew Jones,
Personal Evangelist

Sunday:

Bible Study..... 9:30 A.M.
Morning Worship.... 10:30 A.M.
Afternoon Worship.....1:30 P.M.

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 P.M.

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do to ensure our prayers are heard and answered is to fortify our faith in our God and to trust him to answer our prayers in the way that is best for us and those for whom we pray.

Ignorance Impedes Our Invocation

Another reason prayers may be weakened is because of our ignorance. The disciples once approached Christ as he was praying. They asked: “Lord, teach us to pray, even as John also taught his disciples” (Lk. 11:1). Doesn’t this reveal that there must be a correct way to pray that comes as a consequence of teaching? It is frequently the case that Christians “know not how to pray” as they ought (Rom. 8:26). For instance, it may be that some saints do not know of God’s willingness to answer our prayers, hence, they have not because they ask not (Jas. 4:2; cf. Phil. 4:6). Ignorance concerning the purpose of prayer can hinder. For example, prayer should be according to God’s will in order to be heard (1 Jn. 5:24). But how can we pray effectively according to his will if we don’t know his will. Here’s an example. It is not proper to pray for miracles, since those signs served a unique place in the divine plan (Mk. 16:17-20; Heb.2:2-4) and thus, have been terminated (1 Cor. 13:8-13; Eph. 4:8-16). (See: What Does the Bible Say About Miracles?) And what about praying that God should save someone—someone we dearly love—but who remains in rebellion to the gospel plan of salvation (1 Jn. 5:16). The more we study and understand God’s will as revealed in his word, the more effectively we can pray.

Impurity Inhibits Intercession

If prayer is to reach the throne of grace, the supplicant must strive with deadly seriousness to **conform his life** to the holy will of the Lord God. The Bible is replete with instructions to this end. Isaiah warned Israel of old that Jehovah would not hear them because of their sins (Isa. 59:2). The Savior solemnly taught that we must abide in him and allow his words to abide in us if we would have our petitions fully answered (Jn. 15:7). Peter declared that “the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears unto their supplication” (1 Pet. 3:12). Yes, the prayers of the righteous person avails much (Jas. 5:6). But the requests of those who **deliberately turn away** from hearing the Creator’s will are abominable in his sight (Prov. 28:9). Can we look in the mirror and ask this serious question? How many Christians lead week-day lives of reckless abandon, only to offer impenitent and impious prayers on Sunday morn? Or how many thrust the Almighty to some remote corner of their lives only to summon him in panic when death or disaster invades their home? We need to learn the lesson that David knew so well — Jehovah will be near to those whose hearts are broken on account of

their sins, and who develop a contrite spirit (Psa. 34:18). It is not suggested, of course, that the child of God must be perfect in order to have his prayers heard. None of us has reached permanent perfection—not even Paul (1 Cor. 9:26, 27; Phil. 3:12). We are all still struggling in our many weaknesses. But we may be sure of one thing. Unless we are truly serious about living the Christian life; unless we are earnestly seeking to **grow daily**; unless our minds are being renewed and our existence transformed (Rom. 12:2), our prayers will shrivel and die upon our tongues! So let us bow on our knees in prayer and present our lives in humble submission to his will. May our lives reflect the words we whisper in his ear.

Pride Prohibits Prayer

No one is qualified to approach the great God of the universe with a spirit of smugness. He is the Lord, God Almighty (Gen. 17:1). We are but dust (Gen. 3:19). He is Creator. We, the created (Psa. 100:3). He is holy (Psa. 9:9), yet we are sinners (Rom. 3:9, 10). Accordingly, prayer must ever be characterized by a spirit of lowliness. This lesson is taught in one of the Lord’s parables. Two men went up to the temple to pray (Lk. 18:9ff). One was a Pharisee and the other was a publican. The Pharisees were the strictest sect of Judaism (Acts 26:5). To put it bluntly, they were religious show-offs (Mt. 6:1-17). The common people of Palestine revered them—which seems to be the purpose of their religion. By way of contrast, the publicans (tax collectors for the Roman government) were despised. They were put in the same category as Gentiles, prostitutes and sinners (Mt. 18:17; 21:31-33; 9:10). When the Pharisee arrived at the temple, he struck a pose and eulogized himself. I thank thee, that I am not as the rest of men." He viewed himself as a self-made man, and he adored his creator! In stark relief, however, the publican contritely sought the Lord’s mercy as a sinner. He was justified rather than the other. The lesson of the parable is this. Arrogance can negate prayer. Humility will bless it. This word may be added. While we are to pray with truly humble hearts, a balanced view acknowledges that, due to the work of our great high priest, Jesus, we may draw near “with boldness unto the throne of grace” (Heb.4:16). **Humble confidence** is the divine ideal attitude for effective prayer.

(continued next week)
(*Christian Courier*)

HEARTS AND HANDS

PRESIDE: Danny Braddock Keith McAlister
ASSIST: Cole Bennett Jackson Greer
 Ian Huff Ty Phillips
 Isaac Rice Jack Woods

A.M. OPENING: Francis Fairley
A.M. CLOSING: Clay Adams
P.M. OPENING: John Manning
P.M. CLOSING: Wayne Sanders

If you are unable to lead prayer or serve at the Lord's table, please contact Cedric Huff or Paul Connell.

RECORD, WEEK of September 2, 2018

BIBLE STUDY: 190
 A.M. WORSHIP: 270
 P.M. WORSHIP: 185
 CONTRIBUTION: \$15,231.00

HOMEBOUND

Virginia Ditto Albert & Ruth House
 Hazel Eskew Betty Jones
 Doris Jean Cole Jerry & Betty Robbins
 Anita Hopper Velton & Dorothy Trimm

OUR SICK

Ill at home: Phil Houston, Lisa Howard and Martha McKelvey.

Leta Fay Anderson, will have outpatient surgery this week.

Patsy DeShields, St Francis Hospital, Barry Building, Room 405.

Betty Jones, Ave Maria Home Care, Bartlett.

Rufus Washington, will have glaucoma surgery this week at the Hamilton Eye Institute.

CONGRATULATIONS to the 1st and 2nd grade class for studying their cards. (Colson Albritton, Keegan Brown, Kiernon Brown, and Ava Jones.) Special recognition goes to Stephen Ulrich and Aspen White who recited ALL of their cards.

PLEASE CHECK YOUR BOX!

TEAM "F" (STEVE ALLMOND) AND TEAM "G" (TOM WACASTER) will receive assignment cards September 9.

REORGANIZATION LUNCHEON, Sunday, September 16 following the morning service. Kathy Maund, RN, will be available to administer flu shots on this day. Please sign up on the bulletin board.

EVENTS

LADIES AND MEN'S CLASSES will resume September 11. We will meet at Cracker Barrel for breakfast at 8:45.

YOUNG ADULT DEVOTIONAL Saturday, September 15 at the home of Chris and Steffanie Weight at 6:00 p.m.

KIRBY PINES Retirement Community worship service each fourth Sunday 8:00-8:45 a.m., conducted by Forest Hill. Our next service will be Sunday, September 23.

YOUTH RETREAT October 12-14. Details forthcoming.

Forest Hill Church of Christ

Adult Classes

Fall Quarter, 2018 (Sept.-Nov.)

<u>Location</u>	<u>Teacher</u>	<u>Topic</u>
<u>Sunday Morning</u>		
Auditorium (A)	Greg Mangrum	<i>1 & 2 Timothy & Titus</i>
Chapel Hall (E)	Keith Mosher	<i>Luke</i>
Break Room (E) (Young Adults)	Tom Wacaster	<i>Hebrews</i>
<u>Wednesday Night</u>		
Auditorium (A)	Barry Grider	<i>The Divided Kingdom</i>
Fellowship Hall	Matt Jones	<i>Taking Sin Seriously</i>
<u>Tuesday Morning</u>		
Ladies/Class (A)	Celicia Grider	<i>Portrait of a Christian</i>
Men's Class	Barry Grider	<i>Practical Christianity Studies in the Book of James</i>

A-Auditorium Building
 E-Education Building

Last week's solution:

The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. Psalm 118:22-24

CORNERSTONE

Bible Scramble: Unscramble the letters in each word to discover the passage.

TSOM NME WLLI RPOMLICA YVREE ENO SIH WON
 SSOONGED: UTB A UTLIHFFA NMA WOH NCA NIFD? EHT
 UTSJ NMA WTLKHEA NI SIH YTTRNIIGE: SIH RNLIHEDC
 REA SSLEEDB TRFEA MIH.



**Forest Hill Church of Christ
2018 Ladies Day**

Saturday, November 10

Building Relationships

**Speaker :
Cindy Rodgers
of
Nesbit, Mississippi**

**Forest Hill Church of Christ
Ladies/Men's Classes
resume**

**Tuesday, September 11
10:00 a.m.**

**Ladies Class: *Portrait of a
Christian***

Teacher: Celia Grider

**Men's Class: *Practical
Christianity: Studies in the Book
of James***

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