

Overcoming Hindrances to Prayer Teach Me to Pray, Lord series # 16

Failing to pray leaves us weak.

James 4:1-4 NIV

4 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? ²You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. ³When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong

motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

⁴You adulterous people,^[a] don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

We overcome prayerlessness by the grace of God which we appropriate by praying for God's help.

Obstacles to a persistent powerful prayer life:

1. Cherished sin instead of pursuing a holy life.
2. Critical and judgmental spirit which is born of pride, instead of being loving and edifying.
3. Time-wasting distractions instead of a disciplined devotional life.
4. Faith-weakening discouragement instead of perseverance in prayer.
5. Selfishness in prayer (this is praying contrary to God's will and character) instead of surrender to God in prayer.

James 4:5-17 NIV ⁵Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us^[a]? ⁶But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says:

"God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble."^[a]

⁷Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.⁸Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

¹¹Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister^[a] or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. ¹²There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?

¹³Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money."¹⁴Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then

vanishes. ¹⁵ Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.” ¹⁶ As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is

There are more hindrances that we must overcome so that our prayers are effective, fervent, and pleasing to God.

evil. ¹⁷ If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them.

6. Anger/Wrath and an unforgiving spirit instead of practicing grace and forgiveness.
7. Lack of worship and reverence instead of honoring and cherishing the Lord.
8. Disobedience, whether partial or total instead of doing what the Lord wants. James 4:17 says, “If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them.” Doing what we know God wants us to do or avoiding what God wants us to avoid is a character practice that builds our effectiveness in prayer.
9. Schadenfreude (taking joy when your enemy suffers) instead of seeking to bless those who persecute you.
10. Being argumentative, overly opinionated, and divisive, rather than promoting peace, harmony, and holy unity. This is a tough one in our society.

However, if we take the wisdom of Philippians 2:3 “³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

**⁶ Who, being in very nature^{6a} God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;
⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature^{6b} of a servant, being made in human likeness.
⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!**

11. Perfectionism/idolatry/putting your will above God’s will instead of being humble.
12. Being compromised by sorcery, which is drugs, the occult, horoscopes, etc.,.. instead of trusting in the Lord only.

In the end, proper prayer comes down to making a consistent choice to serve God and Him only. We will encounter hindrances, but God’s graces, gifts, and glories are more than sufficient to help us overcome.