

## STUDY UNIT 4

1 Pet. 3:7 / Eph. 6:18 / James 1:5–8

### WHAT WILL HINDER YOUR PRAYERS?

It may be surprising, but there can be many obstacles to your prayers themselves. We have a responsibility to have a healthy Christian life, so that our prayers will be heard by God. Your requests and supplications to God will be hindered if...

#### 1. You Are Still “Going Solo” Some in Life

To the extent that we are not fully yielded to God’s will in our life, our prayers will be hindered. The word translated “hindered” (*egkopto* in Greek) in the verse below was used of “impeding something” or “blocking its path.” Here Christian husbands are warned that if they lower God’s standards of marital conduct, and do not live by them, **their prayers would be impeded, blocked, hindered.**

*“You husbands in the same way, 1) live with your wives in an understanding way.... and 2) show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.”*

1 Peter 3:7

The same consequences of hindering our prayers are to be applied to heeding all of God’s revealed truths, principles, and ways. If wives will not learn to be appropriately subject to their husbands, their prayers will be hindered too. If children will not honor and obey their parents, their prayers will be hindered, too. If Christians will not attend to fellowship, scripture reading, church meetings, their prayers will be hindered. And so it goes. A tepid commitment to God’s Word and will is perhaps the greatest hinderance to the prayers of Christians being powerfully answered.

The Apostle John uses “abiding” terminology to refer to our relationship with Christ which is accomplished through the presence of the Holy Spirit. A healthy Christian has a healthy, growing relationship with the Lord. It is a healthy Christian—an abiding Christian—whose prayers are unhindered. You may be “abiding” well in most things, but if you are still “going solo” in some things, still trying to do some things in your own strength, your prayers will again be hindered accordingly.

*“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing....*

***IF you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.”***

John 15:4–8

## 2. Your Knowledge of God is Still Too Small

If you do not know God very well, your prayers will not be answered like they will be when you know Him better. A young child does not really know very much about his father. What are his father's goals, likes and dislikes, plans, character, thoughts on this and that, etc. If he doesn't know, what he asks for will mostly be rejected until he learns these things.

"Daddy, can I have a knife to play with." No, Son, you can't. "Why daddy?" Because I love you. But after some learning and maturing comes this request: "Dad, can I have a knife to help Mom with preparing dinner tonight? I will be very careful." Ok, son, here is a knife. Good job, helping out like I asked.

Do you know **God's plan** for history and His reasons for tolerating sin for a season? If not, how would you know what to ask for? Do you know **His promises** to His people which form the basis of so many of our prayers? Do you know the fellowship of **His presence** with the indwelling Holy Spirit and how He is grieved and quenched? If not, your prayers are hindered because your knowledge of these things is too small. To know what to pray for, and to receive answers to those prayers, you must know Him and consequently, His will.

*"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 He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him."*  
1 John 5:14–15

## 3. Your Prayers Are Too Timid

God wants to change this fallen world. He already has a plan. He is waiting for intercessors to ask, because He wants to share His life and glory with them. We have learned what an answerable prayer is. It would be according to 1) His will, 2) His name (His character and values), and 3) His glory. Prayers with these qualities will be effective—if they are requests and intercessions made FERVENTLY to God. Remember that "the FERVENT and effectual prayers of a righteous man (Christian) accomplish much (Jas 5:16)." What is "fervent" prayer to God? **Fervent** prayer has the following characteristics, which are to be added to the three that make prayers effective. Fervent prayer is....

praying BOLDLY, with confidence, and  
praying PERSISTENTLY, even before our Sovereign God.

Only some examples are given of each of the above, but more can be easily found.

### 1) Praying BOLDLY

Do you remember when Abraham prayed for wicked Sodom?

*“Abraham was still standing before the LORD. Abraham came near and said, ‘Will You indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; will You indeed sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous who are in it? **Far be it from You to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?’**”* Genesis 18:22–25

Doesn't Abraham know who he is talking to? His boldness seems remarkably daring—but he continued, and God answered. God already had a plan which included the prayers of a bold intercessor.

Moses was just as bold, just as daring. In Exodus 32, we are told that while Moses had been with God, the people had turned, stupidly and rebelliously, to worship a golden calf. God told Moses about it and that He was going to destroy them. “My wrath shall be great against them and I shall destroy them (Exod 32:10).” But in verses 12 and 13 we are told that Moses TOLD GOD that destroying His own people would ruin His reputation and that He would be breaking His Word and Promises! What happened? Well, one man interceded for millions of people and they were all saved from God's wrath, because He relented when Moses prayed for them. God already had a plan, but He was waiting for a bold intercessor. BE BOLD in your prayer life is the lesson.

## 2) Praying PERSISTENTLY

Jesus tells us this in His parable in Luke 18 about the widow and the unjust judge. This judge had no regard or fear of God or man, and had refused to give aid to the widow who had come to him for help. He said no, but the widow persisted. The judge was finally “wearied” by the widow's persistence, and gave her what she asked for.

*“Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart, saying, ‘In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man. There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, “Give me legal protection from my opponent.” For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, “Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out.”’ And the Lord said, ‘Hear what the unrighteous judge said; **now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them?**”* Luke 18:1–7

Do you doubt that God will heed your prayers for justice, because of your persistence in coming to Him about the same things again and again? Why did He tell us this parable then?

On another occasion Jesus emphasized persistence in our praying with another illustration.

*“Then He said to them, ‘Suppose one of you has a friend, and goes to him at midnight and say to him, “Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him”; and from inside he answers and says, “Do not bother me; the door has already been shut and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up and give you*

*anything.” I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs.*

*“So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.”*

Luke 11:5–9

Knock boldly. Ask persistently. God is waiting for you to do so.

#### 4. You Are “Double Minded”

A “double minded” Christian is one who asks God what His will in a matter is, and then will decide whether he will do it or not. This immature “double-mindedness” significantly hinders their ongoing prayers because their arrogant independence leaves their prayers unanswered.

*“But if any of you lacks wisdom [seeing life from God’s point of view], let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But he must 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 **that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.**”*

James 1:5–8

Confession and repentance are required. Unless we are applying Mt. 16:24 every day, there will be limits to our submission to God’s will and our prayers will be hindered to the point of being cancelled.

*“Then Jesus said to His disciples, **‘If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.** For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.”*

Matthew 16:24–25

Well, do you seek God’s will and blessing—conditionally? Have you drawn lines in life regarding what you will not do, things you will not give up, places you will not go? If so, and to the extent that you do – your prayers are hindered and ineffectual.

#### 5. You Are Not “All” in

It is worth noting that in three separate New Testament instructions regarding our prayer life, the word “**all**” is used 4 times in each passage. The emphasis in all of them is that our prayers are to be **all** consuming, of **all** our thoughts and **all** our time, and encompass **all** the Christians in **all** the earth. Wow. Wow. Wow. Wow.

**The first** is found in Eph. 6, where prayer ends Paul’s instructions about our weapons and armor in our war with Satanic powers.

*“Finally, be strong in the Lord.... Put on the full armor of God.... Stand firm therefore.... With **all** prayer and petition pray at **all** times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with*

*all perseverance and petition for all the saints.”*

Ephesians 6:10–18

It seems to me that applying these 4 “alls” would make prayer the most dominate thing that I do in life. You may have thought that your prayer life was pretty good. But compared to this, are you “all” in?

The **second passage** pushes us even further, if that is possible. Notice again that there are four “alls” which support and combine with the four in the first passage in their meaning.

*“First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”*

1 Timothy 2:1–4

The first **all** in this passage (“First of all, then,”) could be better translated “as a matter of **first importance**”. When combined with the “alls” that follow, this means that our intercessory prayer life to God, asking Him to intercede in the world to change the things that otherwise would not, is the most significant and powerful thing that we can do in life. It means that you can change the world, the course of history, and all eternity—by prayer to God. Doesn’t it?

The **third passage** using 4 “alls” is found in Paul’s letter to the Colossians telling them how he is praying for them.

*“We have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.”* Colossians 1:9–12

All right, you all, are you all in, all the time?

Remember, that by God’s enabling grace, you can do all the things He wants you to do through the Holy Spirit who strengthens you (see Phil 4:13). Praying these “alls” is one of them.

## UNIT 4 STUDY SESSION #1:

In preparation for the group study, read and study the above material and then complete the following self-evaluation.

### Evaluating The Things In My Life That Could Be Hindering My Prayers

To what extent am I **not fully yielded to God's will** in my life and heeding all of God's revealed truths, principles, and ways?

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My lack of knowing God's person and His plans, power, and presence:

- Are not a cause of my prayers being hindered.
- Are not a significant cause. Except perhaps \_\_\_\_\_
- I need to grow to be an approved workman, accurately handling God's Word.
- Is a probable reason that God does not answer my prayers. I do not know how to pray according to His will, consistent with His character and values, in line with His plans.

For the most part I would describe my prayers to God as:

- calm and serious     sometimes tentative     sometimes timid
- usually confident and clear     sometimes bold     sometimes persistent
- definitely bold     definitely persistent     definitely both

As for being a person who will ask God what His opinion is in a matter, but will decide whether to do it until I know what God wants....

- I am not like this
- I am committed not to be such a person
- It depends on the consequences

Regarding the importance of prayer in my life at this point:

- I am devoted to it and do it unceasingly, practicing God's presence all the time.
- I recognize its importance and am committed to it.
- Prayer has not taken up very much of my thinking or time this year.
- Prayer is not an important part of my life.

## **Discussion Questions For Study Session #1**

Before we jump into the study, how did your week go with the Lord and your prayer life with Him?

Getting to this week's study on what hinders our prayers, which of the 5 areas addressed in the study caught your attention the most?

Other comments on hinderance      #1?    #2?    #3?    #4?    #5?

## **Prayer Together**

## **UNIT 4 STUDY SESSION #2:**

Our goal in these studies is to grow in our relationship with God by the maturing of our prayer life. Our ongoing project through these studies is to set aside regular and special times to **SEEK THE LORD IN PRAYER** and to keep a **PRAYER JOURNAL** of our requests and God's answers. Given the focus of this study of Paul's prayers, consider choosing one or more of the following projects for this week:

### **Preparation For Session #2: Application Project**

In the times you set aside to be with Lord this week, talk to Him each day about one of the 5 areas identified in the study that could be hindering your prayer life. Make appropriate commitments in each of these areas and include these in your prayer journal.

If you have not done this for a while, asking one or two others, who know you well, what they see as your "remaining" weaknesses may be of help in removing any hinderances in your prayer life. Talk to the Lord about doing this. Make appropriate commitments and include these in your prayer journal (see Prov. 15:22, 11:14).

### **Discussion Questions**

Did the Lord answer any of your prayers this week?

If you were able to pursue one of the application projects, can you share with us how it went?

### **Prayer Together**