

Does God care when challenging things happen to us? What do we do when God doesn't answer our prayer? What hinders our prayer? Do we think we are the only one that God doesn't hear or that we are suffering something others haven't? Sometimes, it seems that we are in a unique time of suffering and tend to think we are the only one. But our problems are not new... **James 4:1-2** *What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is the source not your pleasures that wage war in your body's parts? You lust and do not have, so you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.*

Divisions and quarrels. Do our prayers point to our own desires to be satisfied? James makes it clear that the source is the pursuit of our own pleasures and desires to be satisfied. Do our own desires impede the prayers we offer? We don't have because we don't ask. **Matthew 7:7-11** *Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Or what person is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf of bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? So if you, despite being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!*

This verse is between two other points, both on how to relate to one another. Our judgement of others and our treatment of each other surround this verse on how we approach the Father. Our desires create conflict with others. Jesus points to the Father as the One who fulfills the desires in our lives. Jesus gives clarity in 3 ways:

- **ASK.** What is in our hearts that we desire for God to do?
- **SEEK.** What are we to seek? It is "Who" we come to when we seek that is more important. We find the Father's presence and the Spirit's power.
- **KNOCK.** How are we going to go about bringing this before God? This implies a persistence. If we don't see immediate results, keep knocking.

We want God to respond immediately but Jesus doesn't clarify how to ask, when to seek, or give a secret knock. Do you feel like you offer prayer to a non-responding God? Two things from this passage that hinder our prayers:

1. We don't offer prayer according to God's will. **James 4:3** *You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.* **I John 5:14** *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 that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.* Do we offer our prayers with hope or with faith? How do we know that God is speaking to us? Everything in the Bible is for us-for me and for you. It is God's Word, infallible. Chapter after chapter, this Book lays out God's will for my life. Stand on it and do not waver. God does not remove struggle and difficulty from our lives but He will in the midst of it give us what we need. Do our desires go in contrast to His Word and His will?

Elijah faces a great challenge and then hides in the dessert and wants to die, asking God to take his life. Have you been in that type of despair? God did not fulfill that request and then we see how God made a way for Elisha to follow and even more that God did. Paul had a thorn in the flesh asking God to remove it 3 times and 3 times God said no.

2 Corinthians 12:8-9 *Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.*

There are two ways for a man to be helped: 1) his burden can be diminished, or 2) his strength can be increased. Do we focus too much on the burden being taken away or God's will for our lives? The goal of prayer should not be the removal of difficulties but the submission to His will. **Matthew 26:39** *And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will."* Jesus struggled with God's will, too. Our requests are not sovereign, but God's will is.

2. Seek. Matthew 7:7 *...Seek, and you will find...* It matters Who we are seeking. God is not distant or uninterested. **Matthew 7:11** (To the disciples) *If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!* **Matthew 6:9** *Our Father...* We should approach God as Father and nothing less or we will hinder the work He is doing. Jesus refers to His father. Our Father wants reverence but also wants us to have the confidence of a child and He will give us peace, security, and find One who delights in meeting our needs. Promises are given from the One we can know as Father! Ask. Seek. and Knock. is given on the condition of knowing Him as Father. When we submit to God's will, He is quick to respond. Ask God to bring about His will in our lives - whether it's the removing of a burden or strength for the challenge. He calls us to come boldly before His throne.

Hebrews 11:6 *And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.* We can stand on this Word, go to the Father, and still have doubt. But the best way is to stand on the truth that says God I know You hear me, You have a plan for my life, a purpose for me. Even though we can't see it, we embrace God's will for our lives. We stand on His sure promise that begins with faith that He is a rewarder. Constantly expect an answer to our prayer. The key = surrendering our will to the Father. Withdraw the favor of our own will and He will give what we need. His grace is sufficient for me.

Romans 8:14 *For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.* **Romans 8:26-27** *In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.*

Do you have a hindered prayers or prayers with no answer? Take that request that we have and ask God what we are to do with it. God knows our grief, pain, confusion, and the fear that we walk in. Offer it to the Father.

What hinders your prayers being answered?

What do you do when a prayer is not answered?

Is there something that changed for your prayer life through this message?