



## INTRODUCTION

### Part 4 - The Obstacles to Prayer

As Christians, one of the most powerful and underutilized resources we have is prayer. The New Testament writer James wrote, "You have not because you ask not."

God invites us to talk with him about everything we face in life! He is a Father who loves to give good things to his children. But often, we are like the disciples of Jesus, who said to him, "Teach us to pray." We don't know how to pray or what we should pray about.

This message series is titled, Ask. Let's explore together how amazing prayer is and how we can grow more effective in prayer.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever felt as though God wasn't listening to your prayers? What was the situation, and how did you respond?
2. Read Isaiah 59:1-4 and Isaiah 58:3-9. What were some of the things the Israelites were doing that led God to ignore their prayers? Why do you think it matters to God how we treat other people? What is the connection between how we treat other people and how God deals with us?
3. Read 2 Chronicles 7:12-15. What do we learn from these verses about how God deals with His people? Have you ever considered that maybe God wants to get the attention of our nation through similar means? Explain your answer.
4. Read Hebrews 12:4-11. Why does God discipline His people? How is this a demonstration of love? Can you think of an example in your own life where you felt God was disciplining you?
5. Read 1 Peter 3:8-12 and James 5:16. How would you summarize these verses? How, practically, might we apply them to our lives?
6. What do you think we could do as a church to apply this lesson to the whole church?

## APPLICATION

There can be many reasons why it might seem like God isn't answering our prayers—why we don't receive answers to the requests we are asking of Him. It's not always because we are doing something wrong. God might have another plan; His timing might not line up with ours; He may desire to stretch our faith; or, there could be a spiritual battle waging.

Sometimes, there are things going on in our lives which might come between us and the answer we had hoped for, especially if there is sin which God has revealed as needing to be addressed, but we persist in holding on to it. We need to be able to stop the thing God has identified, humbly drop to our knees, and pray—stop, drop and pray.

As Christians who have placed our faith in Jesus Christ and know where we stand with God, our sins are already forgiven in an eternal sense. God, however, may choose to hold our sins against us in an earthly sense by allowing earthly consequences for our sins. When we mistreat others, when we give ourselves over to sin, when we know what we are doing is running contrary to God's Word and will, and yet we refuse to stop, our loving, Heavenly Father may choose to discipline us. He may choose to hear our prayers but not respond.

Is it possible that prayers are being hindered due to the treatment of others? Is it possible that prayers are being hindered because of being involved with something that doesn't please God? Nothing is hidden from Him. When we make things right between us and others, and between us and God, we are taking steps to remove some of the possible obstacles to our prayers while restoring the relationship God desires to have with us.

## KEY VERSES

Daniel 10	Matthew 5:23-24	2 Chronicles 7:12-15	Psalms 34
Isaiah 59:1-4	1 Peter 3:7	Hebrews 12:4-11	James 5:16
Isaiah 58:3-9	2 Chronicles 6	1 Peter 3:8-12	