

## CAYA Series – “Understanding the Purpose and Power of Prayer”

### **CHAPTER 8 - “HURDLES TO ANSWERED PRAYER”**

Recognizing and overcoming hurdles to answered prayer will protect your prayer potential and give you the right motivation for prayer.

Prayer is the greatest opportunity and privilege offered to a person in Christ. Yet, because of the power of prayer, the adversary makes it his business to see that the prayers of individuals and churches are ineffective. He will use misconceptions about prayer to thwart our prayer potential, these are hurdles to overcome as we address the problems that lead to unanswered prayer.

Some of these hurdles may be familiar friends to you if you have accepted them and lived with them for any length of time. This can make them hard to recognize—and even harder to set aside.

#### **I. LEARNING ABOUT PRAYER, BUT NOT PRACTICING IT**

We gain a false sense of satisfaction when we learn about something, but don't actually do it. It's like buying a cook book and never cooking anything out of it. We have the false idea that if we know a great deal about prayer, somehow we have prayed. A major cause of unanswered prayer is our becoming experts in the knowledge of prayer but not masters in the practice of praying.

#### **2. MENTAL ASSENT RATHER THAN ACTION**

Mental assent means intellectually accepting the Word as true—admiring and agreeing with it—but not allowing it to have an impact on you, so that it doesn't do you any good. Mental assent agrees with God but does not believe God. The true believer is a doer of the Word and not a hearer only. (**James 1:23**)

A variation of mental assent is “sense knowledge.” This is the attitude that says, “If I can't see it, then it is not real. I'll believe it when I see it.” God says that what He has promised is already a reality. Yet it won't become a manifested reality in our lives until we believe it is real before we see it—through fully trusting Him and His Word. That is how faith

operates. We have to live out our faith by doing what God asks. We should not only agree with His Word and will, but also live it.

### **3. HEARING THE WORD, BUT NOT ABSORBING IT**

We must internalize the Word if it is going to make an impact on our lives. When we don't absorb the Word, it goes in one ear and out the other. Satan steals it away so that it can't have an impact on our relationship with God. When the Word does not become a central part of a person's life—the enemy comes immediately to steal it. If you don't consciously apply these truths to your life, the enemy will try to make you forget what you've just read.

Let the word sink into your spirit. The Bible calls this process meditation. **Joshua 1:8** "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; mediate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful." Meditate can mean to revolve in the mind, turning something over and over in your mind in order to understand it's truths and implications—and then embracing those truths by applying them to your whole life. If Satan can steal the Word from you, he can steal what God has given you to fulfill His purposes in your life.

### **4. HOPING RATHER THAN HAVING FAITH**

There are two ways in which the idea of hope can interfere with what God wants to accomplish through prayer; **(1)** when we apply the biblical definition of hope (future fulfillment) to present-day faith situations; and **(2)** when our hope is not the biblical kind but is really just wishful thinking.

Greek word for faith: *Pistis* meaning "belief, confidence, conviction or assurance."

Greek word for hope: *Elpis* meaning "expectation or confidence."

Biblical hope is based on faith because it is the confident anticipation of the ultimate fulfillment of that faith.

There are blessings God wants to give us in this life, in the present day. If we think they are all in the future, we will not exercise our faith to see their fulfillment in our lives now. Where faith is not applied, fulfillment cannot be given. Hoping is dangerous because it can cancel our prayers. There is a difference in hoping for an answer and waiting on an answer.

## **5. PRAYING FOR FAITH**

When you pray for faith, you are praying to believe. Faith grows as the Word is taken into our lives and acted upon. **Romans 10:17**, Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the Word of Christ. Faith comes and increases as we hear and believe the Word and put it into practice. It is not the size of your faith that counts, it is the size of your God. If you believe—you activate heaven.

If you want to increase your faith, increase the intake of the Word of God. What you know of the Word becomes the limit of your faith because you can believe only what you know. **Matthew 9:29** Jesus said, "According to your faith it will be done to you."

## **6. CARES OF THE WORLD/LAZINESS**

Neglecting prayer altogether either through sheer laziness or because of life's busyness and distractions is also a hurdle. Laziness and neglect are the worst reasons for not praying. None of us wants to be called a "wicked and lazy servant" (**Matthew 25:26**) by God in regard to this crucial purpose for our lives.

We must be careful not to become complacent in our knowledge of the Word and neglect to nurture it. However, when we hear, absorb, and apply the Word, we will bear the fruit of much spiritual growth and answered prayer. We will see God's original purposes for blessing the earth fulfilled through our very lives.

### **PRAYER:**

*Heavenly Father,*

*Your Word says, "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith" (1 Peter 5:8-9). We ask You to help us remain alert to the hurdles in our lives that the enemy wants to use to destroy our prayer potential. Help us to resist him as we stand firm in our faith. Let Your Holy Spirit show us where we are being deceived in our attitudes toward prayer and the Word so we can understand and practice true and effective prayer. We ask these things in the name of Jesus, who resisted the enemy through the power of Your Word. Amen.*

## [Individual/Small Group Activity]

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### **BREAKOUT QUESTIONS**

**What information presented in Chapter 8 impacted/influenced each team member the most?** (It could be a principle, revelation, understanding, insight or obstacle, etc.)

1. What is the difference between hoping for an answer and waiting on an answer in faith?
2. Which of these hurdles best describes my practice of prayer and reading the Word?
3. What attitude or outlook do I need to repent from in order to rise above this hurdle through God’s grace?
4. Select one person in your group to pray about any topic or one related to our lesson today **(if you prayed last week, you are exempt)**. After the person has prayed, then the group should share what they heard prayed. Also, share with the group any word you heard from the Holy Spirit and offer positive feedback to encourage that person.