

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

### CHAPTER 9 - “HINDRANCES TO ANSWERED PRAYER”

Clearing out hindrances in our lives will enable us to live in harmony with God and others and to have confidence in prayer. Some of these hindrances have been discussed in previous chapters; however, they are included in this chapter in a more systematic way so we can recognize and understand the major obstacles that hinder our prayers and, therefore, deal with them more effectively.

#### **I. SIN**

First, we must acknowledge the impact of sin in our lives. **James 1:21-22** “Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. Do not merely listen to the Word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”

When there is sin—especially willful sin—in our life, and you are not obeying the Word, God will not hear you. You will not receive His favor.

**Isaiah 59:1** “Your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that He will not hear.” **2**

**Chronicles 7:14** says “If my people who are called by name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”

#### **2. FEAR**

Fear is a significant hindrance for us to overcome because it often keeps us from believing we can approach God in prayer. **1 John 4:18** says “There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment (“because fear involves torment-NKJV). The one who fears is not made perfect in love.” The idea of punishment in this verse refers to our being afraid to approach God because we think He might remember a sin or failure on our part. It hinders us from having freedom and confidence when we pray. This kind of fear will block your faith, and, thus, your prayers will be ineffective.

The Bible says, fear involves torment; fear immobilizes you. It drains the energy from your body. It is a worry without profit. It is faith in what

could go wrong rather than faith in what that could go right. It is believing what the devil and others are telling you rather than what God is telling you.

When we realize that God first loved us and desired a relationship with us even when we didn't know Him and were living in sin, we will understand that we can freely come to Him and ask for forgiveness. We also have Jesus' word that we will continue to be forgiven. **Romans 5:9** "Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!"

### **3. GUILT**

Guilt is related to the fear of not being forgiven. **Romans 8:1-2** tells us, "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and (its consequences) death." God has forgiven and forgotten your sin if you have confessed it, repented of it, and believed that it is covered by the blood of Jesus. **Hebrews 8:12** says, "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

Sometimes guilt comes from distrust. If you asked God to forgive you, He has forgiven you. If you continue to carry the sin around in your heart, then you are doubting that God forgave you. That is why guilt comes back to life. The devil uses that guilt to undermine your faith; when you pray, your faith is weak, and so your prayers aren't answered.

Since God has chosen to forget your sin, He doesn't want you to remind Him about them either. What a blessing! If you have sin in your life right now, put it under the blood of Jesus. If you sin in the future, ask God to forgive you and to continue the process of sanctification in your life.

### **4. FEELINGS OF INFERIORITY**

Some people are hindered in prayer because they don't feel worthy enough to receive an answer. If you have a low opinion of yourself, it is because you do not know God's true opinion of you, which He reveals in His Word. A low opinion of yourself or self-hatred is not from God, but from the enemy. He uses these things as an insult to God. He doesn't want you to realize that if God loved you so much that He gave you the best He had, then your value to Him must be incalculable.

The way a person feels about himself plays a significant role in how he approaches God in prayer. Many don't have their prayers answered because they don't believe they deserve an answer. Prayer is not trying to get God to do something for you by making Him feel sorry for you. It is coming to Him knowing that you not only deserve what you ask because of the righteousness of Christ, but you also have a right to it because of His Word.

Most of us don't understand what prayer signifies about our relationship with God. When we go to God in prayer, we are supposed to do so recognizing who He says we are. All who are in Christ Jesus are children of God. When you pray like a son, you activate angels, and they go about fulfilling what you prayed, according to the Word.

## **5. DOUBT**

Doubt is making a big fuss before God about what you want Him to do, and then, when the prayer is over, not believe a word you said. You show you don't believe Him when you don't expect an answer, when you don't make arrangements for the answer.

## **6. WRONG MOTIVES**

When your motives are wrong, your prayers will be hindered. God knows we have needs, and it's not wrong to request that He fulfill them based upon His Word. Yet our main focus should be honoring God and promoting His purposes.

## **7. BITTERNESS**

Bitterness often indicates a hidden hatred. Bitterness means you are holding something against someone and not releasing that person through forgiveness. Bitterness is iniquity. Iniquity is a special kind of sin meaning perversity or moral evil. Iniquity is a vicious kind of sin that God specifically says He hates. Iniquity is a secret sin, like jealousy; you smile at someone but are really envious of what that person has. God will not hear our prayer.

## **8. UNFORGIVENESS**

Unforgiveness can be an underlying presence in our lives, even when we don't realize we're harboring it in our hearts. It demonstrates ingratitude for the vast forgiveness God has extended to you. You need to resolve issues of unforgiveness in your life if you want God to hear your prayers.

## **9. BROKEN FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS**

If there are broken or hurting relationships, reconcile them as soon as possible.

## **10. IDOLS**

**Ezekiel 14:3** "Son of man, these men have set up idols in their hearts and put wicked stumbling blocks before their faces. Should I let them inquire of me at all?" We must be careful not to set up idols in our lives, however subtle they may be. An idol is anything we give higher priority than God.

## **11. STINGINESS**

**Proverbs 21:13** "If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too will cry and not be answered." **Proverbs 11:25** "A generous man will prosper he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed."

**Hebrews 12:1** "Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us."

## **PRAYER:**

*Heavenly Father,*

*As Your Word says, we are burdened by things that hinder us spiritually and emotionally, and we too easily become entangled with sin. These encumbrances keep us from having a joyful, unbroken relationship with You and with our families, friends, coworkers, and others. We ask You to enable us to have a true understanding of who we are in Your Son, Jesus Christ. Help us to clear away each of the hindrances in our lives so we can live freely as Your children and so we can pray in harmony with Your will and purposes for the world. We*

*ask this in the name of Jesus, who is our Burden-Bearer—who has carried our sins and sorrows, who has healed us by His own wounds, and whose suffering on our behalf has brought us peace with You.*  
**(Isaiah 53:4-5)** Amen.

## [Individual/Small Group Activity]

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### **BREAKOUT QUESTIONS**

**What information presented in Chapter 9 impacted/influenced each team member the most?** (It could be a principle, revelation, understanding, insight or obstacle, etc.)

1. Are there any hindrances listed that are keeping you from a clear conscience and unbroken relationship with God? If so, what are you going to do about it? When are you going to throw off the hindrance(s)?
2. 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.