

When Prayer Doesn't Work ...

James 5:13-18

Prayer Is Meant To Be Effective

Prayer can “accomplish much.” (James 5:16)

W. E. Vine defines as “to be of force, to be effective, capable of producing results.”

Why pray?

Is that proven true every time?

If not, who or what is the cause?

God's word addresses reasons why prayer sometimes doesn't accomplish what God said it could.

Prayer Is Not Effective When...

It's not used at all.

- Tools don't have to be used.
- Why do we seemingly prefer to worry, stew, and fret? (Matthew 6:31-34)
- That's not God's plan. 1 Peter 5:7
- Is it ...
 - A lack of humility? (“I can handle it myself”)
 - A lack of a spiritual mindset? Colossians 3:1-2

Prayer Is Not Effective When...

They are infrequent or sporadic

- They are to be “unceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17)
- They are to receive our “devotion” (Colossians 4:2; Romans 12:12)
 - “to persevere, be constantly diligent.”
- Requires purpose and planning. (Mark 1:35; Matthew 14:23)
- Persistence is an essential quality. Luke 11:5-8; 18:1-8

Prayer Is Not Effective When...

We lack faith.

- Not praying at all, praying sporadically, or giving up all are indicative of a lack of faith.
- “If you can”? Mark 9:22-23
- What do you expect? James 1:5-8
- We've got to believe it makes a difference. Mark 11:24

Prayer Is Not Effective When...

We don't pray according to God's will.

- The comfort of 1 John 5:14-15
- What is the purpose to our prayers? Please self or Him? (cf. Matthew 6:9-13)
- What are our motives? James 4:3
- Do we know God's will?

Prayer Is Not Effective When...**We don't pray from the heart.**

Jesus spoke of those who use “*meaningless repetition*”. **Matthew 6:7**

- Jesus is not describing someone who uses nonsensical words in their prayers (i.e., babble or gibberish), but someone who uses real words in their prayers that they don't mean from their heart.
- Our prayers are to reflect our “*heart's desire*” (**Romans 10:1**).

Prayer doesn't work when it doesn't come from our heart (1 Corinthians 14:15).

Prayer Is Not Effective When...**We don't do our part.**

- There isn't anything that we might pray for that we don't bear a responsibility in doing our part to bring the results that we seek.
- In fact, do we pray to God that we might – with humility, courage and wisdom – do what we need to do to bring about the answer to our prayers?
- Jesus said in **Matthew 7:7-8**, “*Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it shall be opened.*”

Doing Our Part...

If we pray for our daily bread (cf. **Matthew 6:11**), then we bear the responsibility to go and seek the job that provides for the wages that we need to buy the bread.

If we are praying for the lost, we need to go looking for the lost and prepare to teach the truth.

If we pray for wisdom and strength to overcome the temptations we face, then we bear the responsibility to read and diligently study God's word (cf. **2 Timothy 2:15**) and not go where we know the temptations will be prevalent (**Romans 13:13-14**).

If we pray for a blessed home and marriage, we need to commit to fulfilling our responsibilities in each.

Prayer Is Not Effective When...**We turn our back on God.**

- If we choose to live a life in rebellion to God and His word, we should never expect that prayer will accomplish anything.
- Consider the following passages:
 - **Proverbs 15:8, 15:29, 1 Peter 3:12, 1 John 3:21-22**
- Sin will indeed hinder our prayers (**1 Peter 3:7**).
- Prayer doesn't work when choose to walk in darkness rather than walking in the light (**1 John 1:6-8**).