



SESSION 2 — The Importance of Prayer **- Pastor Phelps -**

UNDERSTANDING UNANSWERED PRAYER

How would you rate your prayer life? People in every religion pray; and their persistence, fervency, and dedication often put Christians to shame! Yet, the most powerful thing a Christian can do is pray. Prayer is the greatest resource known to men. Spurgeon said, "If a man can pray, he can do _____!"

Prayer often avails where everything else fails. . . By prayer the bitterest enemies of the Gospel have become its most valiant defenders, the greatest scoundrels – the truest sons of God, and the vilest women – the purest saints! Oh, the power of prayer to reach down, down, down where hope itself seems vain, and lift men and women up, up into fellowship with and likeness to God! (R.A. Torrey, How to Pray)

Sadly, many Christians know little of successful prayer and fail to understand the reasons for unanswered prayer. Let's take time to understand unanswered prayer. The Bible reveals at least 7 times when prayer will be without _____.

WHEN WE HARBOR _____ SIN (Is. 59:1-2).

Unless we face the question of sin squarely, we will never know the blessing of answered prayer (Ps. 66:18). Praying while _____ will not accomplish anything (Is. 1:13-16). God is able to hear the faintest cries of the weakest child, but will not hear the loudest cries of the _____ saint! Ezra confessed his sins (Ez. 9:6), Daniel confessed his sins (Dan. 9:4-5), and "the effectual, fervent prayer of a _____ man availeth much" (James 5:16). You cannot pray and sin. True praying will keep us from _____ and sinning will keep us from praying!

WHEN OUR DESIRE IS _____ (James 4:3).

Man's nature is fundamentally _____. We need to remember that Matthew 6:33 comes before Matthew 7:7. Luke 12:13-15 well illustrates the problem with much prayer.

WHEN OUR HOME IS _____ (I Pet. 3:1, 7).

In order for a wife to pray well she must _____ well. (Eph. 5:22). In order for a husband to pray well, he must _____ well (I Pet. 3:7; Eph. 5:25). How desperately our children need the gift of our intercession. Sadly, many a child is famished for the power of prayer because though Dad and Mom may be unified in their requests, they are not unified in their _____.

WHEN OUR FELLOWSHIP IS _____ (Mk. 11:25-26).

It is impossible for God to hear our prayers if we have an _____ spirit (Matt. 6:14-15). A forgiving spirit is of prime importance if we would see our prayers answered (Matt. 5:44).

WHEN OUR COMPASSION IS _____ (Prov. 12:13).

We cannot coldly turn away from the needy and expect God to hear our cries (I Jn. 3:16-17; Lk. 6:38). Miserly Christians make miserable prayer warriors.

WHEN OUR _____ IS WITHHELD (Mal. 3:10).

It is wrong to be stingy with God while expecting Him to be generous with us. Remember, Philippians 4:19 was a promise given to generous believers (Phil. 4:17-18).

WHEN OUR _____ IS GONE (Matt. 21:22).

Our faith is based upon God's promises and His _____ (Heb. 11:6). George Muller left a legacy of a life of prayer. Muller's prayer journals gave evidence to the fact that God had answered over _____ specific prayers. When asked the secret of his prayer life, Muller responded – "Have _____ in God!" The secret to successful prayer is not to be found in the vocabulary, emotion, or length of our prayer – the secret is to be found in _____ of our prayer.

Prayer is the power of omnipotence at our disposal. Prayer lifts us higher than the heavens and causes the work of God to increase in the world. May the Lord keep us from the common mistakes Christians make in order to make much of the uncommon results of prayer.

*Oh, the pure delight of a single hour,
That before thy throne I spend,
When I kneel in prayer
And with Thee, Oh, God,
I commune as friend with Friend!
(Fanny Crosby, I Am Thine, O Lord)*

“One hour with God infinitely exceeds all the pleasures and delights of this lower world.” (David Brainerd)