

## **This Month's D-group Focus: What Hinders Our Prayers**

Over the past few months, we've listened to God's Word on prayer and tried to practice prayer as a small group. In D-group this week we will alert ourselves to obstacles that keep us from praying. We will study six passages that outline seven areas of sin that can lead to prayerlessness. As you study the Bible and talk through the questions below, remember that in D-group, we hope to do more than commiserate over shared struggles. We do not only confess our sins, but we also labor to lift our eyes from ourselves to Christ. The gospel teaches us that for those who trust in Jesus, God's wrath against us is exhausted at Jesus' death in our place (Romans 3:24-26). Through Christ's death and resurrection, we are reconciled to God (1 Peter 3:18). Not only that, but Christ gives us his Spirit to empower us to work out our salvation "with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12 ESV) and to obey all that he has commanded (Matthew 28:20). Growth in the Christian life requires rigorous effort, but our hard work is never merely us but the "grace of God that is" at work in us (1 Corinthians 15:10).

You will be guided to ask these three questions after reading each of the passages below.

1. What am I experiencing? (emotions, events, and relationships)
2. Why am I experiencing this? (circumstances, empathy, and sin)
3. How should I respond? (repentance and reconciliation)

### **James 4:3: Selfish motives or idolatry**

- "You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions" (ESV).

### **Proverbs 28:9: Ignoring God's Word**

- "If one turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination."

### **Mark 11:25: Unforgiveness**

- "And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses."

### **1 Peter 3:7: Dishonoring your spouse**

- "Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered."

### **Psalms 66:18: Personal unrepentance**

- "If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened."

### **James 1:5-7: Doubt**

- "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord."

**1) What am I experiencing? (emotions, events, and relationships)**

A. As you consider the passages above, are you experiencing any of the scenarios laid out that may be hindering your prayer life?

B. What else hinders your desire or ability to pray?

**2) Why am I experiencing this? (circumstances, empathy, and sin)**

A. What circumstances, sins, or beliefs hinder your prayer life?

B. Is there a season of life, circumstance, or person that has influenced how you relate to God as much or more than the gospel of Jesus has influenced you?

**3) How should I respond? (repentance and reconciliation)**

A. How do the gospel and Scripture apply to your specific struggle?

B. To whom do you need to repent because of this sin?