

Why We Don't Pray



I have often wondered why so many believers do not pray much, if at all. (Statistics show that more than 80% of western believers would say they have a poor prayer life.) Before I go any further I need to get right out front, that I am not a great man of prayer either. I have certainly improved greatly over the years, but I struggled for the first 30 or so years as a believer to pray almost anytime other than when a crisis was in my life (or the life of someone I cared about).

Prayer has always been something that easily gets forgotten in the church and in the lives of believers. Only decades after the early church was birthed in a prayer meeting in Acts, leaders were challenging, even begging, people to pray. James has to remind people to pray when they are in trouble and when they are sick. Paul tells them to pray for each other, to pray with thanksgiving when they are anxious.

Why does prayer get lost in the shuffle at church and in our lives? Why don't we pray more? There are lots of reasons—in a discussion on this topic with several national prayer leaders a few years ago we came up with more than 15. But I want to focus on four major reasons.

1. Many believers do not pray because they are not really converted. In any church today—no matter what the denomination—there are people who at one point in their life prayed a prayer, went to a confirmation class and/or were baptized, but it “didn't take.” They did it because it was the right thing to do, not because they were truly surrendering and giving Christ their lives.

With no Holy Spirit indwelling them, they only pray when desperate, out of guilt, because it is expected or for show.

2. Other believers do not pray because they are no longer surrendered to God. They maybe once truly gave their hearts to Jesus Christ, but now they are back in control of their lives. An unsundered believer will not pray much. Why? Because all true prayer is an act of surrender. It is saying "I can't do this; I need You to do something." And when we say that, we are giving the Spirit the right to take over. An unsundered person finds that difficult to do.
3. Still other believers stopped praying out of disappointment with God. They prayed for something they wanted to see happen—perhaps even desperately prayed—but what they prayed for never came about. So they got angry or disappointed with God. That disappointment and confusion caused them to walk away from prayer.
4. Finally some believers do not pray because of the attack that comes. This often happens to people who have been at times strong intercessors or people of prayer. But the relentless attack of the enemy on a praying person has taken its toll on them. It is easier to pray less and let things stay "quieter" around them. I once had a believer tell me she did not want to pray in a situation because "that just riles up Satan."

Actually, Satan uses numbers one through three in every one of our lives from time to time to keep us from prayer. As believers who want to pray more effectively, we need to continually stay aware of the things that are keeping us from it. I encourage you to regularly ask the Holy Spirit to draw you to prayer. Encourage others to get past these hindrances, too. Despite the struggles, the rewards are worth it!

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