

# Importunity in Prayer

Luke 11:1-13

One of the most valuable lessons we can learn about prayer is that importunity plays a key role in obtaining answers.

**Importunity**—means shameless persistence in requesting or demanding.

**Importunate**—means to be troublesome, to trouble with request or demands, to ask for urgently.

Being persistent and unrelenting for wrong things accomplishes nothing with God. There is a *manner* (a way or method) of prayer. (See Matthew 6:9.) It is essential for us to eradicate hindering elements from our prayers if we want great things from God. Before exploring importunity in prayer, let us discuss hindrances that we should remove from our lives.

## HINDRANCES TO PRAYER

When we remove these known hindrances, we are ready to persist and persevere in prayer until the answer comes. Write down other things, in addition to these, that you feel hinder your prayer life, and then work to remove them.

**Improper Husband/Wife Relationship**—Contention, strife, and disharmony in a home affect one's prayers (I Peter 3:7).

**Sin in Our Lives**—Being hypocritical or actively engaging in sinful practices and never repenting will stop the answer to our prayers. (See Isaiah 59:1-2; Psalm 66:18.)

**Not Asking according to God's Will**—God's will in this context is His Word. Neither are we to ask God for things contrary to His will for our personal lives. We must consider His Word and His plan for our lives when we pray. (See I John 5:14-15; Romans 8:27.)

**Wavering**—James said to not be double-minded, doubt, be hesitant, or stagger at God's promises when we pray. Ask in faith, without doubting, and the answer will come (James 1:5-8).

**Unbelief**—Doubt is one of the biggest hindrances we have to fight in our prayer lives. (See Mark 9:23; 11:23-26; Hebrews 11:6.)

**Unforgiveness**—Forgiveness must emanate from our hearts while we are praying; failure to forgive hinders our prayers. (See Matthew 18:35; Mark 11:23-26.)

**Failure to Use the Name of Jesus**—All power in heaven and earth is in Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18). His titles and attributes are good to call in prayer, but we should never forget that the power is in the name of Jesus Christ, when we call on Him in faith (John 14:12-14).

**Not Asking or Asking Amiss**—The word *amiss* means unbecoming, not befitting, incorrect, and wrong. Some never ask; therefore, no answers come. Others ask, but for a wrong purpose. (See James 4:3; Matthew 7:7-8.)

**Disobedience to God's Word**—Keeping His commandments is essential if we expect God to continue to answer our prayers (I John 3:19-22).

**Unthankfulness**—Failure to be thankful for past and present blessings can stop the flow of future blessings. (See Ephesians 5:4, 20; Philippians 4:6.)

**Lack of Power with God**—Prayer is a generator of power in our lives. There is no lack on God's part when it comes to power, but for His power to work in our lives we must continue to pray and to walk in the Spirit. (See Acts 1:8; Ephesians 3:20; 6:10.)

**Improper Motives**—Praying to be seen of people, using vain repetitions, and trying to be heard through much speaking are improper motives. If we have the proper motives when asking God for things, the answer will come. (See Matthew 6:5-8.)

Physical weariness, discouragement, and stress are also hindrances to prayer. Zero in on your problem and correct it, and you will receive great things from God through prayer.

## THE IMPORTUNITY FACTOR IN PRAYER

*Prayers made* and *prayers answered* are two vastly different things. God wants to bless us, to give people the Holy Ghost, and to supply our needs, but there is a biblical principle of importunity in prayer. Labor- and time-saving devices applicable to other projects never apply to prayer. Praying is enjoyable and rewarding, but it is also hard work and taxing to the flesh. Never should we feel repulsed when we do not get the desired results in prayer. Being timid, bashful, or easily discouraged in prayer will not bring needed answers. Unabashed determination and stamina are necessary for opening heaven's doors.

We are time conscious since our time is measured in terms of dollars and cents. As a result our busy, rushed society has reduced prayer time to pitiful proportions. Oh, for a fresh awakening to the value of time spent in prayer! Its rewards surpass the highest compensations humans can pay. If you are discouraged with your prayer life, perhaps these examples will inspire you to go to God again and again until the answer comes.

**Example of the Three Loaves**—This example teaches us *how* to pray in relation to persistence. In this case the *friendship factor* did not work but the *importunity factor* did (Luke 11:1-13). God is our dearest friend, but what friendship will not produce, importunity will.

**The Unjust Judge**—God, our Judge, is just. If a widow could move the heart of an unjust judge with persistence, what can we do with our God using the same method? (Luke 18:1-18).

**Syrophenician Woman**—What a story! An outsider, a Gentile, made such an impact on the Master with her unabashed request on behalf of her daughter that Jesus just could not say no (Mark 7:24-30; Matthew 15:21-28).

**Cornelius**—The commentary on his life is that he prayed to God always. Cornelius offered up so many prayers that they mounted up as a memorial before God (Acts 10:1-48). God answers faithful prayers.

**The Apostle Peter in Prison**—"Prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him" (Acts 12:5). The church today can use this key to receive answers to prayer. (See Acts 12:1-19.)

**Daniel**—Twenty-one days of prayer and fasting were necessary before Daniel received an answer to his prayer (Daniel 10:1-21). The prince of Persia, Satan's emissary, hindered the angel of God on his way with the answer for Daniel. Delayed prayers for us could be caused by the same situation.

## PRAYER CHANGES THINGS

Unceasing, prevailing, intercessory prayers can change the following:

1. **Us**—Prayer alters our attitudes, spirits, and conduct to align them with God's Word. Study the effect of prayer upon these individuals when they prayed.

- **Peter** (Acts 10:1-23).
- **The Publican** (Luke 18:9-14).
- **Saul** (Acts 9:11).
- **Hezekiah** (Isaiah 38:1-8).
- **Job** (Job 42:7-10).
- **Jonah** (Jonah 2:1-10).

2. **God**—God’s eternal purpose is unchangeable, but through prayer, God has been moved to extend mercy when He was ready to pour out wrath. What mercy we could obtain for ourselves and for others if we would pray without ceasing! (See Genesis 18:16-33; Exodus 32:7-14; Numbers 14:11-20.)

3. **Others**—Intercessory prayer for those who will not or cannot pray can affect them dramatically. When we pray for others, things can change in the life of the person for whom we pray. Here are instances of prayer having results for someone else.

- **Peter** (Acts 12:1-19).
- **The sick** (James 5:14-16).
- **Those who despitefully use us** (Matthew 5:44).
- **Laborers who are sent into the harvest** (Matthew 9:37-38).

Our world needs a soul-saving revival that only God can give us. Let us unite our faith, harmonize our efforts, and persevere in prayer until it comes. If we pursue *opportunities* but neglect *importunity*, our world will sink deeper in sin. May God grant us a revival of prayer!

## IMPORTUNITY PRAYER CHART

Studying this lesson in conjunction with this chart will give you a healthy overview of the biblical structure through which God answers prayer. Armed with this knowledge, we can become more proficient and effective in our prayer lives. *Pray-ers* may die, but *prayers* never die.

It is in the arena of importunity that we wage our personal battle before an answer comes from God. Too many prayers break down at this juncture. After we pray, we prevail or fail. Abandoned prayers are unanswered prayers.

The task is not easy. May God grant us stamina and strength to persevere in prayer until we find healing, encouragement, salvation, or whatever we need.

Prayer Made	Importunity	Prayer Answered	Scripture
Knocking	Continually	Opened	Matthew 7:7-11
Prayer made	Unceasing to God	Peter set free	Acts 12:1-19
Enter prayer closet	Wait on God	Rewarded openly	Matthew 6:5-8
Ask	Persevere	It shall be given	Matthew 7:1-11
Loaves asked for	Importunity	Loaves received	Luke 11:1-13
Desire Holy Ghost	Keep asking	Spirit given	Luke 11:13
Seek	Unceasing	You shall find	Matthew 7:7-11
Avenge me	Continual coming	Avenged	Luke 18:1-8
Healing desired	Cried after Him	Healing for child	Matthew 15:21-28
Cornelius	Prayed always	Received Holy Ghost	Acts 10:1-48
Daniel	Twenty-one days	Answer came	Daniel 10:1-21
Jacob	Wrestled all night	Touched by God	Genesis 32:24-32