

*But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Matthew 6:33 (NAS)*

## 5 Failing to honor your \_\_\_\_\_.

*In the same way you married men should live considerately with [your wives], with an intelligent recognition [of the marriage relation], honoring the woman as [physically] the weaker, but [realizing that you] are joint heirs of the grace (God's unmerited favor) of life, in order that your prayers may not be hindered and cut off. [Otherwise you cannot pray effectively.] I Peter 3:7 (AMP)*

*Here is another thing you do. You cover the LORD's altar with tears, weeping and groaning because he pays no attention to your offerings and doesn't accept them with pleasure. <sup>14</sup> You cry out, "Why doesn't the LORD accept my worship?" I'll tell you why! Because the LORD witnessed the vows you and your wife made when you were young. But you have been unfaithful to her, though she remained your faithful partner, the wife of your marriage vows. <sup>15</sup> Didn't the LORD make you one with your wife? In body and spirit you are his. And what does he want? Godly children from your union. So guard your heart; remain loyal to the wife of your youth. Malachi 2:13-15 (NLT)*

## 6 \_\_\_\_\_ Of \_\_\_\_\_.

*And it is impossible to please God without faith.*

*Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him. Hebrews 11:6 (NLT)*

*Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart, <sup>8</sup> ...However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?" Luke 18:1;8b (NAS)*

## 7 \_\_\_\_\_.

*To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: <sup>14</sup> "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."*

*Luke 18:9;14 (NIV)*

*Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. <sup>24</sup> Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life. Psalm 139:12-13 (NLT)*

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*For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His... II Chronicles 16:9a (NAS)*

*Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you.*

*<sup>13</sup> You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. Jeremiah 29:12-13 (NAS)*

*The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is? <sup>10</sup> But I, the LORD, search all hearts and examine secret motives. Jeremiah 17:9-10a (NLT)*

*And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. <sup>27</sup> And I will put my Spirit in you so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my regulations. Ezekiel 36:26-27 (NLT)*

*Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>5</sup> Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature... <sup>12</sup> Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. <sup>13</sup> Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. <sup>14</sup> And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. <sup>15</sup> Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup> Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. <sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Colossians 3:1,5a,12-17 (NIV)*

## A wise question:

What is \_\_\_\_\_ my \_\_\_\_\_ ?

*Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. Proverbs 4:23 (NIV)*

The late Peter Marshall, an eloquent speaker and for several years the chaplain of the United States Senate, used to love to tell the story of a quiet forest dweller who lived high above an Austrian village along the eastern slopes of the Alps.

### "The Keeper of the Spring,"<sup>1</sup>

The old gentle man had been hired many years earlier by a young town council to clear away the debris from the pools of water that fed the lovely spring flowing through their town. With faithful, silent regularity he patrolled the hills, removed the leaves and branches, and wiped away the silt from the fresh flow of water. By and by, the village became a popular attraction for vacationers. Graceful swans floated along the crystal clear spring, farmlands were naturally irrigated, and the view from restaurants was picturesque.

Years passed. One evening the town council met for its semiannual meeting. As they reviewed the budget, one man's eye caught the salary figure being paid the obscure keeper of the spring. Said the keeper of the purse, "Who is the old man? Why do we keep him on year after year? For all we know he is doing us no good. He isn't necessary any longer!" By a unanimous vote, they dispensed with the old man's services.

For several weeks nothing changed. By early autumn the trees began to shed their leaves. Small branches snapped off and fell into the pools, hindering the rushing flow of water. One afternoon someone noticed a slight yellowish-brown tint in the spring. A couple days later the water was much darker. Within another week, a slimy film covered sections of the water along the banks and a foul odor was detected. The millwheels moved slower, some finally ground to a halt. Swans left as did the tourists. Clammy fingers of disease and sickness reached deeply into the village.

Embarrassed, the council called a special meeting. Realizing their gross error in judgment, they rehired the old keeper of the spring, and within a few weeks, the veritable river of life began to clear up. The wheels started to turn, and new life returned to the hamlet in the Alps.

<sup>1</sup>Catherine Marshall, *Mr. Jones, Meet the Master* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1951), 147, 148.

## What heart issues keep my prayers from being answered?

### ❶ Ongoing \_\_\_\_\_.

*If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened; Psalm 66:18 (NIV)*

*He who turns away his ear from listening to the law, Even his prayer is an abomination. Proverbs 28:9 (NAS)*

### ❷ Unwillingness to \_\_\_\_\_.

*And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins. Mark 11:25 (NIV)*

*For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. <sup>15</sup>But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. Matthew 6:14-15 (NIV)*

*This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart. Matthew 18:35 (NIV)*

### ❸ Ignoring the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_.

*The righteous care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern. Proverbs 29:7 (NIV)*

*Whoever shuts their ears to the cry of the poor will also cry out and not be answered. Proverbs 21:13 (NIV)*

*We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. <sup>17</sup>But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? <sup>18</sup>Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. I John 3:16-18 (NAS)*

### ❹ Wrong \_\_\_\_\_.

*What is causing the quarrels and fights among you? Don't they come from the evil desires at war within you? <sup>2</sup>You want what you don't have, so you scheme and kill to get it. You are jealous of what others have, but you can't get it, so you fight and wage war to take it away from them. Yet you don't have what you want because you don't ask God for it. <sup>3</sup>And even when you ask, you don't get it because your motives are all wrong—you want only what will give you pleasure.*

*James 4:1-3 (NLT)*