

When Does God Refuse to Hear our Prayers?

Jeremiah 11:11

God sees, hears and knows everything—including our prayers. Nothing escapes his attention. Why then did God say he would not listen to the people's cries for help? There are several possible reasons.

In this case, God did not respond because judgment was unavoidable. Judah had disobeyed God's laws and ignored his pleas for so long that judgment was, in effect, already on the way. Their cries were too little, too late. God even told Jeremiah not to pray for the people (see [Isaiah 14:11–12](#))—that not even Moses and Samuel could have persuaded him to offer further compassion to them (see [Isaiah 15:1](#)).

It is also possible that people sometimes sabotage their own prayers. The Bible mentions several attitudes and actions that can short-circuit our prayers: sin (see [Psalm 66:18](#); [Isaiah 59:2](#); [Jeremiah 14:10–12](#)), disobedience (see [Proverbs 28:9](#)), hypocrisy and insincerity (see [Isaiah 29:13](#); [Malachi 1:7–9](#)), wrong motives (see [Matthew 6:5–6](#); [Luke 18:11–14](#); [James 4:3](#)), lack of faith ([Hebrews 11:6](#); [James 1:6](#)) and even marital problems (see [1 Peter 3:7](#)).

Finally, what sometimes appears to be no answer to prayer might actually be a delayed answer (see [Daniel 10:12–13](#)). Other times God may deny our request in order to give us something better than what we knew to ask for.