

PRAYER IS DEFINITE ASKING DEFINITELY!

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Ask and it shall be given to you ... for everyone who asks receives ... (Matt.7:7-8).

You do not have, because you do not ask (James 4:2).

I don't want to stir up any gender strife here this morning. We have enough gender confusion, gender engineering, gender bending already. But did you see that birth announcement by the American celebrity? Announcing the arrival of her baby into the world, she put on the birth certificate under "Sex of Baby": GTBA ... Gender to be announced! The idea was that this baby was not going to be saddled with any pressures to live up to what sex the mother or society imagined it to be. When "it" is old enough to make an informed decision "it" will "itself" tell the world what gender "it" feels it is! ¹

Well, call me old fashioned if you will, but I happen to still believe that in the beginning God made us male and female. And if I am ever tempted to question this, I only have to go shopping with my wife. I learned very early on, that a woman loves to go shopping. Indeed, women can spend a whole day in what is euphemistically called "retail therapy". When they get home, you ask, "Did you have a nice day shopping, dear?"

"Oh, Brenda and Julie and I had a lovely day shopping, yes."

"And what did you buy?"

"Oh, apart from a coffee, I didn't buy a thing."

"You didn't buy a thing? But you were in town shopping *all day!*"

"No, we were just window shopping!"

Now, I gotta be honest here. My male brain does not compute that. A whole day shopping, a whole day in "retail therapy", and still not necessarily buy a thing! When I go shopping --- and I imagine I am a typical bloke --- I know what I want. I plan which shop I will find it, and then I hit and run. In and out in 10 minutes, home in 20! Man shop ... he buy! Woman shop ... she try!

I get the impression that's how a lot of people pray. When they pray, they hardly ask for anything, and if they do, they rarely really expect to receive a thing. They are content to window shop when they pray. But Jesus said, *Ask. Jesus said, Ask. Ask and it shall be given to you ... for everyone who asks receives ... (Matt.7:7-8)*. James said, *You do not have, because you do not ask (James 4:2)*. Bible praying is definitely asking definitely. God definitely wants us to come to Him expecting to receive what we need and ask for.

In the Bible, prayer has the power to change things. My brother Jeff preached a series on prayer recently, and he rightly said, "Things happen when we pray that don't happen when we don't pray, and will never happen unless we pray!"

¹ As we speak the Labor Queensland State Government is proposing a new bill to change the sex identifier on Queensland birth certificates from Male/Female, to a range of options that include Male, Female, Indeterminate, Unspecified, Intersex and Non-Binary.

Indeterminate and non-binary are terms used to describe a feeling that you are on a spectrum between 100% male and 100% female, or as identifying with any of the 58 gender identities listed on Facebook. Unspecified means not male, female or any gender identity.

This change will mean that birth certificates will no longer automatically record a person as biologically Male or Female, because, for example, a Male can self-identify as Non-Binary, or a Female can identify as Indeterminate.

Now, let's stay in the shopping centre for a bit, but change the metaphor a little. Much of our praying is like little Johnny with his parents in the shopping mall. There is a little coin operated car or horse. And Johnny wants a ride. He sits there, mum or dad put the money in, and Johnny just goes up and down, up and down, or around and around, in the same place, with a big smile all over his face. He's having the ride of his life. But all too soon, the joy is over, and Johnny (if he's a good little boy and doesn't put on a tantrum) gets off a happy little traveller! But he's gone *nowhere*.

My friends, I want to ask us to examine our hearts this morning. When we pray, do we expect to receive the answer from Heaven? Or do we just get down on our knees --- or whatever position we prefer --- and get up and we've gone nowhere? And if God did send the answer we asked for, would we recognize it?

The Bible knows nothing about prayers without answers!

Real prayer is asking for something definite. Last week we saw that God is called, **You who answer prayer (Ps. 65: 1)**. It is in our Father's very nature to be generous. He wants to be known as the prayer- hearing God. Bible praying gets results. Gets answers.

Now already, I imagine some objections. Some even think that if we come to God asking for things, then we are just being selfish. Others believe prayer is primarily meditation and communion. Prayer is good for us, because it strengthens us, makes us feel more positive and more peaceful about life, re-focuses and lifts our spirits.

Now, I will not deny that reaching out to God in prayer definitely results in inner peace. It is true that communion with the God of Heaven brings a new sense of well-being. But if that is all you expect when you pray, then wouldn't you be just as satisfied if you went to a feel-good romantic movie, or put on some good music, or just practised the power of positive thinking?

Others say prayer is unnecessary. God knows everything. He knows what He will do, how He will do it. He knows the end of all things from the beginning, so why pray? If God has decreed the end from the beginning, then how preposterous to think we can change His plan. God rules. God is Sovereign. All things are in His hands and His wise government will ultimately bring everything to the desired conclusion. Therefore, to ask God to intervene really proves a lack of faith in God's promises.

Others say prayer is a waste of time because God is good and His mercy and compassion will always do the best for us His children. They say that no child of decent parents has to continually ask for daily food. And did not Jesus himself say, "**Your Heavenly Father knows what you need before you ask Him?**" So, surely asking God for what we need is unnecessary! Why ask, why petition, why supplicate, why make request, when we should be resting in faith?

PRAYER AND SUPPLICATION

The answer is that God Himself wants us to receive definite answers when we come to Him;

Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication [petition] with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4: 6-7).

The way to kill worry, the way to inner peace, is **by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving and to let your requests be made known to God.** Prayer is the general word covering the aspects of confession of known sin, repentance, thanksgiving, adoration and worship. However, that word **supplication** is a very strong word. It means to make a specific request with urgency. It is often used in the Bible to speak of a subject kneeling before the king or an emperor, making earnest petition for whatever was pressing. To supplicate is to petition with urgency.

You get that same expression for instance in **Daniel 9:3**. Daniel was troubled deeply by the humiliation of Israel. What did he do? Worship? Yes. Adore God in heaven? Of course. Confess sins? You bet. But he does not stop there ...

I gave my attention to the LORD God to seek Him by prayer and supplications ... (Dan. 9:3). Specific requests! He pleads, "O God, open Your eyes, turn your ears to our needs!"

You get the same expression, **prayer and supplication** when God says to King Solomon,

I have heard your prayer and supplication (I Kgs. 9:3). Solomon went away with great peace and great joy. God heard his specific request. A request for wisdom.

You get the same expression **prayer and supplication** multiple times in the Psalms. **God heard my prayer and my supplication** (Ps. 28:6; 31:22; 116:1, etc.) Prayers that God hears, prayers that God honours, are prayers that ask, that supplicate, that plead, that are specific for what we need.

You get the same expression **prayer and supplication** in Acts 1: 14, **These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer and supplication ...** Those people were specifically asking God to send the power of the Spirit upon them as Jesus had promised.

Part of the armour we are to put on in our spiritual warfare, is **with all prayer and supplication to pray at all times in the Spirit** (Eph. 6: 18).

Paul says that the widows who have **fixed their hope on God** and who live alone are to **continue in prayers and supplications night and day** (I Tim. 5: 5).

It will not do just to think positive thoughts, it will not do just to meditate. Nor is it enough, believe it or not, just to stop at worship and praise of God. That is not the full way to kill anxiety. It is **by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving**; it is by **letting your requests being made known to God**.

Finally and supremely, our Lord Jesus himself, we are told, in his days on earth, **offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to Him who was able to deliver him from death, and was heard because of his devotion** (Heb. 5:7). Most of us have the idea that is referring to Jesus' agony in Gethsemane. That's true. Jesus nearly died in the Garden and would never have made it to Calvary except God heard him and sent a strengthening angel. But it is far, far more than that. That verse reveals that all his days on earth before Calvary, Jesus was in a life and death struggle. Many times his enemies sought to kill him **before his hour had come**.

If Jesus had not specifically and constantly asked His Father to deliver him from wicked plots and schemes of evil men over the years, he would never have made it to Gethsemane, yet alone Calvary! Jesus constantly made the specific request --- with loud crying and tears --- that God would deliver him so he could finish his mission.

The point is this: The way to victory and peace in life, is by **prayer and supplication. Let your requests be made known to God. Ask and it shall be given you.** Petition the God of heaven. He is your Father!! Be specific with what you need. Come before Him with joy and confidence and tell Him what you need.

Don't be vague. **Don't** beat around the bush. **Don't** be like the pagans and use meaningless repetitions (Matt. 6:7).

CARPETS

I well remember when God first taught me this. I was a young pastor, just married, and Chris was expecting our first. We were living in a house with bare, unpolished, cold wooden floors. Chris would often say to me, "We need some carpets before the baby comes." I would do the typical new husband thing and try to just hope she might forget about it. But as her pregnancy went on, the requests became more insistent, "We must have some carpets. Winter is coming. The baby will be here soon."

Finally, one day, the thought hit me with conviction. "Can't you hear My voice in your wife's request? Have not I promised to meet your needs if you will but ask and trust Me?"

So, humbled, I made my request known to God. "LORD, You have encouraged me to pray and make supplication and to let my requests be made known. Lord, as best I know how I am serving You. So I am asking you for carpets, and oh, we need them for when we bring the baby home. We don't have the money, but thank You that you are able to supply all our needs according to Your riches in glory in Christ Jesus."

And that was it. I told Chris that God was sending us the carpet. I was in new territory here. But I felt a strange peace in that place. You can imagine what joy and thanksgiving and what confidence in my God it gave me, when

barely a week had gone past, when I received a phone call from a lady on the hill whose name was Jill and she lived with hubby Bill! Over the phone --- and I can still repeat her word for word --- she said, "Greg, could you use some carpet? We have more here than we need. Oh, and we'll pay for and send our layer too!"

Wow! Could we use some carpet!? Thank You Lord. In came the layer, and our **three** bedrooms were carpeted. Not just any old carpets, mind you. The finest quality! And all with full underlay to boot.

What good is it, if we claim to worship and believe in the God of the Bible, but have no more resources than the world? What good is it, to claim to be a child of the Living God, redeemed by the blood of Jesus His Son, if we have no one to hear and to answer our prayers? What good is it, if we can't pray, "Father, give us this day our daily bread, what we need to serve you?"

After witnessing all the mighty works of Jesus, he still had to say to his disciples, "Until now you have not asked for anything in my name, Ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete (John 16: 24).

I ask you today. Is your joy complete? Now, I am not asking if you never have trouble. I do not mean the Christian will never get sick, or even depressed. We all have our fair share of challenges and problems and disappointments. But I will be so bold as to ask you, Do you have the joyful testimony that God is the One who hears and answers your requests? It is our privilege in the midst of these tribulations to bring them to God in prayer.

Unfortunately, the motto on many Christians fridges or on their desks is: "Why pray when I can worry?"

THE ANTIDOTE TO SKEPTICISM

We should be asking God for definite answers to our prayers. Don't you think this is one of the reasons why there is so much unbelief even in our Christian homes these days? We wonder why our kids are not so enamoured, not so attracted to the Gospel, not so impressed with our profession of faith.

Have they seen, do they see, real definite answers to our prayers? Do they know that our God is the Living God who delights to answer our prayers?

HAIL

One day when our kids were young, we were driving along the highway, when a big, black storm cloud started to unleash its fury upon us. Suddenly, up in front of us, we could see dozens of cars all pulling over to the side. We wondered, why are they all pulling off onto the shoulder of the road? In a few seconds, it became patently obvious ... huge hailstones were starting to fall. "Oh, oh", I said, "look at that hail. We are going to get smashed."

One of the kids, in a fearful tone said, "Dad, let's ask God to save us and stop the hail". Now, it's amazing how many thoughts can run through you mind in a second or two when confronted with that kind of situation. I admit to feeling rather nervous about that request. But hey, we had made it a habit to pray daily and to say we believed in God who hears prayer, so I thought we'd better put this to the test when we need it.

I stopped the car, as the hail started banging all round us ... it was the size of golf balls. Frightening. "Father", I loudly prayed, "we call upon you right now, in the Name of Jesus, please stop the hail!"

I do not exaggerate when I say, it was like a cocoon went around the car. The hail stopped. No damage to the car was evident. Not a single dent! We drove on after some minutes, and all along the next few kilometres were people out of their cars, with broken windscreens, hail-damaged cars.

I don't have to tell you what an impression that made on our children. For many years after that, when our family faced something serious or challenging, the kids would say, "Remember the hail? Let's pray to God to help us again!"

What then, is the answer to secularism, to unbelief, to atheistic materialism, to the "isms", to indifference, to the Gospel-word of Christ? Oh, surely, the answer is to let God prove Himself through the prayers of His people.

Yes, good arguments for why we believe what we believe are right and necessary. I believe in the study of apologetics. Yes, good historical reason is necessary to prove that our trust in the Bible as the holy word of God is absolutely sensible.

But surely, having answers to our prayers proves there is a God in heaven who was not just able to raise the dead in the past, but able to turn stoney dead hearts into new creations in Christ Jesus today? Until God's people make definite supplication and look for God's mighty interventions, then we might as well expect our young people to leave the churches in droves, and the man of the world to stay away from our churches!.

If Christianity is the true religion, if God be a miracle-working, prayer-hearing, prayer-answering God, then the unsaved world has a right to demand that we prove it by having our prayers answered ... We had as well face this question squarely. When the churches of our land again see startling conversions of lives transformed, then people will come to church and listen respectfully to the word of God. And when God's people pray for and get healing of the sick, get rain when they need it, get jobs, get daily bread, get revivals in answer to prayer, then modernism and atheism will lose their hold on the minds of the mass of people ... Even the unconverted will believe that there is a miracle-working God who answers prayer. ²

Answered prayer is a definite antidote to unbelief. Now I know it is not always God's will to heal or to send rain. I know that not everybody is going to believe the Gospel and be saved. That was so in Bible times. I know it is not always God's will to deliver from the sword and the stake. That certainly was not so even in Bible days. In fact, there were more believers killed by lions than were saved in the lions den! I know that miracles were not even common place in Bible times. They were never the plaything or the curious anyway. And we should always first seek the leading of God's Spirit before praying about some things and some situations.

And if our prayers are not answered then we need to seek God and ask why. For each case we need to seek the will and the mind of our Heavenly Father. But I do not hesitate to say that our unbelief has limited what God longs to do.

MY FIRST MISSION

I well remember having a burden to preach the Gospel beyond the little church I was pastoring. I could scarcely keep the fire within. So, I set myself to praying and even fasting, and asking God to open up a door, a chance to preach in an evangelistic crusade. I was in my first year of being a pastor. I was very young. I was a nobody. (Still am!) But I knew I was preaching about a very big God whose heart also was breaking for His lost children that He wanted found.

You can imagine my utter joy and delight when the phone rang one day, and a voice on the other end said, "Greg. We have planned a city-wide crusade and the evangelist we planned for has pulled out. We have invited all the other names we could possibly think of. But none will come. We have been praying that God's man would come. Will you come and preach?"

Now, I didn't care less that I was a no name and literally the last name from the bottom of the barrel. God heard my prayers. Even so, before I went, I prayed, "Lord, I am not sure I am the right man for this job of preaching. So, I ask that if I am anointed for the job, that you would give me 20 public confessions for Christ."

Now, 20 converts to me, was the sky. 20 people making public confessions was a humanly impossible number in my books. But I knew that it was foolish to try and do God's work without God's power. I needed the anointing of God's power from on high. I wanted to know God was with me. I wanted to know God answering my prayers.

After a week of preaching in that city there was one final Sunday night meeting to go. So far, there had been just 12 public confessions of faith in the Lord. Now, I was overwhelmed and very thankful to God for His mercy. But that afternoon, I earnestly prayed, "Lord, I thank You for the fruit so far. But I have asked for 20 public confessions of faith, and if there are not 20 by tonight's end, I will take it I am not meant to preach this way again."

² John R. Rice, *Prayer: Asking and Receiving*. Sword of the Lord, Murfreesboro, TN, 1974, p 38, 41

Well, you know what happened, don't you? I did not see 20 people come to Christ. We saw more than 20! God answered my specific petition and then some. Prayer is definitely asking definitely.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Consider the Lord's prayer, the so-called model prayer. The disciples asked Jesus how they should pray. Jesus commanded, **After this manner therefore, pray ... Pray then, in this way ...**³ After due recognition that God is our Heavenly Father, Jesus lists 6 specific petitions:- In other words, Jesus says prayer is really quite a simple business. If you can ask, you can pray!

1. **Let Your Name be hallowed...** may we give You due reverence and acknowledge You properly.
2. **Let Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as in heaven ...** align our lives to Your purposes.
3. **Give us this day our daily bread ...** feed us, meet our material needs.
4. **Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors ...** cleanse us to be a blessing to others.
5. **Lead us not into temptation ...** keep us from creating our own trouble!
6. **Deliver us from the Evil one ...** protect us from the plots of Satan and his cohorts until our work for You is done.

So, the Lord's Prayer contains 6 specific petitions. It is asking all the way! We are **commanded** to pray **in this way!**

WHAT ELSE SHOULD WE ALSO BE PRAYING FOR?

1. **Holy Spirit Power & Anointing.**
2. **Our Family & Friends (especially their coming to salvation).**
3. **Government and those in Authority.**
4. **Whatever We Need ...** Forgiveness? Then *ask*. A Greater Sense of God's Presence and Guidance? Then *ask* definitely. He generously gives wisdom to all who ask in expectation. A job? Then definitely *ask* your Heavenly Father. Finances (Daily Bread)? *Ask*. Healing & health? By prayer and supplication, *ask*. Long and fruitful life for the glory of God? Well, you ought to know by now ... *ask* and it shall be given you. Power to share your faith? Then *ask* for the anointing of the Spirit of God. This is His will for you!

THE ONLY PRAYER CONDEMNED

Is it not highly instructive, that the only prayer in the NT ever held up for condemnation and scorn by our Lord, was the prayer of the Pharisee who **prayed to himself (Lk 18: 11)**? "Lord, I thank You that I am not like this, and I am not like that ... I thank You that I pray and fast ... I do this and I do that!" This man was so full of his own resources and powers and goodness, that he *never asked for a single thing!* That is the kind of praying that God hates!

Come to think of it, we are so weak, so sinful, so mortal, so fragile, and God is so mighty and so generous and so abundant in riches, the only proper thing we should do is be asking Him to fill us. When a person comes before God so occupied with his own self and ability he forgets who God in Heaven is, and that is unbelief and contemptible.

The older I grow the thought strikes me more and more. Oh, if only I had asked God for more! He is so willing and able to give to everyone who asks.

Yes, it's all too easy to only "window shop" when they pray. All too easy to get on the toy horse, and get up content just to feel a little better in themselves. But Bible praying is definitely asking definitely. Your God loves to answer prayer! Jesus says, Definitely **ask** definitely!

³ The verb *proseuXesthe* is imperative, present, middle, second person plural, and may be translated, **Pray then as follows.**