

January 11, 2004 ~ Redwood Christian Center, Pastor Dick Tennesen

## **“The NECESSITY of PRAYER”** Matthew 7:7-11

*16Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ... If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!”*

### **INTRODUCTION**

LAST WEEK we saw the PROMINENCE that the WORD of GOD should have in individual lives, and as our SECOND CORE VALUE for the CHURCH -- to summarize, we need:

ØEA greater HUNGER for the WORD of GOD...

•A greater UNDERSTANDING of what we READ...

•A greater DETERMINATION to LIVE by HIS WORD!

This morning we're going to be talking about one of THE MOST CONVICTING SUBJECTS in all of the Christian life -- PRAYER.

But PRAYER HAS to BE a CORE VALUE -- in the LIVES of INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIANS, and in the LIFE of the CHURCH. We BEGIN WITH...

### **I. The ACROSTIC, “ASK”**

“Ask... Seek... Knock...”

One writer says of these, "Ask...seek...knock" (v7) These words occur in both the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. In each context the emphasis is on persistency and intensity in prayer. The very words, "ask," "seek," and "knock" suggest a progression of passion in prayer.

A. ASK -- has to do with requesting in prayer (see James 4:2,3; Phil. 4:6).

B. SEEK -- has to do with the art of researching in prayer. Paul speaks of this seeking of the Lord's will in that classic passage in Romans 8:26,27.

C. KNOCK -- has to do with resisting in prayer. If there is a door between us, then it is of human or satanic origin; and this level of prayer calls us to break through such barriers to fellowship with God in prayer.

D. The TWO most important things about these are:

1. The PROGRESSION -- If you don't get when you ask, you maybe ask again; and if you still don't get then you start to seek; and after seeking, if you have not received, then you start to knock. Each one is a step nearer to God, seeking God - there is an illustration about needing your neighbour, and calling over the garden fence: 'Can you help me?'. There's no answer, and you call again, and you still get no answer so you go round and look for him around the house and in the garden, and you don't find him so then you go to the door and you knock and you knock and you knock until he comes out, until he answers. There's a progression, each action: ask, seek, knock is an extra step further on than the previous one - it's an increasing eagerness and earnestness.
2. The PERSISTENCE -- These words are in the present tense and imperative mood. These commands suggest persistence and determination. ... so it can be rendered, “Ask, and keep on asking, seek, and keep on seeking, knock, and keep on knocking...” - it is a progression in persistence.

We are NOT to GIVE UP if we KNOW it is a GODLY THING for WHICH we are ASKING. The WORDS of JESUS say that the ASKER will RECEIVE... the SEEKER will FIND... and the ONE WHO KNOCKS will HAVE the DOOR OPENED to HIM.

then Jesus continues...

### **II. The ANALOGY of an EARTHLY FATHER,** vv. 10-11a

A. “Or what man is there among you...” -- One of the BASICS in TEACHING is TAKING from the KNOWN to the UNKNOWN and SCRIPTURE is FULL of THESE KINDS of CONTRASTS and COMPARISONS.

- JESUS used the WIND to HELP NICODEMUS UNDERSTAND the WORKING of the HOLY SPIRIT;
- The WRITER to the HEBREWS used the DISCIPLINE of an EARTHLY FATHER to HELP the READERS UNDERSTAND the WORKING of GOD'S DISCIPLINE... and here, we see JESUS using THEIR UNDERSTANDING of HOW EARTHLY FATHERS RESPOND to NEEDS and REQUESTS to HELP INCREASE their UNDERSTANDING of and APPRECIATION FOR HOW GOD RESPONDS...

B. “if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent?...” -- Jesus gives TWO EXAMPLES of UNDERSTANDABLE REQUESTS, and RESPONSES. There is no deep, hidden meaning to these, they are simply EXAMPLES that would be understood by His hearers, and applicable to their lives.

C. "If you then, being evil..." -- Remember, this is a teaching using the CONTRAST between an EARTHLY FATHER and our HEAVENLY FATHER, so the term "EVIL" is certainly not out-of-place here. And, if we are honest, we will admit that many of our motives and actions spring all too often from our BASER INCLINATIONS.

YOU HUMANS OPERATE a CERTAIN WAY... and I WANT you to USE YOUR UNDERSTANDING of YOUR WAYS to MOVE to a GREATER UNDERSTANDING of, and APPRECIATION for HOW GOD WORKS.

but also, we need to remember we have

### **III. The REALITY of a HEAVENLY FATHER,** v. 11b

A. "how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!"

1. "how much more..." Now, He says, EXPAND your THINKING to HOW GOD RESPONDS to HIS CHILDREN! There's a TRITE SAYING these days, "Think outside the BOX" -- that's kind of a way of saying, GO from the KNOWN to the UNKNOWN
2. "your Father who is in heaven..." It is at this point good to remind ourselves that THIS PASSAGE today is from the SERMON on the MOUNT and only 20 or 30 verses AFTER the LORD'S PRAYER -- which, as we know, begins, "Our Father, who art in heaven..." (Matt. 6:9) -- So, JESUS is REMINDING them that they HAVE a HEAVENLY FATHER. This can be easily seen as the MAJOR THEME of THIS SECTION of SCRIPTURE -- just from the Lord's Prayer to this point in chapter 7, Jesus as used the term "your heavenly Father," several times -- 6:14; 6:18; 6:26; 6:32 -- and EACH of THESE teaches something important about the WAY and the WILL of GOD.
3. "...give good things..." Now, you might say, "I KNEW there was a CATCH to IT!" -- HE ONLY GIVES GOOD THINGS! -- Uh-huh... YOU GOT a PROBLEM with THAT? That's what PSALM 37:4 means, when it says, "Delight thyself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart!" -- We BEGIN the PROCESS with the UNDERSTANDING that GOD ONLY GIVES what is GOOD! And that is GOOD NEWS!!!
4. "...to those who ask Him." Well, there it is -- the CONDITION -- we NEED to ASK. Paul's promise in Philippians 4:6,7, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God, and the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your heart and your mind through Christ Jesus."  
LET YOUR REQUESTS be MADE KNOWN unto GOD --  
SUBJECT: REQUESTS  
ACTION: MAKE them KNOWN  
AND: TO GOD

### **CONCLUSION**

We believe that. There's a great little TWO STANZA POEM that someone wrote that is VERY CONVICTING... It's called the ROBIN and the SPARROW...

*Said the robin to the sparrow:  
I should really like to know  
Why these anxious human beings  
Rush about and worry so!*

*Said the sparrow to the robin,  
Friend, I think it must be  
That they have no heavenly father  
Such as cares for you and me!*

It's REALLY a CHOICE -- we can, as I've seen, have a SIGN on our HEARTS that says, "Why WORRY, when YOU can PRAY?!" -- or ours can say "WHY PRAY, when YOU can WORRY!"  
Let's PRAY...

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For more information, contact the pastor or the church at:

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