

How to Pray For Help

January 22, 2023

Good morning!

- Prayer leader—Pastor Bill
- Scripture Reader— Sophia Rivers (Mark 10:46-52)

In the lobby, at the Welcome Center you will find two books that have been extremely important to me— both are written by Peter Greig, a pastor from the UK (Emmaus Road Church) and a global prayer leader of 24-7prayer.com.

- How to Pray
- How to Listen to God (2nd most influential book I've ever read)

Each week we are providing you with resources to help you in your pursuit of a deeper relationship with God. Today, you will find...

- A **31 day Bible Reading Challenge** with selected Scriptures to read each day in January.
- The **sermon notes** for today.

We continue our monthlong journey with prayer but we should not quit praying. Just as these 31 days in January offer us the opportunity to increase our praying and devotion to God, perhaps it has sparked a new level of time spent with the Lord.

Don't overthink it!

Lifeway Research conducted an experiment with 298 persons, randomly selected across a wide range of demographic and geographic specifics in search for whether or not praying increases our feeling of closeness to God. The group was divided into 2 test groups—with one group they were given the task to write a one minute personal prayer to God. The other group was to write a one minute letter about their day. After completion, they were surveyed about their feelings of closeness to God. The group who had written a prayer to God felt significantly closer to God.

Several of you know that in my discipleship journey with you, I encourage you to pray just 5 minutes every day, driving to and from work, doing chores, working out at the gym...just five minutes (you should pray more) but if you are consistent with it makes a huge difference in your relationship to God.

Assume that after marrying Shelley I rarely ever talked to her, hardly ever listened to her (she thinks that is the case) and was largely distracted by my own life to the extent I rarely thought about her—how then could I justify that I love her, that she's important to me.

The same is true of your relationship with God.

Today, I want you to meet a father who needs a miracle. His story is fascinating because the details offer such insight into the way we are sometimes called upon to do great things for God but we “flinch”.

(Mark 9:14-29)

When they returned to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd surrounding them, and some teachers of religious law were arguing with them. When the crowd saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with awe, and they ran to greet him. “What is all this arguing about?” Jesus asked. One of the men in the crowd spoke up and said, “Teacher, I brought my son so you could heal him. He is possessed by an evil spirit that won't let him talk. And whenever this spirit seizes him, it throws him violently to the ground. Then he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast out the evil spirit, but

they couldn't do it." Jesus said to them, "You faithless people! How long must I be with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring the boy to me." So they brought the boy. But when the evil spirit saw Jesus, it threw the child into a violent convulsion, and he fell to the ground, writhing and foaming at the mouth. How long has this been happening?" Jesus asked the boy's father. He replied, "Since he was a little boy. The spirit often throws him into the fire or into water, trying to kill him. Have mercy on us and help us, if you can." What do you mean, 'If I can'?" Jesus asked. "Anything is possible if a person believes." The father instantly cried out, "I do believe, but help me overcome my unbelief!" When Jesus saw that the crowd of onlookers was growing, he rebuked the evil spirit. "Listen, you spirit that makes this boy unable to hear and speak," he said. "I command you to come out of this child and never enter him again!" Then the spirit screamed and threw the boy into another violent convulsion and left him. The boy appeared to be dead. A murmur ran through the crowd as people said, "He's dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and helped him to his feet, and he stood up. Afterward, when Jesus was alone in the house with his disciples, they asked him, "Why couldn't we cast out that evil

spirit?” Jesus replied, “This kind can be cast out only by prayer.”

Introduction:

- How many of you have ever prayed for an open parking spot?
- How many of you have prayed the patrol man coming up behind you is going for someone else?

Is that kind of praying silly? I think not...

When you pray about the small things in life, you get to live with greater gratitude.

If you only ever pray about big, ugly problems that seem serious enough to warrant divine intervention, you will only very occasionally experience miracles.

This story that Sophia read takes place as an addendum to a much bigger story that preceded this event. Jesus took three disciples up onto a mountain and there was a divine revelation that occurred there. The other 9 disciples were left below and while this BIG moment was occurring on the mountain, a father approaches the remaining disciples with a sick boy asking for help. The situation is a child who is being

tormented by evil spirit, convulsing and at times in danger for his life...the father is desperate.

He later reports to Jesus that he came to the disciples and "So I asked your disciples...**but they couldn't do it.**"

After it was over and the boy was healed, the disciples asked him why they could not perform the miracle and Jesus told them that the kind of miracle the father was asking for came only by prayer and fasting...

We are learning there are many dimensions of prayer and some of them are deep and theological but at the heart of all prayer is asking God for help.

Jesus said...

(Matthew 18:19)

I also tell you this: If two of you agree here on earth concerning anything you ask, my Father in heaven will do it for you.

(John 14:14)

Yes, ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it!

(James 4:2)

you don't have what you want because you don't ask God for it.

So why is “asking” so critical to our prayer life?

God Wants Us To Ask Because It Is RELATIONAL

- We've been saying for some time that God is interested in a relationship with you—not just dispensing blessings to you.
- In Mark 5, a woman with a bleeding disorder is healed but Jesus looks until he finds her because the connection is important to Him.

(Shelley @ Starbucks)—the owner wants you to return the drink because they are pursuing a relationship with you—if you don't return the drink you are likely to never return again—but if they replace the drink for one you are satisfied with—there is now a working relationship!

The Gospels are full of references to the Father-Child and that as children of God we can come to our father!

God Wants Us To Ask Because It Is VULNERABLE

- This is the true reason we don't ask—because to make a request is to admit to some area of personal need.
- Jean Williams suggests some possible reasons we are so reluctant to ask God for help...
 - Our requests seem too trivial to bother God with.
 - We're protecting ourselves from disappointment and doubt.
 - We feel like we're being selfish or greedy.
 - We assume our prayers can't affect his sovereign plan.
 - We think we can handle it ourselves.
 - We assume he is unwilling or unable to help.
- **Asking is an expression of dependence:** when we ask, we rely on God rather than ourselves.
- **Asking is an expression of faith,** a way of opening our hearts to believe and our hands to receive

(Matthew 7:11)

So if you, despite 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!

God Wants Us To Ask Because It Is INTENTIONAL

- When we ask God for something we are inviting Him to participate in our lives—
 - God respects us too much to ride roughshod over our free wills, and he loves us too much to force us to do his bidding.
- When we refuse to ask Him, it is prideful to assume we can handle things on our own...
 - Have you ever handled something in your life **BETTER** than God could?
- He comes where he is welcomed and waits to answer until he is called.

Conclusion:

Ask God for help is hard for some of us. We internalize and carry on a debate that comes something like... I should be able to handle this without asking God for help...what's wrong with me?...why am I so troubled

by this?...I guess I should talk to someone but I don't want to burden anyone with my issues...

An old song concludes...

... What a friend we have in Jesus

All our sins and griefs to bear

What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!

... O what peace we often forfeit

O what needless pain we bear

All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer

Last week, Jesus said to the mother who came to him about her daughter—

(Matthew 15:28, ESV)

Then Jesus answered, "Woman, you have great faith!

You will get what you asked for."

What would that be for you? What do you need to ask God for?

God I am a sinner

I believe Jesus died for my sins

I believe Jesus will forgive my sins

I'm sorry for my sins

I choose Jesus

