

# First Baptist Atlanta in 1991 on Prayer - Part 4

by Al Whittinghill

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*Al Whittinghill emphasizes the transformative power of prayer and its role in aligning believers with God's will through a deeper understanding of His nature.*

**Duration:** 46:02

**Scripture:** Luke 11:1-4, Revelation 5:8

**Topics:** "Prayer"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of continuing in prayer. He uses the analogy of a target with different rings to illustrate different levels of prayer. The preacher discusses the elements of prayer, including asking, seeking, knocking, thanksgiving, supplication, petition, and intercession. He also provides examples from the Bible of individuals who prayed and witnessed miraculous outcomes. The sermon concludes with the disciples asking Jesus to teach them to pray, highlighting the need for humility and dependence on God in our prayer lives.

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## Transcript

Let's pray together. Father, we sense that still, small voice tonight, softly and tenderly calling us to your bosom. And we pray that in these next moments, that you will speak to our heart, and that we will heed what your Spirit says to us, that we will obey.

Thank you for the privilege of belonging to you. And thank you for those who've come diligently these last four weeks to turn their hearts toward prayer. And I thank you that you're going to result in their life in much fruit, as they apply the principles and the things we've shared together.

And now, Lord, you know the inadequacy I feel in my own heart for tonight's word, and how I desperately need you. But I also know the overwhelming supply that you give. And I thank you in advance for being to these people, to their hearts, what no man could ever be, which is what they need.

And thank you in advance for the power of God through the word, the encouragement of the Spirit of God. Thank you. In Jesus' name, amen.

I heard a story that really blessed my heart about a certain man who was trying to get a hold of the greatness of God. And as he was in his prayer closet, he was saying, Lord, what is a million years like to you? And the Lord answered him and said, To me, a million years is just like a second. And the man said,

Wow.

And he said, Lord, to you, what's a million dollars like? And the Lord said to this man, To me, a million dollars is just like a penny. Well, Lord, could I have a penny? And the Lord said, Just a second. You see, that's how a lot of us approach prayer, trying to get God to change his mind or come over to our viewpoint.

And the result of that is that we're discouraged in a lot of areas of prayer. But as Christians, we should be able to write a book on answered prayer. Every single one of us.

That's his promise, that all of us would triumph as we trusted him. But sadly for many of us, prayer is not that which we could write a book about or that which is encouraging. It may be a great disappointment.

And maybe on the inside, we have been to these three weeks and we've said, I've heard that and I've been encouraged, but I wonder if it could last. Could it ever last, this kind of life for me, being alone with the Lord in the closet? Well, most of our discouragement in prayer is simply due to a lack of revelation of who God is and what his purpose is and his gracious plan for prayer. And it's kind of like that guy that prayed at the beginning, as I was talking about a million years, a million dollars.

He just didn't understand what prayer was all about. You see, prayer is not just to get man's will done in heaven. It's to get God's will done on earth.

And we have two ears and one mouth. So we should listen twice as much as talk when we're in our closet. Now, last week we spoke about the secret place of the Most High and those three words of secrecy, solitude, and sacrifice.

Three weeks ago, we began with that precious verse in Luke 11, verse 1, that says, Lord, teach us to pray, just like John Baptist taught his disciples. And we pointed out how that of all the things the disciples could ever have asked Jesus to teach them, that prayer was the only one the Holy Spirit picked out to record. Teach us to pray.

He could have taught them to preach or do miracles, but they weren't as overwhelmed by all those things as prayer. When he stopped praying, they said, teach us to pray, like that. And then the next week, we spoke about the power of prayer and how that prayer is God's way to bring to earth blessings that could get there no other way.

It's His bridge. And the only way to see Thy will being done on earth as it is being done in heaven is that the church take her rightful and truthful place before the throne in prayer and that God will wait on the church to get back to His way. We can try promotion and commotion and emotion and all these other oceans, but none of them will work until we get back to the real devotion to prayer, the quietness and confidence of His presence.

And so, I want to go back to Luke 11, verse 1 tonight, and I want to go beyond that because there's a key to us as we leave these four nights stressing prayer, having bailed the ocean with a teacup, just kind of touching it, there's a key in the verses following that first verse concerning persevering prayer and prevailing prayer. We've talked about God's priority and the power of prayer and how privileged we are as sons of God, but in verse 1, as we made reference to, it came to pass that as Jesus was praying in a certain place, when He stopped, one of His disciples said to Him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. Now, remember that four weeks ago, we said we were going to bring truth for the heart, not just for the head.

This verse says, teach us to pray, not teach us how to pray. Many of us would like to know more about how to pray because we want to feel more confident in this area. But the truth of the matter is, God wants us to feel our bankruptcy.

He wants us to feel our inadequacy. The first time prayer is ever mentioned in the whole Word of God is in Genesis 4, verse 26, when Seth had a son named Enos. And Enos means weakness or frailty.

And that's so important because it says, Then began man to call upon the name of the Lord. As soon as one came along who was weak enough and in poverty of spirit, blessed are the poor in spirit, to those come the kingdom of God. And that's what he wants us to feel tonight.

Not our adequacy, but his adequacy. And not our knowledge, but our availability to him. So, teach us to do what we've been learning how to do all these years, maybe, as a Christian.

Now, in verses 2 through 4, the Lord Jesus gives them the model prayer, what is commonly called the Lord's Prayer, but really is the disciples' prayer. It's the model prayer. And he says to them, When you pray, say.

In other words, this is what to pray. Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed or holy is your name. Your kingdom come.

Your will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

See, all prayer centers around God Himself. The first word. Our Father, which art in heaven.

And so, prayer will develop as our relationship with Him grows. That's the key of prayer. It's the living revelation of God the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, that will give fuel to all our prayers.

And if you're weak in a certain element of prayer, then what you need is to see who He is. A vision of who He is and what He has done. Prayer is the logical and sensible response of a human soul to a revelation from God.

When He shows us who He is, automatically there's prayer. And lack of prayer proves that we are not walking with the awareness that God is there. A prayerless life is a life that's not walking in the fear of the Lord.

And it only proves that we don't sense His presence. But as we meditate upon Him and sense His presence, prayer will become like breathing. It will become natural.

So the Bible doesn't really define prayer. The Bible just demonstrates it over and over and over again. In pictures, remember? Lord, teach us to pray.

You know, when you're teaching your children and you say, go get that book over there, which one do they usually get? They get the one with all the lines without pictures, or they get the one with pictures. And that's how God does it. He teaches us in our hearts with pictures.

More so than just lists and principles, He gives us examples to inspire us and to inflame us with His knowledge that He answers prayer. Nobody can jump into a life of prevailing prayer. It develops as we

grow in God.

And it's like trying to run the Peachtree Road Race if you've never even been walking. You can't just do it. You've got to begin now to prepare for July 4th.

And a life of prevailing prayer takes time. Intimacy takes time. So God wants us tonight to see some pictures.

Just think of the pictures throughout the whole book. Noah prayed and God gave him the blueprint for the ark. Moses prayed and a nation was delivered from bondage and saved from destruction.

Again and again. Gideon prayed and a host fled in terror from 300 anointed men. Daniel prayed and God revealed secrets and He stopped the mouth of lions.

Elijah prayed and the fire fell. Then the people fell. Then the rain fell.

David prayed and then Goliath fell. And then kingdoms that were enemies to God, they fell. The disciples prayed and thousands of people were converted daily.

The Lord added to the church. Paul prayed and as he prayed, churches were birthed and planted all over the then known world. And the list goes on.

It's glorious and it's endless. You can put your name there. Bill prayed and that's what God wants to do.

He wants to do the impossible thing for man through your life and through mine. And its list is still going on. One of the best pictures in the Word of God is prayer as incense.

Now, I'm aware that most Christians in our day can't really understand what I'm going to say next because they haven't really studied the Old Testament picture or flannel graph of God. The tabernacle and the law and the priesthood and the offerings. But I want to just say that in the tabernacle, which was a scale model of heaven, and everything that they did day in and day out, they were acting out the plan of salvation.

When they came and killed the lamb, it was showing Him who was to come and His blood would be shed. When they confessed their sins, it was a picture of going into the real throne room of God and confessing sin. Everything they did, the shedding of blood, the washings, it was all a picture of what we do today as the real priesthood going into the real tabernacle in heaven.

Now, incense was a picture of prayer and God, time and time again, uses it. In fact, in Psalm 141, in verse 2, David prays, Let my prayer be set before thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as an evening sacrifice. He says, Let my prayer come before you like incense.

If you know how they offered incense in the tabernacle, it will help you understand something of what prayer is meant to do. Incense gave fragrance to everything else the priests ever did. They would stop in the outer court, a public place, and there they would see visually the lamb slain.

It would be a picture of Calvary. And then they would see the washing place where the spots were cleaned. It would be a picture of the proclamation and cleansing of the Word of God. After this born-again priesthood would go into a room covered from the public's eye, they would discover a seven-fold lamp of one piece of pure gold with oil on the inside.

And they would walk in the light of that lamp, which would be a picture of walking in the light of the Scripture. They would walk in the light and they would eat from a table of bread that was in the presence of God. But right up beneath that secret place of the Most High God, the curtain, was a golden altar of prayer.

And there on that altar, it says, was to be a perpetual incense burning before God. The priest would come to the altar in the outer court and trust the blood to clean his sin. He would wash away the spots and then go into the holy place fellowshiping with other priests, walking in the light, one bread but many together, and he would go over to the place of prayer.

The altar, the place of sacrifice in prayer. Prayer is sacrifice. And then he would take incense and place it upon a little censer of hot coals.

Now this censer was a golden little kind of pot about the size of a human heart. And he would stop outside in the outer court and get burning hot coals from the altar, which stood for Calvary, and put it inside that censer and go into the golden altar. And there at that golden altar, the passion and the judgment outside would give the power for the incense on the inside.

You see the picture? The fuel for prayer would be the passion of Calvary. Right there on the golden altar, he would take incense, a secret formula that only the priest could mix, no counterfeit, five different elements in this precious incense, this fragrance of wonderful worth, and he would sprinkle it on those coals and it would... And it would fill the whole house with a fragrance of beautiful fragrance. And as that fragrance filled, it would permeate the veil that was hiding God's presence from man back in the invisible, and the fragrance would unite the secret place of the Most High and the place where the priest stood in prayer.

So fragrance united heaven and earth in a picture in that sense. Now, then they would be right there at God's throne praying. Just like today when we go to prayer, our prayers unite heaven and earth.

Those men were acting out the picture of what we do literally. When we come to Calvary in our mind's eye and are washed in the blood, we go to the Word and we search the Scriptures and we let them search us. Then we come in with the other saints who are also walking in the light, and we gather together in one name and we pray, and God says that whisp of prayer unites heaven and earth.

It's like God, amidst all the sounds and noise of earth, He is looking for this perpetual incense that unite the invisible and the visible. You know, I saw a big pile of tires burning once, and it was terrible. It was belching up this big black smoke.

And as I saw it, I thought of, that must be what God smells when He looks at what's coming up from the city of Atlanta by and large. He sees this billowing stench coming up of shrieking at one another and cursing and anger and all the things that are coming up from the altars of this world. And over in a little closet is a little widow woman, and there she is on her knees praying for someone saying, in Jesus' name.

And it's like on the Passion of Calvary a little bit, a tiny little prayer, goes up and God goes, and it reminds Him of the passion of His Son. God saves that prayer. Now, the reason I went into all that was because in the book of Revelation, chapter 5, when the Lamb takes that scroll to bring in God's everlasting kingdom.

You know, when He comes, John is weeping, and who is worthy to take the book to open the seals thereof? The Lord Jesus, the Lamb, comes and takes that book, and everybody falls down and praises

God. But it says there in Revelation 5, verse 8, one little phrase that you need to note. It says that when He had taken the book, the four living creatures and four and twenty elders fall down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps and golden vials full of incenses or odors, which are the prayers of saints.

Friend, God keeps prayer in heaven. Not one of them is ever wasted. And He's saving them for a coming day when we pray, Thy will be done on earth as it is being done in heaven.

God says... He takes it like He keeps our tears, we said last week, in His bottle. Look at chapter 8, and you'll see in verse 3, just before the trumpets are sounding in a coming day, very soon, it says, another angel came and stood at the altar having a golden censer. That's what I just described to you.

The altar of prayer and the true tabernacle in heaven. And there was given to him much incense that he should offer it, look at this, with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar that was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.

And look what he does. The angel took the censer and he filled it with the fire of the altar and he threw it on the earth. Let me tell you, prayer is going to be the means by which God initiates His great judgments in the days ahead.

Stored up prayers and the prayers of mercy and the prayers of judgment. God does nothing on earth but in answer to believing prayer. He's chosen it that way.

And so, with those five ingredients of incense, we have five ingredients of prayer. Confession, adoration, thanksgiving, supplication, and intercession. Basically, those five ingredients.

Secret, but basic, elemental ingredients. See, and as we meet Him and know Him, confession is our response to the holiness and majesty of God. And see, if you don't confess your sins, and if you're not able to confess, I'll tell you what you need.

You need to study the Bible and see the holiness and majesty of God. And then you'll cry out and confess. But if that element of prayer is missing, then you need to see who He is and His holiness and majesty.

Adoration is our response to the attributes of God, His worth. So if you are not able to adore Him in prayer alone and thank Him for the way He has done His things and who He is, then you need to get alone with Him and you've forgotten who you're speaking to. You need to study about Him and see His great attributes.

Thanksgiving is our response to the goodness of God, how He's blessed us, what He's done, His blessings. And if you have a hard time thanking Him, it's because you haven't realized that everything you have is from Him. Study the Bible and see that all we have is from Him, and then you'll thank Him.

Supplication and petition, that fourth element, is our response to God's wisdom and His power. He is able to do what we ask Him. And so we ask Him.

It's omitted when I don't trust God to fulfill His promises. I don't think He can do it. So if I'm weak, I need to study Him and get a revelation of Him.

All prayer stems from Him. It originates with God. The last one, intercession, is our response to the love and the mercy and the purpose of God.

It's love on its knees for others. And I see, God, You loved me, and if You love me, You love them, and You want to do it for them. And therefore, Lord, I'm on my knees for them.

And that's what intercession does. Well, these are the ingredients in Luke 11, as we're back there now. Back in Luke 11, you see in that Lord's Prayer, you see the adoration and thanksgiving.

Hallowed be Thy name. And you see that intercession, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us day by day our daily bread, supplication, petition.

You see, confession, forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who are indebted to us. And you see, intercession, lead us not into temptation. Warfare praying.

Authoritative prayer. So as we meditate on Him, a burning takes place in our heart and gives power to His name and rising up from feeble lips, comes from the altar of our heart, the prayer that God is looking for, on which He can rest His purposes. Now all that's pretty mystic, I know that.

But I'll tell you, it's in the Scripture. And so He gives us a bone-crunching practical application. Remember now, they've just said, teach us to pray.

Okay? Look at this next verse, verse 5. And He said to them, now He's applying that word, teach us to pray. You want to learn to pray? Here it is. Which of you shall have a friend and shall go to him at midnight and say to him, Friend, lend me three loaves.

For a friend of mine in his journey's come to me and I have nothing to set before him. Isn't that how we feel? I have nothing to set before the world. I have nothing to say at First Baptist Church tonight, Lord.

I'm desperate. And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not, the door is now shut. My children are with me in the bed.

I cannot rise and give to thee. I say to you, though he will not rise and give him, because he's his friend, yet because of his importunity, and the word in the Greek means shame-facelessness, desperation. It means it's impudence it has a certain sense.

He has no sense of shame because of his desperate, shame-faced impudence. He will rise and give him as many as he needs. That's it.

Teach us to pray. That's what God is after. This is the bottom line.

He's trying to get us to keep on knocking. And he's going to talk about that in just a moment. Here at midnight, a certain person comes and he has to give his friend something and he doesn't have anything.

I have nothing. So there's insistent, desperate prayer. And the sense of our own inadequacy is the beginning of prayer.

A proud man will never pray. And so the poor in spirit are desperate and God's grace looks first at poverty, not purity. He looks at the bankruptcy.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for to them comes the kingdom of God. And so he comes and he's knocking. I have a need and it's now.

It's insistent. It's insistent and it's intense. Let me tell you, you can't do this unless you know God's character.

You cannot be insistent in prayer unless you know who you're talking to and you know He's your Father. And that's what Jesus is after because you see, as we do this, the process is as beneficial as the answer. This is what He's after.

He wants you to come and be insistent. Thy will be done and come before Him. Not coming, as we say, I'm hoping and praying.

That's not the same as believing and praying. Hope is future. Faith is now.

Lord, I believe what you say is true. There are facts and there are promises that must be so now. And so, He is better than any human mind could ever conceive or has ever written about.

Insistent, desperate prayer. And it's also persistent. That means it's determined.

Because of His shame-facelessness, He just keeps... First, He gets a no answer. No, I'm in bed with my kids. He keeps right on.

He just won't stop. And pretty soon the dog... And all these noises. And the neighbor's lights start flashing on.

We just got a new puppy. And I know what I'm talking about. All night long.

You just want to go in there and say, thank you for this puppy. But see, faith sees the invisible. Don't let the visible panic you.

That's what He's saying. Here's a closed door. And this man's saying, you can't have what I could give you.

You may have some doubts when you pray, but not one of them is from God. Not one of them is from God. God is building grace into your soul.

Remember that Syrophenician woman that came to Jesus and she said in Matthew 15, she came and, Lord, Thou Son of David, my daughter is grievously vexed with the devil. He didn't even answer her. How rude.

Is it rude? He's trying to teach something to His disciples. His disciples came and said, Lord, send her away because she's crying after us. She's following them saying, Lord, Lord.

And she's insistent and she's persistent. But He answered and said, I have not been sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped Him and said, Lord, help me.

And He answered and said, it's not fitting to take the children's bread and throw it to dogs. He's calling her a dog, a Gentile. And you know what? Instead of saying, hmm, she says, truth, Lord.

You're right. That's what I am. Yet the dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their master's table.

And Jesus answered and said, oh, and the sense in the language, He is blessed. He is amazed. He is delighted.

Oh, woman. Oh, great is your faith. Let it keep on being to you even as you've willed.

What a lesson. He's trying to teach us the same thing. To don't quit.

Just be shame-faced. When you know something is God, listen to what George Muller wrote. He says, Once I have been persuaded a thing is right, I go on praying for it until the end comes, I'll never give up.

The great point is to never give up until the answer comes. Who is it that's lost that you've been praying for and you've given up on? What is it that you know God wants to do but you quit holding before Him because you've gotten tired? The great fault of the children of God is they do not continue in prayer. They do not go on praying.

They do not persevere. If they desire anything for God's glory, they should pray until they get it. He says over in Luke 18, we made citing that verse last time, that men ought always to pray and not to faint.

And then he told a parable again about a little widow. Remember, we cited this. And she had a person trying to take her to court.

He was going to just rake her over the legal coals. And she went for the judge. This judge didn't fear God.

He didn't care about men. He was a self-lover. But this little widow was always outside the courthouse, is the picture there.

Pictures! And here she is shaking her umbrella at him. Avenge me of my adversary! And he says, get away from me, woman. And next time he comes around the corner, there she is, avenge me! And it goes on to say, he says, by her continual coming, she's wearying me.

He says, listen, shall not God hear if the unjust judge says, I'm going to do what this woman says, lest by her continual coming she gives me a black eye? That's what it says. Then shall not God, the righteous judge of all the earth, hear His own? They cry day and night to Him. That's it.

Day and night they cry to Him, though He make them wait a long time. He makes them wait. Why? Because He's trying to do something in our soul.

Be insistent. That's desperation. Be persistent.

That's determination. And be consistent. That's disciplined.

Paul, in Ephesians 6, when he says, he says, with all prayer, he says, watch unto prayer. And the word in the Greek is being sleepless unto. Go without sleep if you have to, to pray.

Don't give up at the first symptom of weariness. Keep pressing in. The kingdom of God is taken by force.

You see, I remember once waiting for something. And I had waited and waited and waited. And I said, Lord, I've waited long enough.

And the Lord says to me, now you begin to wait. Because you've never waited on God until you think you've waited long enough. We think it's reasonable to wait.

And God says, when you think it's long enough, that's when you start waiting. You're longing, you're waiting. And the desire, when it comes, He's enlarged your heart and prepared you for it.

Some of you in here are waiting for God's promise He gave you a long time ago. But you've gotten discouraged. Do you know why? Because you compare somebody else's answered prayer to yours.

And God has a timing. And God has a will for you. And He wants to encourage you tonight to go back to Calvary and get your heart full of His coals from the altar.

Stir up the gift of God within you. And take His name back to the place of prayer. And continue in prayer.

And watch in the same with thanksgiving. Because He will not forget you. He will answer.

And He will give you as much as you need. Even if He wasn't your friend, and even if He didn't care for you, if you keep coming shame-facedly and will not be turned away because of that reason, He'll give it to you. That's what He's saying there.

Forget His character. But His character is the main thing. Verse 9. Back to Luke 11.

Now we're getting down to the application. He's going to bone crunch right here. I say to you, and I'm going to translate it as it is in the original because it's present tense.

I say to you, keep on asking, and it shall be given to you. Keep on seeking, and you shall find. Keep on knocking, and it will be opened unto you.

He's answering their request. Teach us to pray. Teach us to pray.

This is how you need to pray. Not just how-to's. You need to do it.

This way. Keep on asking. Keep on seeking.

Keep on knocking. And look at verse 10. I want to ask you if you believe this.

Everyone that asks, receives. Everyone. Would God tease us? He means this.

Oh, the deepest truth comes in the simplest little language. Everyone that asks, receives. And whoever keeps on seeking will find.

And whoever keeps on knocking, it will be opened. And then he throws this character before us. If a son asked bread of any of you that's a father, would you throw a rock at him? Dad, I'd like a sandwich.

Throw a rock at him. Great, Dad. If he asked for a fish, will he, instead of a fish, give him a snake? Hey, let's go to get some fish and chips.

Great, son. You open the bag and out comes a rattlesnake. Ha, ha, ha.

Great, Dad. If he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? Picks up the cover for breakfast and you get a little poached egg and there's a scorpion that bites him on the nose? I mean, that's absurd. Well, if you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how infinitely much more shall your heavenly Father look at this, look at this, give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him.

The Holy Spirit, in this whole context here, is the Spirit of Prayer. You see, it's pointless to say we're Spirit-filled Christians if we're not praying. Because here, the Spirit of God is that Spirit whom we ask.

God gives us the Spirit of Prayer. Ask Him for the Spirit of Prayer. Ask Him for the perseverance in prayer.

That desperate heart. It says in Hebrews 6.12 that we are to be not slothful. Listen to this verse.

Hebrews 6.12 We are to not be slothful but followers of them who through faith and endurance inherit the promises. Don't be lazy, but keep pressing in. And so the life of prayer develops.

Do I believe that everyone that asks receives? Everyone that seeks will find? Well, then how can I miss? You say. Well, see, that's what makes prayerlessness such infinite folly. If we don't pray, we won't receive.

That's what we must learn is to continue in prayer. Now, I just want to finish tonight by saying that in these immediate verses about asking, seeking, and knocking, they're pictures again. Pictures.

Pictures of levels of prayer. Picture a great big target with an outside ring that's white and then a blue ring and a red bullseye. And on the outside ring, it's a target.

You hit the target. It's asking with lots of arrows all around it. That's where most of them go.

And then there's a middle ring that's seeking. And there's less arrows, but there's still a good many. But in the dead center, that's what God's getting at, is knock.

Knock. And that's what is the very few people really are able to sustain what He's talking about here. And that's what He wants to encourage us to tonight.

When you think about asking, I want you to think of a table. Pictures. Pictures.

Think of a table. He says, listen, ask. Keep on asking.

And what's His promise? It'll be given to you. The Bible says there are things we're supposed to ask for. What are some of them? Our daily bread.

We're to ask for wisdom. It will be given to us. He's our Father.

We ask Him for bread. He gives to us. Give us this day.

Our daily bread. It's perfectly right. Manna.

He feeds the birds. It honors God when we ask. And the desire to ask proves that we're children.

Children have no trouble asking. I'm going to get mine to memorize Psalm 23.1. The Lord is my shepherd. I will not want.

I want this. I want that. I want this.

Anyway. We're told to ask. Ask.

Picture a table that the Father sets. Now these answers are not often the deepest. But they're just right there.

We have not because we don't ask. God says ask. And you'll receive that your joy may be full.

You say, oh, that's just a coincidence. Well, when I pray, coincidences happen. And when I don't pray, they don't.

Ask. Picture a table. And the Father giving you what you need.

As the Son of God. But then He says, keep on seeking. And what's the promise to those who keep on seeking? You will find.

It's deeper than just asking and having it set on a table. Because here with seeking, picture in your mind, a treasure buried. A treasure chest, okay? And here you're having to seek.

It's deeper. And they're not just laying on the surface. You have to go to the Scriptures.

It's not just saying, Father, give me this. It's seeking God. Verily, Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, O God of Israel, the Savior.

It says in Isaiah. Then in Proverbs it says, It's the glory of God to hide a thing. It's the honor of kings and priests to search it out.

God wants us to seek Him because you know why? It honors Him when you love Him enough to seek Him. It honors Him. And that's what He's wanting the world to see.

People who love God enough to seek Him. Search the Scriptures. And let them search you.

And a promise will glimmer from the page. And it's like buried treasure. Psalm 119 says, I rejoice at Your Word like one that finds buried treasure.

Promises in the Word of God. There's areas of prayer that are deeper. You have to dig and find promises to go with need.

Now we need to realize then, I get this, this is so key. Asking and seeking are different. We're told in Matthew 6, where we were last week, that certain things we're not to worry about.

Take no thought what you shall eat, drink, put on. Why? Well, because we're simply to ask. Your Father knows what you have need of before you ask Him.

Now, He says, listen, after these things, do all the Gentiles, what does it say? Seek. You see, the world spends their whole energy seeking what we're told to ask for. We're simply told to ask our Heavenly Father.

And to free us from the... be not anxious for all those things, but to ask Him. He gives us this great promise. He knows what we have need.

So we don't have to seek those things. Instead, we are to seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. Don't live for things or what the world can give, but live for Him and His Kingdom and character.

Seek ye first and foremost. So we get these things reversed, don't we? We tend to seek for what we're told to ask for. Lord, help me to do better at this so I can buy this or that.

We seek Him for what we're told to ask. And we tend to ask Him for what He tells us to seek. Lord, give me a knowledge of Your Word.

And you sleep with your Bible under your pillow or by your bed. And hope that it will come across. He says, seek in the book and you'll find the truth.

He says, Lord, seek ye things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God. One thing have I desired of the Lord and that will I seek after. You will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart.

God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. Not casually inquire, as we said. But diligently seek.

And he that cometh to God must believe that He is. He is what? All those things in prayer. All those things.

He is those things. I will be found of you and I will turn your captivity when you seek me. So, you think of a table.

Ask. And God will set the table. Ask Him.

He's your Father. You think of a treasure chest. Seek.

Look, God has some things you have to search out. Because it honors Him. For you to love Him enough to do that.

But the last one, and it's the point of the whole passage when He says, teach us to pray, is knock. And what's the promise? It will be opened. Picture a door.

That's logical. The goal of the story is to teach us about knocking. In the whole context here when He says, teach us to pray, it's a closed door.

But yet, see, this door stands for the world's declaration that you can't come through here. You can't come through here. You can't have your Father meet your need.

It's contradiction of the visible and circumstance over what looks impossible. And so, this is the confidence we have in Him that if we ask anything according to His will, we know He hears us. I'll never forget the time a brother came to me and he'd been praying about something for a long time.

It looked like there was an open door. And he says, I've waited too long. The door has shut.

What do I do now? We were moving, carrying a piece of furniture. And I said, what do I tell him? And I just said, knock. Knock.

Knock. And he got desperate and started knocking and kept on knocking and kept on knocking. See, the devil tries to door you in.

He'll try to slam all these doors around you and lock you in a little isolationist room or stop you or get you discouraged. It says in Acts that God opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. There are doors in the invisible that God can open.

A great and effectual door is opened unto me, says Paul. And there are many adversaries trying to keep me from going through it. When I came to Troas to preach Christ's Gospel, a door was opened to me of the Lord.

Pray for us that God would open to us a door of utterance to preach the mystery of Christ to the church of Philadelphia. I've set before you an open door. And I'll tell you, God says, knock.

If you say to this mountain and don't doubt in your heart, be cast into the sea. God says, I'll do it. I'll cast it down.

And so the power behind prevailing prayer is a person. And He says, keep on asking. Keep on seeking.

Keep on knocking. Because if you do, I'll do that impossible thing. Faith sees the invisible.

It chooses the imperishable and therefore it does the impossible. There's one last point I'll make. In that parable, when it talks about the little widow who keeps avenging me of my adversary and finally the unjust judge hears, the Lord Jesus says, the Lord of all the earth will hear the cry of His own elect even though He makes them wait a long time.

But when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith upon the earth? He means, will He find this kind of prayer, this kind of importunity? Not much. It's bullseye. It's bullseye prayer.

And I'm telling you, we live in a day of instant everything. Almost every invention you see on the television or in stores is how to make life quicker and easier. Instant.

And God says there's no such thing as instant fellowship with God. It takes time. It takes a season.

The question is, not does God answer prayer, but do I really pray? Do I really pray? Am I really seeking? Am I really looking for Him in the Scriptures? Am I knocking? You know what? Our knees are the door knockers of heaven. Of the door of heaven. And we get on our knees and we knock.

And prayer will grow as you give yourself to Him. That's a very simple word. Picture a table.

Picture a treasure chest beneath the surface you're having to dig. And picture a door. And the whole point of Teach Us to Pray is that we learn to do all that.

It's a big, big thing. All those elements of prayer and from our life, the altar of our heart, our lives become a sweet-smelling aroma of confession, adoration, thanksgiving, asking, and intercession. Prayer.

It's as big as God. And nothing's outside its reach except what's outside His will. So keep on asking.

Keep on seeking. And keep on knocking. Because everyone that will do that will glorify Him and He will do what He's promised.

Hope you act on these things because it's one thing if you know these things, happy are you if you do them. Do them. In the closet.

That's where prayer is learned. Not the classroom. In the closet.

Let's pray together. Father, in Jesus' name, we have a sense of disappointment in our heart as we look at our own prayer life and how we have failed to knock, how we failed to trust You and obey You when things look hard, how we've pulled back from circumstance and adversary. But tonight, Lord, there are things You're bringing to people's hearts.

People that are lost. Situations that need to be changed. Hearts that need to be healed.

Things that You want to do. Opportunities that look like they're out of reach. Mountains in people's way blocking their path of faith.

And tonight, You want to say to them, pray this way. These elements. All prayer.

And keep on asking. Keep on seeking. Keep on knocking because I'm teaching you about faith.

I'm teaching you about trust. I'm teaching you about humility. I'm teaching you about God's honor.

Trust Me. And it will happen. It will happen.

I pray tonight that we'll leave here with that spirit of prayer asking You for the Holy Spirit of prayer. You want to give it to us. May we dare to believe You for it tonight with something that's not there unless You give it.

The desire to pray. The Spirit of God Himself in us teaches us how to pray. We don't know how to pray as we ought.

Thank You for that gift of God. Send us from here tonight encouraged and equipped in Jesus' name. Amen.

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