

# Learning to Ask

by Richard E. Bieber

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*The sermon emphasizes the necessity of asking God sincerely for help and blessings, contrasting it with the common pitfalls of pride and complaining.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 7:7, Luke 11:9, John 16:24, Philippians 4:6, James 4:2, 1 John 5:14

**Topics:** "Effective Prayer", "Faith And Humility"

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## Description

Richard E. Bieber preaches about the importance of asking God for help, contrasting the boldness of the children of this world in seeking God's assistance with the hesitancy of believers. He emphasizes the power of genuine, heartfelt asking, drawing examples from biblical parables like the Pharisee and the Publican, and the Prodigal Son. Bieber highlights the need for believers to overcome laziness, shoddy thinking, and pride that hinder them from seeking God's blessings. He encourages the congregation to approach God with clear, sincere requests, believing in the Father's readiness to give abundantly.

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## Transcript

Jesus says that the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. This is certainly true when it comes to knowing how to ask for help from God.

Again and again we see the children of this world lifting up their voices without shame, crying out to God for help, while the children of light keep limping along somehow unable, or unwilling, or too timid to pray a real prayer.

The children of this world never turn to God except when they're in trouble. As long as life is running smooth, the money is coming in, their health is good, the thought of God never enters their mind. Then along comes a crisis, sickness, death, a layoff, a family problem - now it's "Please dear God help me!" And God helps them.

God knows very well that when the crisis is past they will forget him until the next crisis - but he answers their cry. The pity is that even though they ask only in a crisis the children of this world do more real, definite, believing asking than many people who have met and known the living Christ.

What is it?

Is it laziness?

Is it shoddy thinking?

Or is it this abominable pride that keeps believers walking through this world with their drooping heads and drooping hearts and never asking for the blessings the Father is just waiting to give them?

Why is it that when people become religious they know less about asking God for the things they need than they did before.

In our Lord's parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, the Pharisee is praying up a storm with his these and thous but he doesn't ask for one thing. He thinks he has it all.

God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are ---

God, I thank thee that I am so much more righteous than

other men ---

I fast twice a week ---

I do such marvelous things ---

And all the while this pompous Pharisee is, in fact, wretched, pitiable, prior, blind, and naked. This man ought to be asking for help. He ought to be on his face pleading.

But to break down and ask for something he'd have to give up his front.

The Publican, on the other hand, does nothing but ask.

He doesn't go through that goody goody routine. It's just,

"God be merciful to me a sinner."

And the mercy comes. God visits that man's heart with holy peace. And all heaven breaks forth into singing. In our Lord's parable of the Prodigal Son we see the older brother, the good boy who stays home and does everything right, in the same condition - he doesn't know how to ask. He complains that the father has killed the fatted calf for his no-good brother.

"You never even gave me a little goat that I might make merry with my friends."

"Son, you're always with me. All that is mine is yours."

But it didn't do that young man any good because he never asked.

"Lo, these many years I have served you and I never disobeyed your command." "But did you ever ask me for anything?"

What a picture of so many believers. They're so good and proper, but they bore you to death! Because they have never learned to ask the Father for one of those promised blessings that their joy may be full.

The prodigal son came home with one thing on his heart, a request. He just wants his father to hire him. He's not claiming any rights... He does not say - "I'm your son you ought to do something for me."

"Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son, just hire me",

and before he can get another word out, "Bring quickly the best robe and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet. And bring the fatted calf and kill it. And let us eat and make merry".

Blessings the young man never dreamed of come pouring down over his penitent head. The father was just waiting for him to come and ask.

That's the kind of God we have. A God who is a thousand times more ready to give than we to ask. He sent his only begotten into this world to show us just that.

He gave his only begotten son.

He gives his crucified and risen Son to every soul who asks.

Jesus is God's 'yes' to every cry a human heart could ever raise.

Never once did Jesus turn to a sick man crying for healing and say "No". Not once did Jesus ever answer a penitent sinner pleading for forgiveness with a "No". Always "Yes".

If you want to - Lord - you can make me clean.

Of course I want to. Be clean. And the leper was healed.

And how Jesus labored with his disciples trying to teach them to ask!

Ask and it shall be given to you, seek and you shall find, knock, and it shall be opened to you. For every one who asks receives; and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it shall be opened.

If you ask your father for bread you're not going to get a stone!

If you ask him for fish you're not going to get a scorpion!

Truly, truly I say to you, if you ask anything of the Father, He will give it to you in my name. Hitherto you have asked nothing in my name; ask, and you will receive that your joy may be full.

If two of you agree on earth touching anything they shall ask, it shall be done for them by my Father who is in Heaven.

Every redemptive miracle, every healing, every unbinding of a human life is tied directly to some child of God lifting up his heart to the Father and asking. Two believers over here or two believers over there coming together in unity and asking.

The Father has those blessings all lined up, ready to fall like showers upon the dry ground but somebody has to ask. It won't happen until somebody does ask.

If you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.

This flock has seen blessings. The stream of living water has been flowing in our midst. Many have been quickened - many have been healed. But we haven't seen anything compared with the blessings that will be flowing out of our lives into that dry thirsty world when the children of the Father here start taking the Master at his word and really asking - not just in a crisis but day after day.

"Oh, but I tried that, nothing ever happened. I prayed and prayed and nothing happened:"

Sometimes people think they're asking, but in truth they aren't doing anything but mumbling to themselves. It's a monologue - not a prayer. The heart is fixed, not on God but on itself. Their spirit is clothed not with the name of Jesus, but with its own phony righteousness.

Complaining is not asking.

The older brother of the prodigal was a complainer. "Lo, I've done this and this and this - and you've never done anything for me." "I've worked so hard in the church all these years - and look at the thanks I get." A complaining spirit cannot pray, all it can do is complain. Don't think that because you've done a lot of complaining and nothing happened, God failed you. Repent of your complaining spirit and draw near to the Father with a heart that has been to the Cross and seen the Father's love and ask, and you will receive.

Brooding is not asking.

There are people who go into their room and shut the door and get down on their knees and brood for half an hour. They wonder why their prayers are never answered - they never prayed.

Envy is not asking.

You see power moving in another man's life and instead of rejoicing at what God is doing in that man you envy him - you begrudge him those blessings.

..."when my no-good brother comes home, you kill the fatted calf."

You may get a raise out of the boss that way but you'll never get blessings out of God with envy.

Self-pity is not asking.

We all sympathize with the man who is married to a woman who is forever moaning about her aches and pains, her incisions, and shots and pills and trips to the doctor. But this is the kind of garbage the heavenly Father hears in our hearts day in and day out.

Not cries for help -- Not cries for mercy,

but an incessant spewing forth of self-pity. What a joy it is to the Father when this self-pity stops and he hears one decent prayer!

Asking is more than saying the words.

Sometimes we say all the right words. but our hearts are miles away and the words fall to the ground like stones.

Asking is more than shedding tears.

We can become deeply emotional about Brother Jack's drinking problem and shed real tears, but our hearts aren't there.

Asking begins with finding out from your heart what it really wants -

not what you think it ought to want - but what your heart deeply and truly is crying out for. If you have to sit still in a chair for 10 hours and unwind your tangled thoughts, (or 10 days), it's worth it.

Do you really want to be set free from that bondage?

Do you really want the fullness of the Holy Spirit, even though fire comes with it?

Do you really want that child of yours brought into the Kingdom, even though he never becomes Valedictorian of Michigan State?

Do you really want God to make you a more effective laborer in his vineyard?

Do you want to see a harvest of multitudes in this city coming under the living Word?

When you have that clear then take your request to the Father. Lift up your heart to God, whose eye is upon you and whose love for you is deep beyond words, who sent his own Son to the Cross so that you could lift up your heart like this and ask.

Here, O Father, is my need.

Here is the cry of my heart.

Help me! Give me these people for your Kingdom!

O God, open up those windows of Heaven upon us all.

Truly, truly I say to you, if you ask anything of the Father

he will give it to you in my name.

So now you believe that in Jesus name you have this thing you asked for. You believe before you see it. You believe because you know your heavenly Father has heard you, and it's done.

The message of the Spirit to this flock today is one word: ASK.

Don't sit around and brood and complain and feel sorry for yourself. Lift up your heart to the Father and ask and in the name of Jesus you shall receive.

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