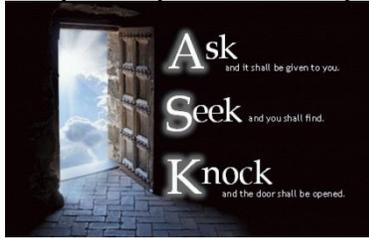


Ask, Seek, and Knock; but also one warning. Luke 11:1-13, Matthew 6:9-15



- Do you ever feel impatient with God?
- Does He seem slow or somewhat deaf in answering your requests for those specific things that you think you need?
- Certainly all of us have had questions concerning prayer at some point in our Christian life. Such as why should we continue to pray repeatedly for something after we have already prayed and asked and are now trusting God for the answer? Isn't that unbelief?
- Could it be that we have been repeatedly asking for the wrong things rather than that one special thing – actually that one special person – who is the answer to all our needs?
- And could there also be something blocking our prayers, keeping our requests from getting through?

These are some powerful questions that we will seek to find a surprising answer to today. **Maybe all along we've been asking God for "things," for the detailed concerns of our daily lives, rather than asking for and acting to bring ourselves into a closer daily relationship with Him, through His indwelling Holy Spirit, which He has promised will help us thrive no matter what life throws at us.** Let me explain

The Gospel of Luke (11:1-13) records that after watching Jesus pray, the disciples asked, "*Lord teach us to pray.*" Jesus then gave them a prayer that we now call "**The Lord's Prayer.**" But in reality, this prayer was more than just a set of words to be repeated it was meant to serve as a blueprint of all prayers that would be acceptable to God. While it is not wrong to recite the prayer, it is more important to understand its principles. Jesus expects us to live our lives in accordance with the words we pray.

Notice that the first half of Jesus' prayer is, about our recognizing that God is "the Lord God Almighty" whom we ought to give Him the honor due Him; thus we ask that we might be aligned with His will for our lives and working to bring His kingdom here on earth. This is what we mean when we pray "*hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*"

Then the second half of the prayer focuses on our family relationship; recognizing that the God we honor as God is also our "Father," and asking for His daily provision for our

lives. But notice, our request is not in the specific “*give me my daily bread,*” but rather in the more general “give US *our daily bread,* forgive US, lead Us.” **So, what should we really be asking God for?**

I think that following his prayer, Jesus’ strange story – about banging on a neighbor’s door at midnight - and his encouragement to keep asking, seeking, and knocking, will help us understand that **our real need is to be daily accessing and using the resources of the one best gift** God has already given us, so that we will have the provision we need to face whatever problems any day may bring.

First, here is the story. After teaching them the prayer, Jesus told his disciples about a man knocking on his neighbor’s door at midnight asking for bread. The moral of the story Jesus gave was that while the neighbor, as a neighbor, might not have gotten out of bed to supply the door knocker’s request, but because of his boldness and persistence in asking the requestor did get the provision he needed.

If we left this story here, we might get the impression that God is our sleepy, less than concerned, neighbor who has to be pestered into giving us what we want. **But the context (the surrounding verses) just do not support this conclusion!** Instead, Jesus continues on, calling God our Good and willing “Heavenly Father” – not our sleepy neighbor - he encourages the disciples to keep asking, seeking, and knocking, promising them that those who did so would always receive, always find, and always get an open door in accordance with their request.

But now notice: what it is that God would give them in response to their asking, seeking, and knocking ... not loaves of bread but rather His Holy Spirit to reside within them (*which, by the way, the Spirit was not yet doing because Jesus had not yet returned to Heaven*). **So what Jesus was saying is that God’s parental answer to all our requests is the Holy Spirit that He has now already given us to be our comforter, advocate, guide, teacher, encourager, strengthener, and even our personal prayer warrior for our life.**

God’s indwelling Holy Spirit then is His answer for every need we might have in our everyday life. And what we should be daily asking, seeking, and knocking for is not for more things, but for a closer relationship with and reliance upon the Holy Spirit’s provision of what God already knows we need. Let me explain.



Have you ever owned a swiss army knife? Or one of the many variations of multi-tools now available? These are designed to include in one small package all the possible tools you could ever need to do whatever task you are facing. I even have a multi-tool so small it fits on my key ring ... and it is so useful that I won’t leave home without it.

This is what the Holy Spirit is! **God's multi-tool** that our Heavenly Father has already given us to provide for every need in our daily lives. Only the Holy Spirit – metaphorically speaking – looks more like this.



So we should be daily, boldly, asking, seeking, knocking, not for loaves of bread but for our closer relationship with the Holy Spirit in order that He might guide, direct, and provide for our daily needs according to God's will for our life. That is what the Lord's Prayer is meant to be teaching us about prayer.

- How can we know what God's will is?
- How can we work to bring His kingdom to earth?
- How can we be forgiven?
- How can we be helped to resist temptation?
- Or protected from the evil one ... without the Holy Spirit in our lives?

In other words our focus in life should not be in worrying about and asking for the daily things that we think we need to live, but rather about growing into a closer relationship with God through His indwelling Holy Spirit, trusting him to already know and be providing whatever it is – whether things or events, or strength, or patience, to thrive no matter what today brings us.

Let me illustrate this idea of asking for a relationship instead of for thing from some other scriptures. In his sermon on the mount, not long after his teaching on the Lord's Prayer, Jesus concluded

Therefore, do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' ... your **heavenly Father** knows that you need all these things. Strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and **all these things will be given to you as well**
Matthew 6:31-35

So striving for God's kingdom and striving to live righteously – these are actions on our part that can only be empowered by our connection with the Holy Spirit. God knows we need food and clothing – we don't have to ask for these things! But if we strive to live our life according to the guidance of God's Holy Spirit, these physical needs will be – one way or another – taken care of for us. **The secret to always living abundantly regardless of our circumstances, rich or poor, healthy or not, is in striving**

daily (asking, seeking, knocking daily) to live in a close relationship with God's Holy Spirit ... Its this relationship that we should be daily relying upon; not things.

Take the Apostle Paul for example, he led perhaps a more adventurous life that we would care to live; five times lashed, three times beaten with rods, twice shipwrecked, having spent countless nights in jails or prison, all for daring to share his faith with the world. During one of those times when he was imprisoned, Paul expressed his attitude towards this life that God gave him to live. Writing to thank the Philippian Church for a financial support gift they had sent to him, Paul would say,

*Not that I am referring to being in need; for I have learned to be content with whatever I have. I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned **the secret** of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need...*

*I can do all things through
him who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:11-13)*

Paul's "**secret**" was that he came to this place of seemingly utter self-sufficiency through all his trials life not because he was SELF sufficient, but rather that by his reliance on the Spirit of Christ living within him he was made sufficient.

Paul would also write to the Roman Church that we can rejoice even in our sufferings. Not that anyone looks for suffering, but because we have Peace with and direct access to God through Jesus Christ we can respond to suffering with endurance, character, and the hope that our relationship with God provides. And we know that our hope in God will never disappoint us,

because God's love
has been poured into our hearts
through the Holy Spirit
that has been given to us.
Romans 5:5

So there you have the secret to the Lord's Prayer, the secret to God's daily blessing our lives. **We should neither pray for nor worry about physical things such as food and clothing, but rather we should daily pray about our continuous and growing relationship with God our Father and the daily empowering of His indwelling Spirit helping to align our lives up with God's will. Thus, as we seek first His kingdom we can trust God to**

take care of whatever else we might need, physically, mentally, spiritually, to live for him.

That is why, with the indwelling Holy Spirit, we already have everything else we could possibly need to live here. He is our Heavenly Father's greatest and all sufficient gift that God would give us; if you have open access to the Holy Spirit you have everything you need to live. Therefore to live the abundant life that Jesus came to give us, to daily receive God's answers to our prayers, we just need to be daily, boldly, persistently accessing this amazing multi-tool gift of the person of God living in us.

But there is still Jesus' warning that we need to take into account.

After he taught this prayer to his disciples, Jesus went on to encourage them to daily ask for this greatest gift that God would one day give them, which was the indwelling Holy Spirit to be with them. But in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus followed up his public lesson on the Lord's Prayer with a warning.

For if you forgive others their trespasses,
your heavenly Father will also forgive you;
but if you do not forgive others,
neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Matthew 6:14-15

Jesus had already, privately, impressed upon his disciples their requirement to forgive as they have been forgiven, but the crowd needed also to hear this warning. When you think about it, God's forgiveness being regulated by our forgiveness makes sense. For love and forgiveness form the essential nature of God ... that is the nature that we are expected to be growing into in our own lives as the Holy Spirit helps us to "*be transformed by the renewing of our minds*" (Romans 12:2). It is this transformation and renewal of our minds that enables us to comprehend God's will for our lives – which is what we are praying for in the Lord's prayer

So if we fail to ask, seek and knock, we are failing to access the Holy Spirit's already present power to provide first, our needed growing relationship and reliance upon God our Father and then anything else we could possibly need.

But, if we are unwilling to forgive as we have been forgiven, then we are blocking the very transformative work the Holy Spirit was sent into our lives to accomplish. When you refuse to forgive you are fighting against the very person by whom you have been forgiven; you are denying others what Christ had died to give them... and how Can God forgive you for that?

Time to Pray

I got up early one morning
and rushed right into the day;
I had so much to accomplish
that I didn't have time to pray.

Problems just tumbled about me,
and heavier came each task.
"Why doesn't God help me?" I wondered.
He answered, "You didn't ask."

I wanted to see joy and beauty,
but the day toiled on, gray and bleak;
I wondered why God didn't show me.
He said, "But you didn't seek."

I tried to come into God's presence;
I used all my keys at the lock.
God gently and lovingly chided,
"My child, you didn't knock."

I woke up early this morning,
and paused before entering the day;
I had so much to accomplish
that I had to take time to pray.

(Author unknown)