

“A LATE NIGHT CALL FOR HELP”
2 Samuel 22:1-7, I Corinthians 9:1-13, Luke 11:5-13
February 13, 2022

“A man took his girlfriend out for dinner and when they sat down, he laid an elaborate box on the table for [Valentine’s Day]. All the while they were eating dinner, she just kept thinking about this box, because it was a big box, and she wanted to know what was inside. She could hardly eat. The waiting to open the gift was killing her, but her boyfriend told her to open the gift after dinner. All she could think about was what was in the box.

“Finally dinner was over. ‘Can I open the box now?’ the woman asked.

“Yeah, you can open the box.’

“She opened the box and pulled out a pillow. ‘Oh, wow, I mean, this is a nice pillow...but it’s a pillow.’ She turned the pillow over, thinking that something had to be taped to the backside. There was nothing. ‘Well, thank you.’ It was obvious she was disappointed that she got a pillow [for Valentine’s Day].

“Her boyfriend got up, took the pillow from her, and laid the pillow on the floor. He got down on one knee, took her by the hand, and said, ‘Will you marry me?’

“She forgot about the pillow. **The one who gave her the pillow now became a lot more important.”¹**

You know folks, it is so important for us to keep that in mind as we look at how God blesses us in our daily lives. We can get so accustomed to the gifts given to us that we forget about the Giver of those gifts and about His great love for us. We can become so enamored with the blessings in our lives, that we forget the Bless-er who has granted us that blessing in the first place.

Song writer and artist Natalie Grant has written a tremendous song entitled *More Than Anything* that states this concept very well. The lyrics go like this:

“I know if You wanted to You could wave Your hand, Spare me this heartache and change Your plan
And I know any second You could take my pain away, But even if You don't I pray...

¹ (Tony Evans, *Tony Evans’ Book of Illustrations*, [Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2009] pg. 27, #48)

Help me want the Healer more than the healing, Help me want the Savior more than the saving
Help me want the Giver more than the giving; Help me want You Jesus more than anything.

You know more than anyone that my flesh is weak, And You know I'd give anything for a remedy
And I'll ask a thousand more times to set me free today, Oh but even if You don't I pray...

**Help me want the Healer more than the healing, Help me want the Savior more than the saving
Help me want the Giver more than the giving; Oh Help me want You Jesus more than anything.**

When I'm desperate and my heart's overcome, All that I need You've already done.
When I'm desperate and my heart's overcome, All that I need You've already done.

Oh Jesus Help me want You more than anything

Help me want the Healer more than the healing, Help me want the Savior more than the saving
Help me want the Giver more than the giving, Help me want You Jesus more than anything
Help me want You Jesus more than anything.”

You see, when things happen in our lives, it is natural for us to cry out to God for His help and intervention. Yet we've become so acclimated to His provisions in our lives that we often take God for granted, and when we do that we turn Him into a divine vending machine that we think should dispense every prayer request upon our request. And when we don't get the response we expect, we often turn away from God, even going so far as to say that He doesn't exist and that prayer doesn't work.

WRONG!!!

God knows our needs. He knows the things that are happening in our lives. He knows the difficulties that we face and the hardships that we go through. **God is not blind nor deaf; He knows all about us.** And that can be both encouraging when we need His help, and threatening when we have gone against His commandments and forsaken His ways. But God is there for us, ready 60 seconds out of every minute, 60 minutes in every hour, 24 hours of the day, 7 days a week, 365 days out of the year, and every year of our life and beyond. **And God wants us to turn to Him with praise when things are good, and with prayer when things turn up-side-down.**

We saw that in our Old Testament lesson of 2 Samuel 22, when King David turned to the Lord when everyone else was against Him. He acknowledges God's power and position as our protector and he recounted how much God did for him when he turned to Him for help against his enemies, those who

were adamantly against the ways of the Lord God Almighty. David recognized that it wasn't through his own personal strength and wisdom that his enemies were vanquished and his life was restored. It was God's answer to him because he prayed and sought out God's help and direction. It turned out much differently than what David had anticipated or even asked for, but God came to his aid when he sought out God.

David says, "*In my trouble I called to the Lord; I called to my God for help. In His temple He heard my voice; He listened to my cry for help*" (2 Samuel 22:7). And then he goes on to describe all that God did to remove the threat of his enemies against him. David called out to God in the darkness of the night, and God didn't put him on hold. He didn't tell David to leave Him a message and He'd get back to him when He had the time. **Not only did God hear David's prayers, but He answered them specifically, at just the right time, in just the right way in order to bring God glory in all that happened.** Oh, it may have seemed like God wasn't listening at times, like God had turned His back on David, but God's timing is not like ours, and He does a much greater job of answering our prayers than we could ever hope to do.

And throughout the Book of Psalms, we see so many of David's prayers to the Lord God. Glad prayers, mad prayers, sad prayers, bad prayers, and often, vengeful prayers. But God heard every one of them and, since David sought to follow God's ways and obey all His commands, God was delighted in bringing His blessings to David.

The Apostle Paul used an agricultural example to help us to see the need to keep praying to the Lord. In 2 Corinthians 9:6 he says, "*Remember that the person who plants few seeds will have a small crop; the one who plants many seeds will have a large crop.*" Paul is using this example for a model of our giving, but it also works in this situation of prayer. **If we pray little, we get little in response. If we pray abundantly, we receive abundant blessings.** And then Paul tells us, "*For this service you perform not only meets the needs of God's people, but also produces an outpouring of gratitude to God*" (2 Cor. 9:12). God's answers to our prayers touches the lives of so many people for the glory of God.

But we have to spend the time in prayer before God will answer us. Let me put it this way:

“If I put a million dollars in your physical bank account, you are a guaranteed millionaire. But if you don’t know how to write a check, or use a debit card, or even know the security code, or even the account number on your account, all that which is guaranteed to you cannot be enjoyed. All the money in the world would be useless to you unless you can get into your account to use the resources available to you.

“Too many of us who’ve got spiritual bank accounts full of God’s blessings are forgetting to sign our checks. We’re forgetting that we have access to that account where we can make withdrawals. We forget to draw from that spiritual reservoir, or we don’t understand how to draw from that spiritual reservoir, to live the successful Christian life.”² And therefore we live in spiritual poverty, yet have all of the blessings of Heaven available to us, but unless we know how to get access to the spiritual bank accounts that we have as children of God, nothing is available to us and we live like we’re spiritually broke. We’re missing out on all that the Lord our God has available to us because we don’t know how to access our account. The account becomes available to us as we pray.

How frustrating it is for us to go to the bank and ask for money from our account, but not be able to get any because we don’t know how to get into that account. The same is true when we try to get resources from our spiritual bank account, when we need help, but go to every other avenue rather than to the Lord our God through Jesus Christ. **We don’t get the help we need because we don’t ask of the One who can deliver all our needs to us.**

So Jesus teaches us about prayer so that we can begin to make a difference. Here in Luke 11, Jesus gives us instruction on how to pray. Listen to Luke 11:5-13 (READ Luke 11:5-13).

Have you ever received a late night call for help? You know, someone contacting you because they find themselves in a predicament and need your help. It could be a child or a grandchild or another member of your family calling because they were stranded at an event because their “ride” ditched them

² (Tony Evans, *Tony Evans’ Book of Illustrations*, [Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2009] pg. 230, #702)

for something else. It could be someone calling because of car trouble. It could be a person finding themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time and needing assistance to get them into safety. Maybe you've been the one making that late night call for help. As a pastor, I get called pretty regularly, and it's amazing the requests that I've received. Some desire me to come out and help them through an emergency. Some ask me to pray for them, and others, like this last week, ask if the church has a discretionary fund to help people. All in the middle of the night!

Jesus lifts up a situation where a friend goes over to another friend's house with the request of bread to feed a traveling friend. The requesting friend makes his plea and is initially rejected by the requested friend because of the lateness of the night and the condition of the family inside the house. But because of the continued request for help from the first friend, the second friend decides that the request is legitimate and necessary, so he gets up and meets the need of the first friend.

Notice that it is friends who are making the request of friends. There is a relationship between the two, and the one knows that the other would not be making the request unless it was urgent. And the other knows that the one has the means to meet the need being requested. But there is an established relationship between the two, one of trust and integrity and hope. This is way different than some stranger off the street asking something of you.

Throughout His ministry here on the earth, **Jesus continually urged all people to establish a relationship with God the Father.** If you don't know God and your life is outside of His commands and teachings, and yet you decide to beg God to grant your wishes, it is a high probability that your request will go unanswered. God delights to meet the needs of His people, those who seek Him and follow Him, but God is not very willing to go out of His way to answer the request of anyone who is against Him. Oh, there are requests that God is delighted to grant those who are enemies of God, such as seeking the Lord's Salvation, and inviting Jesus into their hearts. But for those who do not know God, yet call out for His blessings, there is little chance for God to work in their life because they are adamantly against Him and they do not desire to know God, but only want the abundance of God.

But for those who diligently seek the Lord God Almighty, those who desire a close relationship with Him, even more than seeking riches and power, God reaches out to them and begins to guide their lives into a relationship with Him so that they might grow in their faith and become people after God's own heart.

And it is in this kind of relationship that Jesus tells us, "...Ask, and you will receive; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks will receive, and he who seeks will find, and the door will be opened to anyone who knocks" (Luke 11:9-10). You see, unless we ask for the things we need, they just stay in our spiritual bank account, ready and waiting, but just sitting there because we haven't asked for them. And unless we seek the desires of our hearts, we will never find them because they don't just jump into our laps. Only puppies and kittens and children do that. Until we seek them out, they remain hidden in our accounts, ready for their dispersing, but staying in our account until we seek after them. And until we knock at Heaven's door for access to all of the abundance of the Lord our God, no one knows that we're there, and we just stand there waiting for the Lord to do something, but we've not knocked at His door.

You see, **unless we put effort into getting to know God and building a relationship with Him, we are forfeiting all of the blessings that are available to us from God.** Jesus tells us that we have to make the effort to ask, seek, and knock before we'll get the things we need.

In Jesus' parable, think about the man who goes to ask his friend for help with food. If the man just stands outside of the friend's house, not asking, not seeking, and not knocking at the door, nothing will be resolved because the man doesn't initiate the request. There has to be an initial request before anything will happen.

James 4:2 & 3 says it very well for us. He says, "*You want things, but you cannot have them, so you are ready to kill; you strongly desire things, but you cannot get them, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have what you want because you do not ask God for it. And when you ask, you do not receive it, because your motives are bad; you ask for things to use for your own pleasures.*"

So even if we have a relationship with the Lord our God, that does not mean that we will instantly receive everything that we ask for, because we are not asking with the right motives. God knows what is good for us, as well as what is not good for us. If we ask for something that not going to be good for us, why would God give that to us if we're seeking to follow His commands and His teachings? **God wants the very best for us**, but unless we ask for it with God's interest in mind, unless we seek God's will and God's way with it, and unless we knock on the door of Heaven for our request, why would God give it to us.

Satan, on the other hand, wants nothing more than to give us all of the bad things for us. He desires that we turn away from God, so Satan provides us with all the garbage that the world has to offer, that fulfills our own selfish desires that often results in our utter destruction and death. Satan hates us and ultimately desires our joining him in hell, away from God, and eternally condemned. But God desires that we turn to Him, trust in Him and follow Him so that we might have eternal life as we rejoice in His presence.

So not only do we need a relationship with God to establish our spiritual account with Him, but we need to then begin to ask, and seek, and knock to receive the blessings from that spiritual account. And then we need to ask with the right motivation in order to glorify God, seek those things that will bring hope and life to ourselves and those around us, and to knock on the door of Heaven with our requests so that they can be met with the blessings of God.

So Jesus pushes this parable further by asking a couple questions that brings this squarely into focus. He says, "*Would any of you who are fathers give your son a snake when he asks for a fish? Or would you give him a scorpion when he asks for an egg?*" (Luke 11:11-12). **Good fathers know how to give good gifts to their children when they ask.** And they know that there are things that are not good for those children to have and they say "No" to them. Good fathers want the best for their children so that they can grow up to become good people who can make wise decisions for their lives.

Unfortunately, there are bad fathers who give bad things to their children instead of the good

things that they need. These fathers are focused only upon their own desires and they care little for their children, so it doesn't matter what they give to them. And many times those children, surrounded by that harsh and destructive environment, find their lives cut short because of the poor decisions that have been made concerning them.

Jesus tells us, "*As bad as you are, you know how to give good things to your children. How much more, then, will the Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!*" (Luke 11:13).

Not only does God the Father want to bless us with His abundance, He wants to overwhelm us with His Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is given to us in order that we receive direction and guidance in our lives. The Holy Spirit also grants us power to endure and to do things that are way beyond our own abilities. The Holy Spirit constantly points us to Jesus so that our relationship with Him remains strong and we are able to do the work that God desires in our lives.

So not only does the Lord bless us with the things that we need, but He goes way beyond the initial blessing to grant us the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within us so that we can fulfill the great work that God has for us, enabling us to tell many others about the saving grace of Jesus Christ. And it all comes to us as we pour out our hearts to the Lord, looking for a relationship with Him, asking for the things we need, seeking the abundance of God in our spiritual bank accounts, and knocking to find the presence of the Lord God in our lives. And then we find not only the initial blessings in our lives, but the Holy Spirit poured into our hearts so that we might do great things for the Lord. **It starts with that late night call for help, and it ends in the indwelling of the fullness of God's presence with us. It all begins with prayer.**

Father, thank You for Your great love for each one of us. Thank You that You have called us to be Your children by accepting Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. Thank You for the great abundance of blessings in our lives. Help us to learn how to ask, seek, and knock so that not only will our needs be met, but that Your Holy Spirit may be given to us so that we might be Your people every day, living as witnesses of Your great power and love for us. Thank You! In Jesus' Name we pray. AMEN.