

The Gables – Prayer

Introduction

Note: Scripture passages were selected from Growing in Christ, NavPress, Colorado Springs, CO, 2007, Chapter 2.

Before we start we'd like to remember Bob Eden, who was here with us at fellowship on March 23rd. You may recall that his wife Nell played the piano for us. Bob's funeral was yesterday at Valley Community Baptist Church in Avon.

Dialog

Donna: I have a prayer request.

Rick: You do?

Donna: Yes. I'd like God to give us a beach house, a Mercedes Benz, and lots of money.

Rick: A beach house, a Mercedes Benz, and lots of money?

Donna: Yes.

Rick: Why?

Donna: I'm tired of living an ordinary life and want to start living the high life, just like all the celebrities we see on TV. Do you think God will grant my request?

Rick: Well, probably not.

Donna: Why?

Rick: Well, for starters, you're asking with wrong motives. James 4:3 says, "When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures."

Donna: Oh. But I thought God would give us anything we ask for. That's in the Bible, isn't it?

Rick: Yes. Matthew 7:7-8 says, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened."

Donna: So, what's the problem?

Rick: There's a caveat.

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Donna: A caveat?

Rick: Yes. John 15:7 says, “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.”

Donna: Oh, so you have to remain in Jesus to get what we want?

Rick: Yes, but your heart has to be right with him too.

Donna: What does it mean to remain in Jesus and to be right with him?

Rick: You need to be in a right relationship with Jesus. We talk to God through prayer; God talks to us through his word. If the Holy Spirit is living in you and guiding you each day, you’ll only want to ask for good things, godly things, rather than material things. Suppose a little child asked you for something that you knew was bad for him, like riding his tricycle in the middle of a busy street. What would you do?

Donna: I’d tell him he couldn’t.

Rick: Correct. In the same way, God may not answer our prayers in the way we want if he knows it would be bad for us.

Donna: How do we know if God will answer our prayers?

Rick: We know by faith. Hebrews 11:1 says, “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for, and certain of what we do not see.”

Donna: So, we should believe God will answer our prayers in a way that is best for us, as we would answer the requests of a child?

Rick: Correct. There are three likely answers to our prayers: “Yes,” “No,” and “Wait.” We know that God loves us. After all, he gave his only son to die for our sins. We are his adopted children. He wants to give us what’s best for us. Matthew 7:9-11 says, “Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!”

Donna: So, God delights in answering our prayers, as we delight in giving gifts to our children or other loved ones.

Rick: Exactly. We can be sure that God will hear our prayers. 1 John 5:14-15 says, “This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.”

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Donna: There's that caveat thingy again. It must be in accordance with his will, right?

Rick: Right. So, after all this discussion about prayer, do you have a revised list of prayer requests?

Donna: Well, we still need a new kitchen, our son John has a new girlfriend who we haven't met yet, four people we knew have died in the last three weeks, and your dad's health isn't that great. So there's lots to be worried about.

Rick: Yes, there is, but we don't have to worry. We can place our concerns in God's hands and he will help us. Philippians 4:6-7 says, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Donna: There's lots of other people who need prayer too. I have all the people in my Deacons' flock to care for, and a lot of my friends and family don't know Jesus. Besides that, there are so many problems in the world – famine, wars, criminal activity. What can possibly be done about all these problems? It's overwhelming.

Rick: Ephesians 3:20 says, that God "... is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us..." God is able to do more than we think is possible. He's able deal with all these problems in his own way because he is God. We don't have to take those burdens on ourselves.

Donna: That's good. I certainly couldn't handle all that pressure.

Rick: We don't have to. God doesn't want us to mope around in fear and worry. We can present our requests to God and trust he will take care of whatever is concerning us. John 16:24 says, "Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete." So, God wants us to be joyful.

Donna: Why do we pray in Jesus' name?

Rick: Suppose you called the White House and asked to talk to the president. Do you think your call would get through?

Donna: Probably not.

Rick: But let's say your name was Oprah Winfrey or Bill Gates. Do you think they'd take your call?

Donna: Probably.

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Rick: Likewise, we don't have access to the Father based on our own merits, but we do have access based on Jesus' merit. Jesus is our high priest. Hebrews 8:1 says that Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven. Do you suppose that if we ask a prayer in his name that it will get through to God the Father?

Donna: Absolutely. Jesus is sitting right next to him.

Rick: Romans 8:26-27 says, "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God."

Donna: So, the Holy Spirit helps us to pray and intercedes for us, we can be sure our prayers are being heard, and that they will be answered in God's timing, based on what's best for us.

Rick: I think you've got it. As Christians, don't have to worry or be fearful. We know that God hears our prayers and will answer them in accordance with his will for us and others. The most important prayer we can ever make is to ask Jesus to be our savior. Romans 10:9 says that "If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." We hope that you'll pray that prayer, if you never have before, and live a life filled with joy forever.