

Seeking the Specific Goodness of God

by John Edmiston

Walking In the Spirit – Series 40 (A Ministry of Eternity Christian Fellowship)

Matthew 7:7-11 MKJV *Ask and it shall be given to you; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you. (8) For each one who asks receives; and he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, it shall be opened. (9) Or what man is there of you, if his son asks a loaf, will he give him a stone? (10) Or if he asks a fish, will he give him a snake? (11) If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father in Heaven give good things to those who ask Him?*

Our goals and problems in life are specific to our personal situations. The needs of one person can be entirely different from the needs of another. Different factors such as our callings, personalities, ministry situations, relationships and physical constitutions all mean that we are unique in the particular good things we need from God each day.

A good Father knows each of His children and gives them different gifts. One child may get a chess set, another a football and another a dollhouse and each would be delighted with what they received. But mix them up and see what happens! Now if earthly fathers know what gifts to give each of their very different children in order to please them, then how much does our Father in Heaven know these things? God wants us to enjoy life and to delight in His Creation, yet being aware it is not Mammon or earning ability that supplies the good things in life - but rather it is God Himself:

1 Timothy 6:17 ESV *As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.*

Ecclesiastes 5:18-20 ESV *(18) Behold, what I have seen to be good and fitting is to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of his life that God has given him, for this is his lot. (19) Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil--this is the gift of God. (20) For he will not much remember the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart.*

Now how do you get your earthly father to give you an electronics set instead of a football (or vice-versa)? You ask, you seek and you knock! And you do so specifically, in a targeted way. For instance: "I want a red road bike for Christmas with ten-speed gears, and with size 26 inch wheels". And you believe that because

your earthly father is good and kind and gracious that he will give you the desires of your heart!

In some ways our prayer life need be little different from a grown-up version of our child-like requests at Christmas time and can contain very specific items such as: *"Lord I need wisdom on how to handle the Williams contract, please show me if they are telling the truth and lead me to the right pricing structure and time for delivery"*

If that is the wisdom you need for that day, then that is the wisdom you should ask God for! In Hebrew thinking wisdom and knowledge were not abstract but were tied to practical outcomes. When God revealed wisdom to Joseph or Daniel it was specific knowledge that was made known in order to solve specific problems that were brought to them by the King:

Daniel 2:20-23 ESV *Daniel answered and said: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. (21) He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding; (22) he reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him. (23) To you, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for you have given me wisdom and might, and have now made known to me what we asked of you, for you have made known to us the king's matter."*

Our trust is not to be in our own wisdom, riches, might and power but in God who guides us and provides all good things for us, both spiritual and material. We have specific needs for wisdom, provision, deliverance, healing and many other things and we should be bold and ask God for what we need:

Hebrews 4:16 ESV *Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

1 John 5:14-15 ESV *And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. (15) And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.*

And not just what we need but that which will bring delight to us. God is not stingy or mean. God wants His children to be happy as long as they continue to be faithful to Him:

Psalms 20:4-7 ESV *May he grant you your heart's desire and fulfill all your plans! (5) May we shout for joy over your salvation, and in the name of our God set up our banners! May the LORD fulfill all your petitions! (6) Now I know that the LORD saves his anointed; he will answer him from his holy heaven with the saving might of his right hand. (7) Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.*

Psalms 37:3-6 ESV *Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness. (4) Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart. (5) Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act. (6) He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday.*

We should seek all our good from the hand of God. We should look to Him for all we need! Yes we may still have to work, but He will provide the work and we will delight in our tasks. We will know the joy of life and the joy of success in what we do because our God will be with us in all things.

Many Christians lack confidence in God's goodness or they dismiss it as 'the prosperity gospel'. But the goodness of God is a major theme of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation and was part of Paul's preaching at Lystra:

Acts 14:17 ESV *Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness."*

and Jesus contrasts His goodness with the destructive work of Satan:

John 10:10 ESV *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.*

Here are some of the good things that you might want to ask God for: salvation of yourself, your friends or your family members; joy, hope, increased faith, daily bread, increased ministry results, favor with God and man, particular items of provision, a specific job, wisdom concerning a relationship, wisdom in work or business transactions, the ability to be a peacemaker, increased patience and forbearance, understanding of God's Word, understanding of life situations, negotiating skill, greater delight in worship, a good bible study to join, physical healing, growth in grace for your children, academic success for your children, and so on and so forth.

These are all good and legitimate things to ask for. Bring them before the Lord in detail and ask for them passionately and specifically, promising to give God the glory when the prayer is answered. Prayer that is limp, vague, overly general (so that it is 'safe') and half-hearted is powerless. But fervent, specific, commanding and righteous prayer is powerful:

James 5:16-18 MKJV *Confess faults to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous one avails much. (17) Elijah was a man of like passion as we are. And he prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for the time of three years and six months. (18) And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth caused its fruit to sprout.*

When you pray you should ask, seek and knock being confident of the goodness of God, waiting and persisting (Luke 11:5-13), with all godly patience and fear of the Lord, never doubting or wavering in faith. This is what Abraham did when he specifically asked for a son and heir in his old age:

Romans 4:18-22 MKJV *(19) And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body already dead (being about a hundred years old) or the deadening of Sarah's womb. (20) He did not stagger at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, (21) and being fully persuaded that what God had promised, He was also able to perform. (22) And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.*

Do not be discouraged. God has not forgotten you. He simply wants you to ask Him for the good things that you need and to truly believe that you will receive it from Him.

Mark 11:24 EMTV *For this reason I say to you, all things whatsoever you ask for in prayer, believe that you will receive them, and they will be yours.*

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