



# A PRAYING CHURCH

Preaching and Teaching Resources

ADRIAN ROGERS





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# A Praying Church

**SERMON REFERENCE:** Matthew 7:7-8

**LWF SERMON NUMBER:** #2499

There is no substitute for prayer, and a church is only as useful as her prayer life. The devil cannot keep God from answering our prayers, so he tries to keep us from asking. But our Lord has commanded us to pray.

Adrian Rogers says, “The greatest problem that you have in your life is not unanswered prayer; the greatest problem is unasked prayer.”

Matthew 7:7-8 says, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.”

These are the words of Jesus—an undeniable, impeccable promise to a praying church.

God already knows our needs before we ask. We pray, not to impress or inform Him, but to invite Him into our circumstances. God wants us to abide in Him, and prayer teaches us to depend on Him.

## **This passage reminds us first to ask and express our desires to God.**

There is no division between spiritual things we should ask for and secular things we shouldn't. We can't consider some things too big or too small for God to answer. Whatever our desires may be, if they are something we can ask God's help for, we should give them to God. Sometimes the answer is direct.

## **Secondly, we're reminded to seek and expect direction from God.**

Sometimes, God's ways are unknown to us, so His answers are different from what we expect. What we ask for is not what God wants us to have. As we seek God, He will direct our prayers over time so that we will ask for the right things.

## **Finally, this passage tells us to knock and exercise determination with God.**

We cannot give up too easily; we must remember that sometimes, God's answers are delayed and we must be persistent. We should only stop knocking after we have an answer in hand or in our hearts, or if God says “no.” Until then, we must ask, seek and continue knocking, inviting God into our lives, one prayer at a time.

## **Life Application**

Is there something in your heart and mind that you've been afraid to pray for? Freely ask God, seek Him, and continue knocking. He is faithful to answer, whether directly, differently, or delayed.



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## 1) INTRODUCTION

- a) The church needs to be a praying church.
  - i) A church will be no greater, no better, and no more useful than her prayer life.
- b) The church's prayer life will not be any better than our lives because we are the church.
  - i) Instead of asking if your church is a praying church, ask yourself, "Am I a praying Christian?"
- c) If you could ask the Lord Jesus Christ for anything you wanted, what would you ask Him for?
  - i) The disciples asked, "Lord, teach us to pray."
    - (1) Luke 11:1
- d) Matthew 7:7-8
  - i) These are the words of Jesus.
  - ii) This is an undeniable, impeccable promise.
  - iii) The Lord says that we are to ask, to seek, and to knock.
    - (1) When we ask, that speaks of our desires.
    - (2) When we seek, that speaks of God's direction.
    - (3) When we knock, that speaks of determination.
- e) We need to bring desire, direction, and determination together to get our prayers answered before God.
- f) The greatest problem that we have in our lives is not unanswered prayer, but unoffered or unasked prayer.
  - i) James 4:2
- g) Not to pray is not only to miss a blessing, but it is also rebellious.
  - i) Our Lord has commanded us to pray.
    - (1) Luke 18:1
    - (2) Mark 14:38
    - (3) Philippians 4:6
- h) There is no substitute for prayer.
  - i) Not enthusiasm, not eloquence, and not energy.
  - ii) There is no substitute for intercession and prayer.
- i) The reason that many of us are poverty-stricken in our spiritual lives is that we have never learned to pray.
- j) Why does God ask us to pray?
  - i) Matthew 6:7-8
    - (1) God knows before we ask, so why should we ask?
  - ii) We should not pray to impress God.
    - (1) Don't use vain repetition.
  - iii) We should not pray to inform God.
    - (1) God already knows what things we need.



- (a) There is nothing we can tell Him that He does not already know.
- iv) We should not pray to instruct God.
  - (1) Prayer is not some way where we bend God's will to fit our will.
- v) We pray to invite God to be a part of our lives so that we can delight ourselves in the Lord.
  - (1) 2 Corinthians 6:1
  - (2) God loves us so much that He gives us the privilege of participating in His kingdom work through prayer.
- k) God can work without our prayers, but we cannot work without God.
  - i) It is prayer that causes us to depend upon Him.
- l) God does not want us to live lives independent of Him.
  - i) If God simply blessed us without our asking, then that would teach us to live life independently from God.
  - ii) John 15:7
    - (1) God wants us to abide with Him.
- m) The devil cannot keep God from answering, but he will endeavor to keep us from asking.
- n) Matthew 7:7
- o) In today's message, we will look at the following three factors of prayer:
  - i) The desire factor.
    - (1) Ask and express our desires to God.
  - ii) The direction factor.
    - (1) Seek and expect direction from God.
  - iii) The determination factor.
    - (1) Knock and exercise determination with God.

**2) THE DESIRE FACTOR: ASK AND EXPRESS OUR DESIRES TO GOD (MARK 11:24)**

- a) Psalm 37:4
- b) Do not get the idea that there are spiritual things that we can ask for and secular things that we cannot ask for.
  - i) The Bible never divides life between the sacred and the secular.
    - (1) With God, every task is a holy task, and every day is a holy day.
  - ii) Philippians 4:6
- c) A good test as to whether we should desire something or do something is can we ask God to help us do it or to do it through us.
  - i) Whatever you desire, tell God; ask.
  - ii) If you want the wrong thing, then tell Him and ask Him to fix your "wanter".
    - (1) We cannot hide it from God.
      - (a) He already knows it.
- d) Pray about everything.
  - i) The responsibility for asking is ours.
    - (1) The responsibility for giving is God's.
  - ii) Learn to ask God for whatever you want.
- e) The answers to our prayers can be: direct, different, or delayed.



- i) Sometimes we ask God, and the answer is absolutely direct.
- f) Don't think of some things as being too big or too small for God to answer.
  - i) God knows the desire of our hearts.
    - (1) So, don't be afraid to ask God.
- g) Satan cannot keep God from answering, so he will try to keep us from asking.
  - i) God cannot answer unless we ask.
- h) Mark 11:24
- i) The desire factor is ask and express our desires to God.

### 3) THE DIRECTION FACTOR: SEEK AND EXPECT DIRECTION FROM GOD (MATTHEW 7:7)

- a) Sometimes there are things that we ask God for and they are not His will.
- b) Matthew 7:7
  - i) Jesus said to "seek" because sometimes He wants to redirect our prayers to His will.
- c) Asking and seeking have to be linked together.
  - i) God's ways are unknown to us.
  - ii) Sometimes we are asking for one thing, but we need to be seeking another thing.
    - (1) So, we keep asking and seeking until God directs our prayer, if we are not asking for the right thing the first time.
- d) Have you ever thanked God for unanswered prayer?
  - i) Sometimes we ask God for things, and it is not what God wants us to have.
    - (1) We have to keep seeking God until He shows us what His real plan for us is.
- e) Sometimes the answers to prayer are different.
  - i) 2 Corinthians 12:7-9
    - (1) Paul had a thorn in the flesh, and he asked God to take it away.
      - (a) Three seasons of prayer he prayed.
      - (2) But God had something different and something better.
      - (3) God gave Paul a special anointing, a special power.

### 4) THE DETERMINATION FACTOR: KNOCK AND EXERCISE DETERMINATION WITH GOD (MATTHEW 7:7-8)

- a) Sometimes we ask in the will of God and with specificity for what God wants to give us, but we give up too easily.
- b) To knock implies determination.
- c) Matthew 7:7-8
  - i) In the Greek language, the word is "knock and keep on knocking".
  - ii) Sometimes the answers are direct.
    - (1) We ask God for something and He gives it.
  - iii) Sometimes the answers are different.
    - (1) We ask God for one thing, and in love God does not give it; He gives us something better but different.
  - iv) Sometimes the answers are delayed.
    - (1) There seems to be an impediment there.
    - (2) We have asked God and sought God, but the door is closed.
      - (a) God says to keep knocking.



- d) This same Scripture, “Ask, seek, and knock,” is repeated in Luke 11:5-9.
  - i) In the Middle East, if a friend comes to you, then you must invite him to stay, and you must feed him.
  - ii) The word “importunity” in verse 8 means “persistence”.
  - iii) This passage is not talking about a little rattle on the doorknob, but about a man who was banging on the door.
  - iv) Why would Jesus use an illustration like this about prayer?
    - (1) He was not saying that God is like an unconcerned neighbor.
    - (2) He was saying that if a neighbor would get up from sleep and get the loaves of bread just because he was being pestered, then how much more will God hear us if we continue to seek, to ask, and to knock?
- e) In Luke 18:4-8, Jesus tells a story of an unjust judge and a widow.
  - i) The widow had a good case, but the judge would not answer because he didn’t have time for her.
    - (1) The widow kept on pestering the judge for an answer.
  - ii) The judge didn’t fear God and had no respect for man.
    - (1) But because the widow troubled him, he avenged her.
- f) In these stories that Jesus told, He was not saying that God is like an unconcerned neighbor or like the wicked judge.
  - i) Jesus is saying that if an unconcerned neighbor will hear persistent prayer and an unconcerned judge will hear persistent prayer, then keep on knocking.
- g) Matthew 15:21-28
  - i) A Canaanite woman had a daughter who was demon-possessed.
    - (1) She came to Jesus and asked Him to do something for her daughter.
  - ii) Jesus told her that He had not come to the Canaanites but to the lost sheep of Israel.
    - (1) He was not going to take the children’s bread and give it to dogs.
      - (a) If Jesus had talked to you that way, you would think that He didn’t care.
    - (2) The woman said that He was right, but that she was a dog under His table.
      - (a) She would stay there until she got a crumb from Jesus.
    - (3) Jesus was not trying to be cruel to her, He was trying to teach her to knock and persist.
  - iii) Jesus said that her faith was great.
    - (1) She would have what she asked.
- h) 1 Kings 18:41-46
  - i) Elijah was a prophet of God in the Old Testament.
  - ii) God had shut up Heaven so that it would not rain for three years.
    - (1) It was a judgment of God upon the land.
  - iii) But Elijah and the people prayed for rain for the glory of God.
  - iv) Elijah went up on the top of Mount Carmel, and several times he sent his servant to see if there were any clouds.
    - (1) On the seventh time, the servant saw a cloud.
      - (a) There was going to be an abundance of rain.
  - v) We need to keep on praying until God rains down upon us.



- vi) Here was a man who knocked and kept on knocking.
  - (1) If God doesn't answer your prayer, then just keep praying.
- i) How long should we continue to pray?
  - i) We continue to knock (pray) until we have the answer in our hand, in our heart, or until God says, "No".
  - ii) If we have the answer in our hand, then we don't have to keep asking.
  - iii) We may have the answer in our heart.
    - (1) God tells us that He has heard our prayer and to wait upon Him.
      - (a) We need to trust Him.
      - (b) He will take care of it.
  - iv) Sometimes God will just simply say, "No".
    - (1) It is not because He doesn't love us; it is because He does love us.
      - (a) Three of God's greatest prophets in the Bible asked God to kill them, but God said, "No."
- j) We ask, seek and knock.
  - i) Pray until you have the answer in your hand, in your heart, or until God says, "No."
  - ii) The answer may be direct, it may be different, or it may be delayed.
    - (1) But God answers prayer.

## 5) CONCLUSION

- a) Develop the habit of asking, seeking, and knocking.
- b) Matthew 7:7
  - i) In this passage, Jesus was talking to His children.
    - (1) God may answer the prayer of an unsaved man, but He has never promised to.
    - (2) These promises are to God's children.
- c) The time will come when for God to answer your prayer will mean more to you than anything in the world.
  - i) You cannot ask with assurance unless you are a child of God.
- d) If you do not know the Lord Jesus as your personal Savior, then trust Him today.
- e) Jesus loves you so much that He took your sin debt and paid it with His precious blood on the cross.
  - i) John 19:30
  - ii) He offers you salvation if you will trust Him and receive what He did for you.
- f) Do you know Jesus personally? If not, you can pray to Him today by asking Him to come into your life.
- g) Call upon Jesus today. Repent (turn) from your sins, and turn to Jesus. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins, and acknowledge Him as Lord of your life.
  - i) Romans 3:23
  - ii) Romans 10:9-10
  - iii) Romans 10:13
  - iv) Acts 16:31
  - v) John 3:16





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We've been talking about the kind of church that we ought to be, the kind of church that I've tried to teach you to be in these years that God has given me the wonderful privilege of being your pastor. This morning, I want you to open God's Word, if you will, to Matthew chapter 7, and in a moment, we're going to look at verses 7 and 8. I know they are very familiar to you. But the church that I want to be talking about today, our church, needs to be a praying church. We've talked about a unified church, and a steadfast church, and other things; but, today, a praying church. Our church will be no greater, no better, no more useful than her prayer life. And her prayer life is not going to be any better than your life, because you are the church. And don't ask yourself, "Is my church a praying church?" Ask yourself this question, "Am I a praying Christian?"

If you could ask the Lord Jesus Christ for anything you wanted, what would you ask Him for? Would you say, "Lord, teach me to preach," or, "Lord, teach me to sing," or, "Lord, teach me to lead?" The disciples prayed, asked this, "Lord, teach us to pray." And the Lord gave them some words here, and I want you to listen to them. This is Matthew chapter 7 verses 7 and 8. Listen carefully, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." These are not the words of Adrian. These are the words of Jesus: undeniable, impeccable promise. Our Lord says we're to ask, to seek, and to knock.

When we ask, that speaks of our desires. When we seek, that speaks of God's direction. And when we knock, that speaks of determination. And what we need to do is to bring desire, direction, and determination together into a burning laser point to get our prayers answered before God. Now, I want to tell you folks, listen to me. The greatest problem that you have in your life is not unanswered prayer; the greatest problem is unoffered prayer, unasked prayer. The Bible says in James chapter 4 and verse 2, "We have not because we ask not." You see, not to pray is not only to miss a blessing; it is rebellious. Our Lord has commanded us to pray.

Quickly jot these Scriptures down: Luke 18 verse 1. And He says in here that, "Men ought always to pray." Now, who said that? Jesus said that. Mark chapter 14 and verse 38, Jesus said, "Watch and pray." "Watch and pray." And the apostle Paul said in Philippians chapter 4 verse 6, "Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." There's no substitute for prayer. Not enthusiasm. Not eloquence. Not energy. There is no substitute for intercession and for prayer. And the reason that many of us fail, the reason that many of us are poverty-stricken in our spiritual life is, we've never learned to pray. May God help you to pray, may God help me to pray, so this church will be a praying church.

Now, listen very carefully. Why does God ask us to pray? It's a good question. I mean, isn't God good? Doesn't God want to do good things? And doesn't God know everything? So why should we pray? Or put in an ancillary verse over there in Matthew 6, we're in Matthew 7, go back to Matthew 6. Jesus said here in verses 7 and 8, "But when you pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do, for they think they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be ye not therefore like unto them," now, watch this, "for



your Father knoweth what things you have need of before you ask Him." That's very interesting. God knows before you ask. Well, that just begs the question then: Why should we ask?

Well, number one: **not to impress God**. Don't use vain repetition. You don't have to be a junior-size Shakespeare in order to pray with your little flowery praises. We don't pray to impress God. And **we don't pray to inform God**. God already knows what things we need. He knows everything that you need, and there's nothing you can tell Him that He does not already know. So if you don't pray to impress God and you don't pray to inform God, why do you pray? **Do you pray to instruct God?** Absolutely not. Prayer is not some way where you bend God's will to fit your will. You don't instruct God in prayer. Why do we pray? **To invite God**. To invite God to be a part of our lives so we can delight ourselves in the Lord. The Bible says there in Second Corinthians chapter 6 verse 1 that we are, "Workers together with Him." God loves us so much that God gives us the privilege of participating in His kingdom work through prayer.

Now, God can work without our prayers, but we cannot work without God, and it is prayer that causes us to depend upon Him. God does not want us to live lives independent of Him. If God just simply blessed us without our asking, what would that do? That would teach us to live life independently from God. But Jesus said in John 15:7, "If you abide in Me and My Word abides in you, then you'll ask what you will and it shall be done unto you." You see, God wants you to abide with Him. And that's the reason God has taught us to pray; to invite Him to take control of our lives.

Now listen very carefully. The devil cannot keep God from answering. So what will he do? He will endeavor to keep you from asking. Think about it now. The devil can't keep God from answering. So what will he do? He will try to keep us from asking. Now, our Lord in this Scripture says, "Ask, seek, and knock."

Now, three factors I want to give you. Factor number one; **the desire factor, ask and express your desires to God**. So if you have a desire in your heart, "What things soever ye desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them and you shall have them." Mark 11 verse 24. Now the Bible says in Psalm 37 verse 4, "Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desire of your heart." Now, don't get the idea that there are spiritual things that you can ask for and secular things that you cannot ask for. The Bible never divides life between the sacred and the secular. With God every task is a holy task, every day is a holy day. Can you imagine Jesus dividing His life into the sacred and the secular? Can you imagine Jesus saying, "Now, Lord Father, when I preach, I want anointing, but the rest of the time I'll do it Myself." No, you see, "In everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." A good test as to whether you should desire it or whether you should do it, is can you ask God to help you, or can you ask God to do it through you? Whatever you desire, listen, whatever you desire, tell God. Ask.

Well, you say, "What if I want the wrong thing?" Tell Him. Say, "Lord, I want the wrong thing. Have mercy upon me, O God. Fix my want-er." That's right. Listen, you can't hide it from God. If you want it, He already knows it, doesn't He? So tell Him. Say, "O God, this is what I want, and I know it's not what You want." Say, "Have mercy upon me." But friend, pray about everything. The responsibility for asking is ours. The responsibility for giving is God's. Now, you just ask. Learn to ask God for whatever you want.

You see, sometimes the answer to prayer is direct. And I want you to learn these three words today: direct, different, and delayed. All right, sometimes you ask God, and the answer is absolutely direct.

I went to the Inauguration of our President. Had a wonderful time, and God blessed our lives. But, I did not have a ticket for the Inauguration, so I called our Senators' offices, Bill Frist and Lamar Alexander,



and I said, "I need a ticket." Well, they sent a ticket, but they said, "We need to tell you, it is standing and you will be 1/3 of a mile back." No exaggeration. A third of a mile! "Well, I'll stay home and watch on television."

And so I asked another friend for a better ticket. He said, "Yes, you're supposed to have better ticket in a seated area." And he said, "I've sent it over to the hotel." I went to the hotel. It wasn't there. I went again. It wasn't there. I went again. It wasn't there. It was time for the inaugural event. And I'm sitting out there in the lobby, and Jim Dobson comes around the corner. We fellowshipped some. Jim's a good friend and we fellowshipped some. He said, "What are you doing?" I said, "A man was supposed to send some tickets over here for me, and they haven't come." "Well," his friend there said, "Look, I've got four tickets, one, two, three, four." I had my daughter and son-in-law. "One, two, three, four, here." And these were the best seats in the house. I was as about as close as those of you on the back row, sitting in a nice chair on a cement platform.

Now let me tell you something. Just before I was given those tickets, I prayed, and here's what I prayed, I said, "Lord, I don't have to have those tickets, and I'm no better than anybody else in this city. There's no reason that I should have the privilege of getting a closer seat or having a chair to sit on, but I want one." And I said, "God, I don't know this is Your will. I can't pray in the name of Jesus. It's just what I want. Lord, I'm Your child. That's what I want." I'd not prayed that prayer two or three minutes before they came around the corner, and I had four of the best seats in the place in my hand. I asked Him and the answer was direct. You know, don't think of some things too big or too small for God to answer.

Down in Florida one time I got to go fishing. And I love to fish, especially in salt water, not one of these cow ponds around here. I'm sorry. But I was out in the salt water lagoon called the Indian River with some pals. And I had not been fishing for a long time. We were wading on the sandbar casting for speckled trout. And I'm talking to the Lord all by myself, away from everybody else, just loving Him and praising Him. And I said, "Lord, I am not catching any fish." And I said, "Lord, I haven't been fishing for a long time, and it may be a long time before I go fishing again. But, Lord, I want to catch a great big trout." I told Him this. "I want to catch a, not a small one, I want to catch a big one." And I said, "I can't ask in Jesus' name. I have no right to catch a big fish. It's not a necessity. But I want one."

I'd not prayed that prayer any longer than two minutes. I dropped that MirrOlure down into a deep hole there off that sandbar and began to bring it up, and I saw a big yellow mouth like that coming up out of that water. And that big speckled trout hit that thing, and I wrestled him all over the landscape out there, or the waterscape. Finally got him landed. It was a prize trout. It was one they, what they call a button trout. Immediately after I prayed for this fish, there God gave the answer. I said, "Lord, that was great. I want another one." And I cast for another one. And I suppose in two or three more minutes I'd caught another huge trout. I stopped asking and I stopped catching. Now, what was God doing? God knew the desire of my heart. You see, don't be afraid to ask God. Sometimes the answers like that are absolutely direct.

I woke up one night with an excruciating pain in my right ear. What caused it, I do not know. But I put my hand on my ear, and I said, "O, Jesus, in Your holy name, heal me!" because I felt that was His will. Immediately, immediately, immediately the pain was gone. I don't know what caused it, but I know who took it. His name was Jesus.

I was driving to a revival meeting one time. And this was in Florida. And I'd preached Sunday morning at Merritt Island, and I was going over to Wauchula, Florida. Was out there driving my automobile, going



along just as happy as I could be, driving about 65 miles an hour, when my car stopped running. It didn't sputter. It just stopped running. The engine was not running at all. I put it in neutral, coasted as far as I could. I'm out there all by myself on this road, and the car won't run. I did what everybody does. I got out and looked under the hood. I mean, there's the engine. It hadn't fallen out. What was wrong with that car, I don't know, but I got in and I cranked and I cranked and I cranked and I cranked, and it would not even sputter, till, finally, my battery was really going, And I said, "Well, worse than a car not running, now I'm going to have a dead battery." Then I thought, "Adrian, have you asked God?" I got out of that car and I, now, I know this sounds silly, but I laid my hand on the hood, and I said, "Lord, if You are the Great Physician, You're also the Great Mechanic. And I ask You, in the name of Jesus," 'cause I was going to revival meeting, "in the name of Jesus, fix my car." I got in, turned the key. "Phwoooooom!" The engine just roared. You say, "Well, that was a coincidence." You believe what you believe; I'll believe what I believe. But, friend, sometimes the answer is direct. We ask God and God answers our prayer. Now, remember, Satan cannot keep God from answering, so he'll try to keep you from asking. Now, He cannot answer unless we ask.

Now, that's the first factor, the desire factor, "What things soever ye desire." The desire factor is ask and express your desires to God. Now, the second factor is **the direction factor. Seek and expect direction from God**, because sometimes there are things that we ask God for and they're not His will. Why did He say, "Seek?" Because God sometimes wants to redirect our prayers to His will. Asking and seeking have to be linked together. Sometimes God's ways are unknown to us. Sometimes we're asking for one thing and we need to be seeking another thing, and so we keep asking and keep seeking until God directs our prayer, if we're not asking for the right thing the first time.

Have you ever thanked God for unanswered prayer? It's reported that Mrs. Billy Graham said, "I thank God that He does not answer every prayer of mine. Had He done so, I would have married the wrong man five different times." Sometimes we ask God for things, and it's not what God wants us to have, so we have to keep seeking.

This property that we're built on is an answer to prayer, but not because I sought it at first. We were trying to build downtown. And had we built downtown, we would have overbuilt the area and under built our need. But we were trying to buy at least three more acres of property. Out here we have 400 acres of property. But we had 24 acres. We needed at least three more acres of property. And we prayed and I stained Heaven, asking God for the property that we might build a worship center where we could reach people, because we were having three services on Sunday morning. I preached three times in a row, then again Sunday night. Then after church they slid me under the door. And so we were praying.

I remember I was with Roland Maddox. We're walking across the parking lot. And Roland said, "You know, Pastor, that piece of property we've been trying to buy up there?" Said, "The man has just raised the price again." Here's what I said, I can remember the exact words. I said, "Well, praise God. No two-legged man whose breath is in his nostrils is going to stop what God is doing. Just praise God. I don't understand the way, but praise You, Lord. Praise You." That man did us the best favor he could have possibly done for us by raising the price on that property. In Orlando, asleep, or trying to sleep, God laid on my heart that we need to move this entire facility out here. It has been an incredible blessing. We asked God for one thing, and we kept seeking God until God showed us what His real plan for us was.

I remember I used to pray, "O God, let Interstate 40 go through Overton Park." Now, if you're a tree lover, I'm sorry, but that's what I prayed. "Let the interstate go through the park so that our people,



who live where they live, can get to the church rather than going around through Robin Hood's barn," wherever that is. But I told the Lord. I explained the whole deal to Him. You know, I tried to inform Him, and then instruct Him, but I didn't impress Him. But He heard my prayer. When I went and told the mayor of the city what we were about to do, he said, "That's wonderful." He said, "You know, the money that was set aside to go through Overton Park can be used to put an interchange right there." You see, isn't God good? Isn't God good? Hasn't God been good to our church? You see, friend, sometimes the answers are direct. Sometimes the answers are different.

The apostle Paul had a thorn in the flesh. And you read about it over there in Second Corinthians chapter 12 verses 8 and following. And he said, "O God, take away this thorn." Three seasons of prayer he prayed, but God said, "No, I've got something different for you, and I've got something better for you. My strength will be made perfect in your weakness. I'm going to give you a special anointing, a special power."

Now, so, what do we do? We ask and express our desires to God. Then we seek and experience direction from God. And then, thirdly, **we knock**. And when we knock, **we exercise determination with God**. Sometimes we're asking in the will of God. Sometimes we're asking with specificity for what God wants to give us. But we give up too easily. To knock implies determination. In the Greek language, and this was written, as you know, in Greek, the word is, "knock and keep on knocking." Knock, knock, knock upon Heaven's door. Now, I said that sometimes the answers are direct. You ask God for something; there it is. I love those kind of answers. But sometimes the answers are different. You ask God for one thing and God in love does not give it, but He gives you something better, but different.

But sometimes the answers are not direct and they're not different; they are **delayed**. There seems to be some impediment, something there. We've asked God. We've sought God, but the door is closed. And so God says, "Knock, knock, keep on knocking on Heaven's door." That's very interesting. Why would God tell us to do that? Why doesn't God just give us what we ask?

Well this same Scripture, "Ask, seek, and knock," is repeated in Luke chapter 11. You might want to turn over to Luke chapter 11. And Jesus here again is teaching on prayer. And look if you will in Luke chapter 11 verses 5 through 10, "And He said unto them, 'Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go to him at midnight, and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves,''" that is, three loaves of bread, ""for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.'"" Now in the Middle East, if a friend comes to you must invite him to stay there and you must feed him. That is the expected thing. "And he," the man said, "Look, the cupboard's empty. I've got this friend. I've got to feed him something. "And he from within shall answer and say, 'Trouble me not, the door is now shut, and my children are with me. I say unto you, though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity,'" now, just write out in your margin "his persistence," "he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you," here it is, "seek, ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

Now, he's not talking here about a light rattle on the doorknob. He is talking about a man banging on the door. And his friend, his neighbor said, "Will you go away? Do you know what time it is? Man, if you wake up those dogs and wake up those babies, we're going to have some serious trouble." You know, the houses were small. They would sometimes keep animals beneath on the first floor, and the locks were complicated; the whole family often in one room. And he said, "Look, I can't do this. Go away." "I said go away." "I said, how many do you need?" "Get this bread and get out of here." Now why



would Jesus use an illustration like that about prayer? He's not saying that God is like an unconcerned neighbor. He's just saying that if a neighbor will do that just because he's being pestered, how much more will God hear us if we continue to seek, if we continue to ask, if we continue to knock?

Jesus told a story of an unjust judge. There was a widow. She had a good case. But this crooked judge would not answer. He didn't have time for her. And she just kept on pestering him. And notice, if you will, here in Luke chapter 18 and verses 4 through 8, "And he would not for a while, but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I fear not God, nor regard man;'" what a hard-hearted guy this was. Didn't fear God. Had no respect for man. Listen to what he says, "'Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.' And the Lord said, 'Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily.'" Now what's all of this about? Is He saying that God is like an unconcerned neighbor? No! Is He saying God is like a perverted, wicked judge? No! But what He's saying, "If an unconcerned neighbor will hear persistent prayer, if an unconcerned judge will hear persistent prayer, then keep on knocking." That's taught, we see it all in the Bible.

Over there in Matthew chapter 15 verses 22 through 26 there's a story of a Canaanite woman. The Bible calls her a Syrophenician woman. She was from Syria and Phoenicia; that is, she was a Canaanite. She had a daughter that was demon-possessed. She came to Jesus, and she said, "Jesus, I've got a big need. My daughter has a demon. Do something for her." Do you know what Jesus said to her? "I haven't come to you Canaanites. I've come to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Do you think I'm going to take the children's bread and give it to dogs?" Now, suppose Jesus talked to you that way. You'd say, "Some Messiah He is. Some caring person He is. Call me a dog. Said, 'He doesn't care about me and my daughter.' She's demon-possessed." You know what that woman did? In Matthew 15 verses 27 and 28, she said, "That's right, Lord. You described me perfectly. I'm a Gentile dog. But I'm a dog under Your table, and I'm going to stay there until I get a crumb from You." Jesus' heart broke. He wasn't being cruel to that woman. He was trying to teach her to knock, to persist, and He said, "Woman, great is your faith, great. You'll have what you ask." You see, she just continued to knock.

Elijah was a prophet of God in the Old Testament. In First Kings chapters 17 and 18, God had shut up Heaven that it would not rain. For three years it didn't rain. The leaves were shriveled. The animals were dying. It was a judgment of God upon the land. But then Elijah and the people prayed for rain for the glory of God. Elijah went up on the top of Mount Carmel; I've been there many times. And he looked out and he sent his servant. He said, "Go see if you see any clouds." He went. Nothing. He prayed some more. He said, "Go again." He went. Nothing. He prayed some more. "Go again." He went. Nothing. On the seventh time the servant came back and said, "Well, I see a little cloud about the size of a man's hand." Elijah said, "There's going to be an abundance of rain." Friend, we need to keep on praying until God rains down upon us. And here was a man who knocked and kept on knocking. And that's what we need to do. If God doesn't answer your prayer, just keep praying.

Well, that brings up a question; how long should we continue to pray? Let me tell you how long you continue to pray, how long you continue to knock. You continue to knock until you have the answer in your hand or in your heart or until God says, "No." If you have the answer in your hand, you got four tickets, you don't have to keep asking. Now you may have the answer in your heart. God says, "I have heard your prayer. Wait upon Me."



I had a deep prayer request in my life one time. Concerned some of my loved ones. And I tried again to tell God how to do it, but He would not let me instruct Him. But one day He said to me, "Adrian, you trust Me, I'm going to take care of it; I have heard your prayer." Now it took a while for that prayer to come to me, but I had the answer in my heart.

Now sometimes God will just simply say, "No." Why? Because He doesn't love us? No, because He does love us. Three of God's greatest prophets in the Bible asked God to kill them. God said, "No." You know, God said, "No, I'm not going to do that. That's not what you need." You ask. You seek. You knock. You pray until you have the answer in your hand, in your heart, or until God says, "No." The answer may be direct. The answer may be different. The answer may be delayed. But God answers prayer. What is my desire for this dear church? That we will be a praying church.

I hope you will develop the habit of asking, seeking, knocking. These are not my words. These are the words of Jesus, "Ask, it'll be given to you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." But let me put this caveat there. He's talking to His children. Now, God may answer the prayer of an unsaved man, but He's never promised to. These promises are to God's children. Now, friend, I'm telling you something. Listen to me, even if you're not all that excited about going to Heaven and missing Hell, live long enough, and the time will come when for God to answer your prayer will mean more to you than anything in the whole world. And you cannot ask with assurance unless you're a child of God.

Now if you don't know the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, I want to invite you today to give your heart to Him, just to trust Him, to depend upon Him, to do with you and for you and through you what He said He would do. Remember that He loved you so much, He took your sin debt and paid it with His precious blood on the cross, and said, "It is finished; it is paid in full." And then He offers you salvation if you will trust Him and receive what He did for you. When you trust Him, that moment you become a child of God. Now you'll be a baby Christian. You'll have to grow. You're not going to sprout wings and get a halo. You'll have to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus. I'm still growing. I don't want to stop growing. But you'll grow, and the Lord will be in your heart. You'll have fellowship with Him, and Heaven will be your sure destination.

Bow your heads in prayer. If you already know the Lord, I want you to begin to pray for those round about you who may not yet know the Lord. If you do know Him, thank Him that He has saved you. And, today, if you are not sure that you're saved, or sure that you're not saved, I've got wonderful, wonderful, good news for you. Jesus can and will save you today. You might pray a prayer like this: "O God, I'm a poor, lost sinner. I need to be saved, and I want to be saved. Thank You for paying my sin debt with the blood of Your dear Son, Jesus. Lord Jesus, I open my heart right now like a little child. I receive You into my life. Come into my life. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Save me, Jesus. Amen and Amen.



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