

## 20. Can you hear me now?

November 11, 2007

We all are familiar with the catch phrase from Verizon Wireless commercial, "Can you hear me now?" Many cell phone companies promise that they give the most minutes to talk. But in reality, many minutes don't do any good if the cell phone continuously drops the calls. That is why there is a tremendous competition among wireless phone companies in setting up more cell phone towers around communities of the United States.

But the connection between God and us through prayers is beyond any wireless phone company can provide or imagine. There is no activation fee, no monthly charge, no over-the-limit charge, no call-waiting, no out-of-home-area charge, not even an upgrade charge for a better and newer praying method. The connection Adam, the first man, had with God is as good as the most devoted godly man alive on this earth now. The best part of our communication with the Lord is that He answers all of our prayers in person, no secretaries who screen the calls, no answering machines, and no voice mails.

Through prayer – whether we are in a church setting or really bad and horrible place – we get a direct access to the God of the universe. He gives His full attention to me when I pray, at the same time He gives His full attention to millions of believers all over the world. Some may say, "It is impossible." That's why He is God, we ain't.

Some of you ladies are thinking, "God must not be like my husband. He cannot do two things at the same time." Yes, God can do multi-tasking beyond anyone's imagination.

### A. QUESTIONS TO ASK

Before we go deeper, we need to pause and ask ourselves these questions that demand the most honest answers to ourselves and to our God. A simple 'Yes' or 'No' will do.

Q1) Are you satisfied with your prayer life? I am not talking about prayer that requires long hours or flowery words.

Q2) When you pray, are you confident that the Lord is listening to your prayer and after you finish your prayer, the Lord is capable to do what you ask for?

Q3) When somebody asks you to pray for them, do you always remember to pray for them?

Q4) When you pray, do you only want to be seen and heard by God, because you are not concerned about impressing others with your prayers?

If your answers are all "Yes," you ought to come out and teach this subject. If your answer is a half and half, you need to pay attention to this teaching. If your answers are all "No", I need to see you in my office. None of us can honestly and confidently say that we know everything about prayer.

Jesus is going to teach His disciples as well as us how to pray, so that we don't have to wonder, "Can you hear me now, God?"

## **B. TEACH US TO PRAY**

*Luke 11:1 Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."*

There was something about watching Jesus pray that made the disciples want to learn how to pray like Him. Just like the disciples, we need Jesus to teach us to pray.

Prayer is so simple that the smallest child can pray, but it is so great that the mightiest man of God cannot say that he truly has mastered prayer.

Jesus never taught His disciples how to preach, only how to pray. He did not speak much of what was needed to preach well, but much of praying well. To know how to speak to God is far more important than knowing how to speak to man. Not power with men, but power with God is the first thing.

## **C. A FORMAT OF PRAYER WE CAN USE**

*Luke 11:2-4 So He said to them, "When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven. 3 Give us day by day our daily bread. 4 And forgive us our sins, For we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one."*

This prayer is a format we can use, not some fancy formula, nor the most powerful prayer we can whip out when we are in a really bad situation.

Prayer, like many aspects of our walk with God, does not come naturally to us. It must be taught. Who can teach us better than the Son of God Jesus Himself?

### **1) Acknowledgement and Praise**

In v2, it starts with an acknowledgement and praises to the Father in heaven. Jesus doesn't tell us to call Him "Friend," as though we were equal with Him. Or "Master," as though we were slaves. Or "King," as though we were one of the subjects. Rather our relationship with God is that of children to daddy.

Calling Him 'Father' is demonstrating a privileged relationship. In the Old Testament, we don't see anywhere great men and women of God pray to the Lord this way. Jesus opened up to us new and greater paths of intimacy with God.

The next phrase, "*hallowed be Your name,*" shows the attitude we are to show toward God. The word 'hallow' conveys two ideas:

1. to make holy or set apart for holy use,
2. to respect greatly.

The phrase "*Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven*" disturbs some Christians, because they were taught by their Bible teachers that it is God's will to fulfill their will on earth. That is wrong. Prayer isn't a tool to get what we want from God. It is a method to get God's will accomplished in us and all around us. Let me say it a different way: Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance, rather it is getting hold of God's willingness.

By now you might have a question in your heart: Why do we need to start our prayers with praises, adoration and acknowledging who God is? Is it because His ego needs to be stroked by us?

Of course not. Whether we praise Him or not, He is who He is. He doesn't need us, rather we need Him. While we praise Him and acknowledge His sovereignty and power, we get to have the right perspective of the situation we are facing.

Does it mean we have to recite long, meaningless adjectives of praise of God at the beginning of our prayers? The Jewish Rabbis had sayings like, "Whoever is long in prayer is heard." One famous Jewish prayer began: "Blessed, praised, and glorified, exalted, and honored, magnified and lauded be the name of the Holy One." By all means "NO!" If I went to my daddy and recited that phrase to him, he would look at me with those eyes that only daddy could give and would ask me, "Did you take your medication today?"

Here is another very important point we need to ponder. The Father listens to our prayers because our relationship with Him through Jesus Christ. In other words, when a non-believer who doesn't have that Father and son relationship pray, the Father in heaven does not listen to his prayer exception of one kind of prayer.

That is the sinner's prayer. When a non-believer comes to Him to receive Jesus Christ as the Savior and Lord, the Father is all ears.

## 2) Supplications

In v3, Jesus tells us to bring our prayer requests. In many times, our prayers are nothing more than a wish list. As a matter of fact, it often starts and ends with nothing but a wish list. That ain't a prayer, but a demand. We are not in a position to demand anything from God. We need to come to Him humbly and respectfully with our needs, not greed.

## 3) Spiritual Cleansing

In the first half of v4, Jesus teaches our need for daily spiritual cleansing. What food is to the body, forgiveness is to the soul. To receive cleansing of sins, we must simply ask for it. But our appeal must well up from a broken and repentant heart, one that is willing to forgive as well as receive forgiveness.

## 4) Daily Purity

The second half of this v4 sounds like that God is the One who leads us to the temptation that we don't want to get in. That is far from the truth.

*James 1:13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.*

What the v4 means is this: "Do not allow us to be led into temptation." It's a prayer for God's protection from Satan's insidious traps. Each day, Jesus is saying, pray that the Lord will remind us of our vulnerable areas, guard our eyes, guide our thoughts, and keep our hearts and bodies pure.

True prayer is always offered knowing how weak we are in ourselves, and how much we need the power of God. Temptation is literally a test that is permitted by the Lord for our character training, not always a solicitation to do evil. God has promised to keep us from any testing that is greater than what we can handle.

## D. PRAY PERSISTENTLY

*Luke 11:5-10 And He said to them, "Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; 6 for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before*

him'; 7 and he will answer from within and say, 'Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you'? 8 I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs. 9 "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 10 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

In this parable, Jesus did not say that God is like this grouchy neighbor. In fact, He said just the opposite. God the Father is always generous, and delights in meeting the needs of His children.

Jesus teaches us to be persistent when we pray. The Greek word for 'persistence' literally means "shamelessness." The guy asking for bread wasn't concerned about social graces. He didn't care if he awakened the whole neighborhood. He needed bread for his visiting friend, and he shamelessly persisted until he received it.

Do we approach God with that same kind of bold endurance? Or do we knock one time, hear nothing, and quietly tiptoe away? Jesus is saying, "Keep asking, keep seeking, keep knocking!"

Why does Jesus want us to be persistent in our prayers? Is it because the Lord is hard of hearing? Or does He have selective hearing like some of us? While we come to Him persistently, it makes us to depend on Him for the answer of our prayer rather than our own power or intelligence.

### **E. TRUST GOD TO GIVE YOU GOOD THINGS**

*Luke 11:11-13 If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? 12 Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? 13 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"*

When God's people pray, God's reputation is at stake. The way He takes care of His children is a witness to the world that He can be trusted.

God especially delights in giving the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him. We never need doubt God's desire to pour out His Spirit. The problem is in our receiving, not in God's desire to give.

### **F. APPLICATIONS TO PRAY LIKE JESUS**

1) Talk to God as to a loving father.

Approach Him with an attitude of awe and respect.

2) Submit to His kingdom plan.

3) Bring Him your requests daily.

4) Depend on Him for everything – the necessities of life, spiritual cleansing, purity.

5) Don't forget to be persistent.

6) Keep on trusting in Him.