

Our Father Wants to Take Care of Us

Do you ever almost feel guilty asking God for what you want? I have. I have thought, and have heard others express, that it can feel “selfish” to ask. But there is a difference between being selfish, as most understand it, and praying in our self-interests. One is wrong, the other is encouraged by God. Asking God to provide a beautiful, brand new black Corvette for me would be selfish and unnecessary. But praying for a reliable vehicle is asking for my needs to be met. And it certainly is not wrong to ask for things when God Himself tells us to do so.

We know God wants us to go to Him with our needs because He often tells us to in places like the Lord’s Prayer where Jesus is teaching us to pray (Luke 11:1). In that prayer, we are told to pray about God’s glory, God’s Kingdom, God’s provision, God’s forgiveness, and God’s protection. Out of the five things Jesus told us to pray about, three are requests for ourselves. God is our Father and wants us to be dependent on Him. In the next chapter (Mt. 7:7-11), Jesus again brings up the issue of coming to God for our needs.

Matthew 7:7-11 reads as follows:

“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. Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!”

Some have decided to translate the commands with an ongoing nuance (“Keep asking, keep seeking...”). I don’t think the original language demands that translation. In fact, I think the context indicates that Jesus’ point is very different than that idea.

If you notice, the emphasis is on God’s willingness, even His desire, to provide for those whom He loves. The idea is something like, “You’re evil and you wouldn’t think to not care for those whom you love. How much more will a perfect Father care for you?” I would suggest a translation of the idea here is something like, “Just ask, He’ll give it. Just seek and you’ll find. Simply knock, and He’ll open”.

But it’s clear He wants to be asked.

Luke expands further the idea in a similar passage following the Lord’s prayer in chapter eleven of his gospel. This is a parable that helps us understand even more Jesus’ point.

Here's Luke 11:5-8:

"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; for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; 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'? 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."

Notice here that this is not a parable about what God is like. It is not a comparison. It is a contrast.

God is never asleep. He never tells us to go away. The point is that even a friend who is bothered by your coming will eventually give in to you. Just like a sinful parent cares for their children ("if you being evil know how to give good gifts..."), surely a good God will do so even more! He is saying that you don't need to act like this with God. He doesn't give in because you bother Him so much that He finally, and reluctantly, says, "OK, YES...Man, you're a pain..."

God is not like that and doesn't look at your coming that way. He is a good Father who cares. And so, like Matthew, Luke records Jesus' words to underscore the point in 11:9-13.

"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. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. 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? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? 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!"

Do you see the intention? It's not, "Keep pounding on the door", at all. It really is to "Just ask", because your Father loves you and welcomes you. This doesn't mean we should not continue in prayer. That's emphasized and taught in Luke 18:1-8. But it's one thing to labor and battle in prayer while God's indication is to wait. It's a good thing to continue to approach our Father with what we are convinced He wants. It's quite another thing and altogether different to come with the idea that we have to deal with a God whose door is closed, is busy, and that we are troubling Him.

Of course, the ending in Luke's account involves the giving of the Spirit, which the Apostles no doubt prayed for, as he records in his second book, the book of Acts (Acts 1:4-8; 2:1-4). But, as the account of Matthew makes clear, our Father's willingness extends to our general request, as well.

The point is this: God wants you to ask Him for things. And, even more, our Father wants to care for us and wants us to know He both can and will provide. That's one of the main points of the Lord's Prayer to "Give us this day our daily bread". Obviously, you come daily. But as He begins, Jesus assures us that, "For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him." So, we should come.

Never forget that when you pray, your Father welcomes you and will care of your needs.

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