

God Wants Us to Pray and Get What We Pray For



How to Pray and Get What You Pray For (Part 1)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again at the beginning of a new week, sharing with you out of truths that life has taught me, truths that have made the difference between success and failure in my life, and can do the same for you.

First, let me say thank you to those of you who have been writing to me. Before I finish this talk we'll be giving you a mailing address to which you may write. Feel free to share with us your personal needs, your problems, your prayer requests.

This week I'll be dealing with one of my favorite themes, the theme of prayer. For some people, I suppose, prayer seems like an irksome religious duty. For my part, I love to pray, and what's more, I get what I pray for.

As we come to God in prayer, most of us need to begin by changing our negative and unattractive image of God which somehow hinders us and stands in between God and us. I don't know how it is with any of you, but in my experience I remember as a boy growing up at school, and I spent many long and rather weary years in boarding schools, God in my thinking was somewhat like a schoolmaster, and I really wasn't too fond of schoolmasters. But I think I envisaged God as a schoolmaster, sitting at his desk, in his study at the end of a long corridor. And if you ever had to go and see the schoolmaster, you kind of had to tip-toe down the corridor and probably the floor boards would creak as you stepped on them and that would give warning that you were on the way. And then you'd knock at the door and the rather grumpy voice would tell you to come in, and probably begin by scolding you for something you'd done or hadn't done. I think that picture of the school-master was really the way I thought about God. And so for me to be able to pray effectively, that picture that I had of God had to change. And I think somehow, there is a similar picture in the minds of many, of somebody who is a rather long way off and doesn't want to be bothered and he is probably going to scold us. Well, the best thing we can do is stay away from him if possible.

Now that isn't at the truth about God. Actually, when we come to God He does not scold us, He welcomes us. If anything He says, "Why have you waited so long?" There's a beautiful picture of how God welcomes us when we come in the 15th chapter of Luke's gospel. It's the well-known story of the Prodigal Son who'd strayed away from home, wasted all his living, got himself into real deep trouble and ended up absolutely down and out, totally broke with no resources. And when he came to the end of all that his thought was, "I'd better go back home. Perhaps my father will receive me. I couldn't ask him to take me back as a son, but I could ask him to take me as one of his hired hands." And so it says in Luke 15:20:

> "So he got up and went to his father. [Now I want you to notice how his father received him] "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him." (NIV)

See what a welcome he got as soon as he was willing to turn around and go back home? He never had a chance to say "make me as one of your hired servants," because before that, his father was kissing him and welcoming him back as a child. That's a beautiful picture of how God receives us. He doesn't scold us, He doesn't blame us, He isn't stern and distant. He's loving and warm and gracious. When we get that picture of God, it altogether changes the way we pray.

There's another statement in the epistle of James 1:5 about praying for wisdom. James says:

> "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him." (NIV)

Notice, God gives generously and He doesn't find fault. Keep that in mind as you think about praying. God gives generously, He doesn't find fault.

Jesus came to represent the Father to humanity. And the teaching of Jesus on prayer was as totally positive as any area of His teaching. This is what He says in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7:7-8:

> "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; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened." (NIV)

Notice those three positive statements. Every one who asks receives, he who seeks finds, to him who knocks the door will be open. Again, in Matthew 21:22:

> "Everything you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive." (NAS)

Everything you ask in prayer you shall receive. And again in Mark 11:24, Jesus says:

> "Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours." (NIV)

What could be more all embracing than those statements. Everything you ask in prayer, whatever you ask in prayer. And notice what Jesus says in that second context. He says, "Believe that you have received it." It is so important to realize that we receive when we pray. The actual experience of what we've prayed for may have to wait, but by faith we receive what we pray for when we pray. In His closing discourse to His disciples in John's gospel, Jesus three times assures us that God will answer our prayers. Listen to these words, John 14:13-14:

> "And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 'If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.'" (NAS)

How comprehensive. "If you ask anything I will do it"! John 15:7:

> "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you." (NAS)

"Ask whatever you wish." How could you say more than that? Again in John 16:24:

> "Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be made full." (NAS)

There is a special kind of joy that comes from getting our prayers answered. To know that Almighty God, creator of heaven and earth, the Ruler of the whole universe has His ear open to our personal, individual prayer, that He'll do what we ask Him to do, individually. That's one of the most exciting experiences that anybody can ever have. Jesus wants us to have that joy, that special joy that comes from seeing the answers to our prayers. And so He says, "Ask and you will

receive, that your joy may be full."

Now I'd like to give you a final picture for this talk today which illustrates what God wants us to become through our relationship to Him in Jesus Christ. The words are found in Revelation 1:5-6:

> "...To him who loves us, and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father, to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen." (NIV)

Notice what we have become through the forgiveness of our sins and the cleansing blood of Jesus, we have become a kingdom and priests. Other translations say, "kings and priests" or a "kingdom of priests." But we combine two of the highest functions ever made available to man through our relationship to God in Jesus Christ. We are both kings and priests. We are a kingdom of priests. What does that mean? Let's ask ourselves what are the two special functions of kings and priests. I think everybody knows what kings do. They rule, they govern. Not everybody, perhaps, is so clear as to the special function of priests. But the Scripture makes it clear that the special function of priests is to offer sacrifice. So as kings we are to rule, as priests we are to offer sacrifices. But we are a kingdom of priests. In other words, to be in the kingdom we have to be priests, or to put it more simply, only when we learn to minister as priests, can we really begin to rule. To rule as kings we have to learn first of all to minister as priests. We have to learn to offer the kind of sacrifice that God requires of priests in this age.

This kind of sacrifice is stated in 1 Peter 2:5, where Peter says:

> "...you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood [Notice what we are to be in Christ, holy priesthood] offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." (NIV)

Notice that once the word "priesthood" is mentioned, the next word that follows it is "offering" which speaks of sacrifice. So we are a holy priest offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. What kind of spiritual sacrifices does God expect us to offer? Well, we can look at the example of Jesus as recorded in Hebrews 5:7. Speaking about Jesus' life on earth it says,

> "During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions..." (NIV)

What was His sacrifice? His offering? Prayer and petition. That's the kind of sacrifice and offering that God expects from us as priests, prayer and petition. So God wants us to rule as kings, He wants us to offer the sacrifice of prayer and petition as priests. But in order to rule we first have to learn to minister as priests. In other words, we aren't qualified to minister as kings, to rule and to govern, until we've learned first to minister as priests in prayer. In other words, when we learn to pray, then we're qualified to rule. Or put it another way, we learn to rule by praying. But first we have to learn to pray.

Now that's going to be the subject of my talks for the rest of this week, "How You Can Learn to Pray so that You Can Rule."

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll begin to speak about the way in which we need to approach God in prayer. I believe that there are four main requirements for the right approach to God. Tomorrow I'll deal with the first of these requirements.

Radio Program

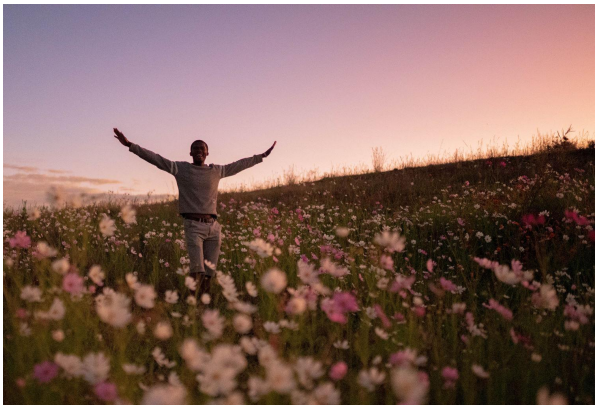
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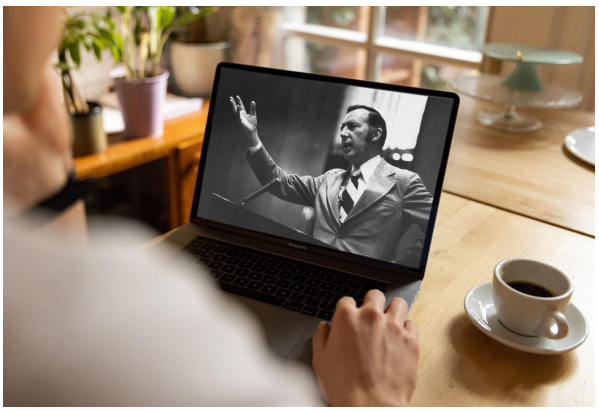
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