



The Teaching of Jesus Christ - Prayer in Perspective

Matthew 7:7-11

1. How do these verses fit into the sermon?
2. How ought we to apply these verses in our own lives?

As we have studied Jesus' teaching on the Sermon on the Mount, we have encountered many different topics along the way. We began in chapter 5 with a description of what a Christian looks like. We entitled this section (5:3-16), "Jesus Describes Kingdom Citizens"

- They are poor in spirit (verse 3).
- They are those who mourn and are gentle (verses 4 and 5).
- They hunger for righteousness (verse 6).
- They are merciful, pure of heart, and make peace with other (verses 7-9)
- They are persecuted for their righteousness (verses 10-12).
- They are salt and light to others (verses 13-16).

We continued in chapter 5 with the demands of righteousness, which God requires -- nothing less than absolute perfection. We entitled this section (5:17-48), "Jesus Requires Perfect Righteousness).

- Jesus doesn't stop at prohibiting murder. He goes on to demand that you never are angry with another person (verses 21-26).
- Jesus doesn't stop at prohibiting adultery or divorce. He goes on to require that we never even think about sexual sin (verses 27-32).
- Jesus doesn't stop at fulfilling your vows to the Lord. He instructs us to be true to our word always! (verses 33-37).
- Jesus doesn't stop at retribution for a wrong done to you. He continues to extend God's standard for you to have a genuine love for your enemy (verses 38-48).

Sound's difficult, right? Better yet, it sounds impossible, because it is impossible, apart from the righteousness that Jesus fulfilled (in verses 17-20). Then, beginning with chapter 6, Jesus has been describing what our practical righteousness ought to look like. We entitled, "Jesus Explains Practical Righteousness" (6:1-7:12). Jesus first addressed the religious realm with ...

- giving (6:1-4)
- praying (6:5-15)
- fasting (6:16-18)

Then, Jesus addressed the day-to-day realm, dealing with ...

- our worldly goods (6:19-24)
- our worry about the future (6:25-33)
- our attitudes and actions toward others (7:1-6)

In this sermon, Jesus has been pretty exhaustive in addressing all aspects of our life. Sure, there may be particular details that He has left out, but one could easily take the Sermon on the Mount and use it as a practical guide for living. (Some liberal theologians recognize this and say that we don't need anything else in the Bible, but this sermon of Jesus). Up to this point, every topic Jesus brought up was new. Yet, there is one topic which Jesus addresses twice. It is this matter of prayer. He addressed it in 6:5-14, and now, He comes to it again in verses 7-11. May I offer to you that this ought to highlight for us **the supreme importance of prayer**. Of all topics, this is the one that Jesus chose to comment further upon. As such, it demands your attention this morning.

Matthew 7:7-12

7 "Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you.

8 "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it shall be opened.

9 "Or what man is there among you, when his son shall ask him for a loaf, will give him a stone?

10 "Or if he shall ask for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he?

11 "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!

12. "Therefore, however you want people to treat you, so treat them, for this is the Law and the Prophets."

These verses aren't particularly difficult to understand. They are actually quite simple and straight forward. Verses 7-11 are talking about prayer. Verse 12 sums up all of our practical living. However, there are two difficulties with these verses.

First of all, actually applying them in our life is difficult. We all struggle in praying as consistently, as fervently, and as passionately as we ought to pray. Prayer is work that is never finished. I don't care how much you pray, you will always feel the need to pray more. As one man said, "If I wished to humble anyone, I should question him about his prayers. I know nothing to compare with this topic for its sorrowful self-confessions" (Dean C. J. Vaughan, as quoted in *Spiritual Leadership*, p. 103, by J. Oswald Sanders). Furthermore, we all struggle in treating others as we want them to treat us. The "Golden Rule of living" (verse 12) seems also to be the "Broken Rule in life." Because we are all sinners, it is natural for us to love ourselves. It is unnatural for us to treat others as we would like for them to treat us. As one man said, this command "cuts to the root of our sinfulness and exposes it" (John Piper, commenting on Matt. 22:39 in a sermon dated, May 7, 1995).

The other difficulty is in understanding how these verses fit into Jesus' sermon. In my study this week, I found that many commentators and pastors failed to even address this question of the connection of these verses with the rest of the Sermon on the Mount. They simply jumped into the content of these verses. Yet, they seem to have little relation to the previous verses or themes.

I want to ask two questions this morning in accordance with the difficulties. I want to spend a little bit of time answering the first question. Then, I want to spend the majority of our time answering the second question. Here is the first question.

1. How do these verses fit into the sermon?

You look at Jesus' words here and you discover that they don't seem to flow very nicely. The transition seems to be quite abrupt, especially with the "Therefore" of verse 12. How does it follow from a discussion on prayer to a conclusion of treating others as you want others to treat you?

As I mentioned previously, Jesus has been continuing though this sermon addressing topic after topic after topic. Never once does He repeat Himself, until this point. His topics have always been unique, until now. I believe that this gives us the key to understanding how these verses fit into Jesus' sermon. I believe that Jesus is beginning to wrap things up in this sermon. These verses are a transition to His final conclusion in verse 13-27, where He basically gives an invitation to follow Him. He will invite us into the narrow gate. He will invite us to build upon a good foundation.

So, with these verses today, Jesus is transitioning and summing it all up. Jesus has spoken of God's great demands upon our life. We come now to understand our great need to meet those demands. Thus, the reason for us to pray. He concludes all of His practical teaching with his statement in verse 12, "Therefore, however you want people to treat you, so treat them, for this is the Law and the Prophets." This is a great summary of all of His teaching here.

Let's now turn our attention to our second question. ...

2. How ought we to apply these verses in our own lives?

The topic of prayer is mentioned in verses 7-11. Let's begin with verse 7, "Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you."

We have three actions. All of which describe our prayer life. Each action increases in fervency. The first action is that of **asking**. This is a simple, verbal request. It doesn't take much effort. Simply open your mouth and the request will come forth. The second action is that of **seeking**. This requires a bit more effort. Seeking implies that you have arisen from your chair and have walked on your two feet to go someplace in your seeking. The third action is that of **knocking**. Again, this requires more effort yet. Not only have you arisen, ... Not only have you walked someplace in your search, ... but now the picture is that of physically beating on a door.

It is a great picture of the mounting effort you are spending in your praying. But, that picture even heightens when you realize that these are present imperatives, which means that they are commanding continual action. The NASB footnote says, "keep asking ... keep seeking ... keep knocking." In other words, your prayers ought to continually take place.

Have you ever played a game with your children, where you hide something and they have to find it? They go out of the room and you hide the object and call them back in. You give them clues as to the whereabouts of the thing you hid. Perhaps you say, "you're getting hotter. Keep going. Keep going. You're almost there!" Your words are encouragement for your children to continue their search for the hidden object. This is what Jesus is telling us. Jesus says, "keep asking ... keep seeking ... keep knocking" -- you'll find it.

This fall, I have been coaching a soccer team of children in kindergarten and first grade. Our first game was yesterday. The rules of this particular league allow two coaches on the field during the game to coach the children while they are playing. On the field yesterday, I discovered that most of my words were simply encouragements to the children to keep going. "Go! Go! Go!" I yelled. This is what Jesus is saying in these words: "keep asking ... keep seeking ... keep knocking!"

This is in line with all of the Scriptural exhortations to pray. In Luke 18, Jesus told a parable "to show that at all times [we] ought to pray and not to lose heart" (Luke 18:1). I love how Samuel, the judge put it when the nation of Israel sinned in asking for an earthly king like all of the other nations. He said, "Far be it from me to sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you" (1 Sam. 12:23). In other words, in some instances, a failure to pray is sin.

The epistles are also flooded with such exhortations. In 1 Thess. 5:17, we are told, to "pray without ceasing." Colossians 4:2 sums it up best,

"Devote yourselves to prayer." You might translate this, "Continue steadfastly to prayer" or "diligently take heed to prayer." Perhaps Ephesians 6:18 sums it up best, "With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints."

The Christian life is a life of prayer. The non-praying Christian is an oxymoron. The words, "non-praying" and "Christian" simply don't go together. Jesus instructs us to have this constant attitude of prayer continually occurring in our lives. Such an attitude surfaces in the lives of those who understand Jesus' words, "apart from Me, you can do nothing" (John 15:5). Think of the reality of what Jesus said. "Apart from Me, you can do nothing!" Being linked to Jesus, as a branch is linked to a vine is the key to all ministry.

Jesus, Himself, understood the reality of constant prayer in His life as He would often slip away to pray (Luke 5:16). If Jesus felt the need to pray constantly, how much more ought we to pray constantly.

Yet, the question naturally comes up, "Well, then, how do you reconcile Jesus' teaching here in Matthew 7 with what He said about prayer in Matthew 6?" In Matthew 6:7-8, Jesus said, "And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need, before you ask Him" (Matthew 6:7-8). Yet, Jesus instructs us here that we are to "keep asking ... keep seeking ... keep knocking"? How are we supposed to do this without many words?

I believe that the key to this is understanding what "meaningless repetition" means. Don't think that it is your many words before God which will ultimately please Him. Rather, Jesus is instructing us to pray repeatedly and fervently and earnestly over a long time.

I think of the example of George Müller. He wrote, "In November 1844, I began to pray for the conversion of five individuals. I prayed every day without a single intermission, whether sick or in health, on the land or on the sea, and whatever the pressure of my engagements might be. Eighteen months elapsed before the first of the five was converted. I thanked God and prayed on for the others. Five years elapsed, and then the second was converted. I thanked God for the second, and prayed on for the other three. Day by day I continued to pray for them, and six years passed before the third was converted. I thanked God for the three, and went on praying for the other two. These two remained unconverted. ... The man to whom God in the riches of his grace has given tens of thousands of answers to prayer in the self-same hour or day in which they were offered has been praying day by day for nearly thirty-six years for the conversion of these individuals, and yet they remain unconverted. But I hope in God, I pray on, and look yet for the answer. They are not converted yet, but they will be." After writing this, George Müller continued to pray for his friends until his death in 1898. Subsequent to George Müller's death, God converted these two men and brought them into His fold (as recorded in Basil Miller's biography of George Müller, *Man of Faith and Miracles*, pp. 145-146). **For fifty-four years, George Müller, "was asking ... and seeking ... and knocking" for God to be gracious to save these men.** This is not meaningless repetition. Rather, George Müller's words were a cry of the heart that aches and longs for others to be saved from the wrath to come. A little child lets you know when he is hungry. You don't need to remind him by asking, "Are you hungry?" So also with genuine, spiritual longing and hungering, continued prayer over long periods of time will be natural.

This is how you reconcile the two statements of Jesus. Obviously, they cannot be contradictory, He said them in the same sermon. Jesus condemns the repeated prayers in which the same thing is said over and over and over and over again. Yet, Jesus delights in the daily prayer that repeated for years, looking for an answer. Each Sunday morning before our worship service, we gather for prayer. As I have reflected upon our prayers, I have thought that we often pray for the same things. We praise the Lord for salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. We praise the Lord for providing us with the facility in which we meet. We often pray for those preaching the word today. We often pray for president Bush and the international situation. We pray for these same things almost every week. I don't think that it is vain repetition. I think that it is applying Jesus' instruction to "keep asking, keep seeking, and keep knocking."

Jesus promises an answer to such prayers. Look at verse 7 and the answers that Jesus promises, "Ask, and it **shall be given** to you; seek, and you **shall find**; knock, and it **shall be opened** to you." What an amazing promise of answered prayer this is! If you are continually asking, you will receive. If you are continually seeking, you will find. If you are continually knocking, it will be opened to you. This isn't an isolated statement in all of Scripture of the promise of answered prayer. Here are similar promises, which are only a sampling of the verses like this. There are many more.

"All things you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive" (Matthew 21:22).

"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" (John 14:13-14).

"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you" (John 15:7).

"Whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight" (1 John 3:22).

"And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him" (1 John 5:14-15).

These are incredible promises! Did you ever hear such tremendously good news that you asked for it to be repeated to you. "What did you say? I don't think that I heard correctly. Could you please say it again." Sometimes our children ask for things that they know that they shouldn't have, but really want. Often, one of them will say, "Dad, can I have a cookie? Please?" even though they know that it is somewhat close to dinner. They are expecting me to say, "No, it's too close to dinner." Sometimes, however, we say, "Yes" to these sorts of questions. The response is almost always the same. They perk up with bright eyes and say, "What???"

In verse 8 Jesus repeats Himself for the slow of heart. He says, "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it shall be opened." The only difference between the words used in verses 7 and 8 is one minor verb. Rather than saying, "it shall be given," Jesus says, "he will receive," which actually means the same thing! What a comfort this ought to be for us. In all of the uncertainties of

life. We can trust our prayer-answering God, who has promised to answer us.

This is particularly applicable to the issues Jesus just discussed. In 7:1-6, Jesus discussed judging and discernment. Last week I had several people ask me after the message about the fine balance between the two sides of condemning another person, yet offering constructive criticism. How do you balance this? Only through much prayer for wisdom. When seeking to balance these extremes, pray to God for wisdom and He will willingly give it. In 6:25-34, Jesus addressed the topic of anxiety concerning our future. How will we ever have attitudes that approach what Jesus said? Only through prayer to God for help to set our minds on things above, not on earthly things (Col. 3:2). The same approach goes for 6:19-24 when Jesus discussed materialism. When you have tendencies to love the world, pray to God for a change in your desires. If you keep asking, seeking and knocking, Jesus promises an answer to your prayer. Each of these examples are simply an illustration of James' words. When faced with a difficulty in life for which we lack the wisdom we desire, James tells us that we can "ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him" (James 1:5).

Though Jesus' words are particularly applicable to the topics He just addressed, they seem to be much more global than simply limiting it to the topics given in the Sermon on the Mount. This is especially true in light of the many verses that I just quoted of unequivocal answers promised to your prayers.

At this point, the question naturally comes up, "Well, what about the prayers that I have prayed in the past that have gone unanswered?" Some may say, ...

- I prayed for the health of my grandmother, and she passed away?
- I prayed earnestly for a job, but the job I want still hasn't yet come?
- I prayed for a spouse, but I've been single all these years?
- I I prayed for children, but I am still barren! Why?
- I prayed the salvation of my children, but they are still wayward?

Once again, we need to be careful not to take Jesus' statement here as an absolute that always hold true in every circumstance. Last week we discovered that Jesus' statement in 7:1, "Do not judge" was not an absolute to be applied in ever circumstance. So, here, we need to take the entire scriptural revelation into account. Jesus isn't a genie, who will answer our every request if we simply rub His lantern the right way.

So, why do prayers go unanswered? Sometimes we simply don't know why. However, there are some times that we do know. I have three reasons why some prayers go unanswered. These reasons will come from the verses I previously mentioned, that appear to teach a similar truth to Jesus' teaching here.

1. Prayers go unanswered because of a lack of faith.

In the days before His death, Jesus was walking into Jerusalem. Along the way, Jesus saw a fig tree with nothing but leaves on it and said, "No longer shall there ever be any fruit from you." Matthew records, "And at once the fig tree withered" (Matt. 21:19). The disciples were amazed at how this could happen. Jesus replied, "Truly I say to you, if you have faith, and do not doubt, you shall not only do what was done to the fig tree but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' it shall happen. And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive" (Matt. 21:22).

On another occasion, Jesus ascended a high mountain with three of His disciples. While there, Jesus' face was transfigured to shine like the sun while His garments became white as light. During this time, several of His other disciples were off in a village some place, trying to help a man whose son had a demon. They tried and they tried and they tried, but failed to cast out the demon. When Jesus returned to them, Jesus promptly cast the demon out of the child (Matt. 17:18). They asked, "Why could we not cast it out?" (Matt. 17:19). Jesus said, "Because of the littleness of your faith" (Matt. 17:20).

A lack of faith will result in unanswered prayer. When we come to God, we must "believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him" (Heb. 11:6). James said the same thing. I already mentioned James 1:5, "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him" (verse 5). When you continue on to verse 6, you see the connection of faith to answered prayer. "But **let him ask in faith** without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways" (verses 6-8).

Do you see the importance of faith and prayer? When you pray to God for wisdom, don't say, "I prayed for wisdom, but I'm not sure that I received it, because I don't think that I did the right thing." This is nothing more than doubting. There have been great things accomplished by faith. In Hebrews 11:32 we are told of "Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight" (verses 32-34). But apart from faith in God to answer your prayer, you will be left without an answer.

This week, the men who will do their homework for Men's Equippers are going to be blown away by God's ability to answer prayer. Their assignment is to go through Isaiah 40-48 in search for statements that speak of the supremacy and sovereignty of God to act in human history. God is fully capable of answering our prayers. Do you believe it? When prayers go unanswered, it isn't because God isn't strong enough to bring about the answer to the prayer. We must believe with Job, "I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted" (Job 42:2). When prayers go unanswered, it is because God, in His pleasure, has decided, for one reason or another, not to answer the prayer. Sometimes we don't know why they aren't answered. Sometime we do. Lack of faith may be the reason in your case.

2. Prayers go unanswered because of a lack of purpose to glorify God.

In one of the verses I quoted earlier, Jesus said, "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" (John 14:13-14). Notice the connection here between "My name" and "the Father's glory." The things for which you pray ought to be "in the name of Jesus," which ends with the glory of the Father. We often end our prayers with the phrase, "in Jesus' name, Amen." Yet, we often fail to realize what this means. When we say, "in Jesus' name," we are essentially saying, "for the glory of Jesus." And when the Son is glorified, the Father is glorified.

When we pray with a lack of purpose to glorify God, we ought not to expect that our prayers will be answered. James said, "You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures" (James 4:3). This verse rules out the "God, give me a new boat" kind of prayers. This verse rules out the "God, let me win the lottery" kind of prayers. Again, Jesus isn't a genie, who will give you anything that you want! Our prayers need to be aligned with God's purposes and God's glory.

Another way to say this is that we ask in accordance with God's will. "And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything **according to His will**, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him" (1 John 5:14-15). Prayers not aligned with the God's will and God's glory will simply go unacknowledged and unanswered.

3. Prayers go unanswered because of a lack of obedience.

If you know anything about 1 John, you should know that it is filled with tests of our genuine salvation. Much of this is tied with the fruit that God manifests in our life. So, it makes sense for John to connect prayers that are heard with an obedient life. In 1 John 3:22, we read, "Whatever we ask we receive from Him, because **we keep His commandments** and do the things that are pleasing in His sight." In other words, a disobedient life has no reason to expect that it will experience answers to prayer. This concept fills scripture....

- The Psalmist says, "If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear [i.e. so as to act]" (Ps. 66:18).
- God says, "When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you, Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood" (Is. 1:15).
- The Proverb says, "The LORD is far from the wicked, but He hears the prayer of the righteous" (Prov. 15:29).

You must tie a life of obedience to a life that experiences answered prayer. This is what Jesus meant when He said, "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you" (John 15:7). It is the life that abides in Christ that is obedient to Christ and will only request those things that glorify Christ. Perhaps you have heard the story of a captain on a ship who said, ...

We had George Müller of Bristol on board. I had been on the bridge for twenty-four hours and never left it and George Müller came to me and said, "Captain, I have come to tell you I must be in Quebec on Saturday afternoon." "It is impossible," I said. "Then very well, if your ship cannot take me, God will find some other way. I have never broken an engagement in fifty-seven years; let us to down into the chart room and pray." I looked at that man of God and thought to myself, "What lunatic asylum can that man have come from, for I never heard of such a thing as this?" "Mr. Müller," I said, "do you know how dense this fog is?" "No," he replied, "my eye is not on the density of the fog, but on the living God who controls every circumstance of my life." He knelt down and he prayed one of the most simple prayers. When he had finished I was going to pray, but he put his hand on my shoulder and told me not to pray. "As you do not believe He will answer, and as I believe He has, there is no need whatever for you to pray about it." I looked at him and George Müller said, "Captain, I have known my Lord for fifty-seven years and there has never been a single day when I have failed to get an audience with the King. Get up, Captain, and open the door and you will find the fog has gone." I got up and the fog indeed was gone, and on that Saturday afternoon George Müller kept his promised engagement. (Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations, Paul Lee Tan #1494).

The reason why George Müller could pray the way that he prayed is because of the years he obediently trusted His Lord. If today, you are not experiencing the joys of answered prayer, consider that you might have a lack of faith, a lack of purpose to glorify God, or a lack of obedience in your life.

But listen, answered prayer doesn't necessarily mean that you get everything that you want. What might appear to you as unanswered prayer is really answered prayer in disguise. For instance, In the life of Rock Valley Bible Church, we had an opportunity to rent the Seventh Day Adventist church in town. I was convinced that it would be a good thing for us. I prayed that God would unify the hearts of the people at the church to agree with me. There were a few (a clear minority) who weren't so convinced. I tried hard to persuade them. As the men of the church gathered together, we decided together that we shouldn't rent the building. Now, I ask you, "Did God answer my prayer?" Absolutely, but not in the way that I thought it should have been answered. He answered it by saying that the Seventh Day Adventist church wouldn't be good for Rock Valley Bible Church. God provided Rockford Christian High School for us to use.

Never despise your unanswered prayers, because they may be answered prayers, with the answer of "no." Why would God say "no" to our prayers? God is far wiser than any of us. Come to think of it, God is far wiser than all of us put together. God is for us, and not against us. God isn't an ogre in the sky, who doesn't want to satisfy the desires of His children. Rather, God delights to bless his children, ... which leads us nicely to our next verses (verses 9-11). Jesus continued, "Or what man is there among you, when his son shall ask him for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he shall ask for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!"

The illustration that Jesus uses is obvious. Jesus deliberately uses a totally ridiculous picture to demonstrate what is actually true. When your son comes up to you and says, "Dad, I'm hungry," What do you do? You seek to satisfy his hunger (unless it is too close to dinner, or

something like that). You help your child by giving him something to eat. You don't give him something that will hurt him. You don't say, "Here, son, try a gravel sandwich!" (Soon you will be at the dentist's office). Of course you don't do this. You give to your child good things!

Notice carefully the key to Jesus' argument. It comes in the two little words, "being evil." Here is one of many places in the Bible that puts for the depravity of man. We are evil. We are self-centered. We are self-focussed. We seek to satisfy ourselves. I could list off a dozen or more verses that say the same thing. We aren't here at Rock Valley Bible Church because we are good by nature. We are here because we are evil by nature, but God has so worked in our hearts, through the gospel of Jesus Christ, to transform us.

But Jesus says that if an evil person (like you and me) has a genuine love and concern for his child, so much more care and concern does God have for His children. He'll give to you and to me what is best for us.

This is where unanswered prayer comes in. Perhaps in our prayers we are asking for a stone to eat. It is so like God to say, "No, you can't have a stone. Here, let me give you some bread." God is for us, and not against us. God delights to answer the prayers of His children, who cry to Him day and night.

At this point, the obvious question here is this. What are you continually asking God for? What is it that you are seeking? What is the door that you are knocking on?

For me, this answer is easy. Not a day goes by that I don't pray several times for the prosperity of Rock Valley Bible Church. My prayers are for God to bless us, that His name would be hallowed among us. This church here, is so much a work of God, that I can do nothing but pray that He might bless the work, here. I am praying, not just for us, here, but I am praying beyond. I want to see people coming from other communities, where we can reduplicate ourselves all over again. From the north, the south, the east, or the west, wherever it is that God begins to bring people. Will God delight to answer my prayer? Look around you and you will see a partial answer to my daily prayer request. Perhaps there are several of you here as well, who are united in this request.

But, what are you continually asking God for? Is there anything? I challenge you to begin praying for God to do a work, somehow, someway, that would give Him all the glory. Pray with me, daily, for the prosperity of Rock Valley Bible Church. Perhaps you have a family member or friend, who doesn't know Jesus Christ.

Perhaps you need to seek God yourself. Perhaps you have been coming to church for years, but have never repented of your sin and trusted in Jesus Christ alone to save you. Perhaps you have never found what a joy it is to trust in Jesus for all things in your life. The promise of the Scripture is that you will find the LORD, "if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul" (Deut. 4:29)."

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on September 8, 2002 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.