

Life in Jesus Church
Sunday, April 3, 2022
Confident in Prayer (Timothy Keller)
Scripture passage: John 14:12-15

Introduction

At the beginning of Lord of the Rings, the members of the fellowship are given gifts that will be necessary on their journey. In our study of John, we are seeing that Jesus is preparing the disciples by giving them gifts for handling the future. One of these gifts is prayer, a powerful gift. In this teaching we look at the power, conditions, purpose, and foundation of prayer.

Power of Prayer

1. The temptation is to jump to the conditions of prayer, but let's stay with the words that Jesus says in the order in which he speaks them.
2. In verse 12 Jesus says the disciples will do greater things than he did. Prayer is not an Aladdin's lamp, but an aid in achieving God's mission.
3. The God of the universe basically says, "You ask and I do." Examples:
 - James 5 – Elijah, was "a man like us" yet by prayer he confronted the evil Ahab. Prayer is powerful and can yield wonderful results.
 - John Calvin carefully says that in some sense, God, in his goodness makes the world susceptible to our prayers.
 - "You have not because you ask not."
 - The pagan Saxon king invading the Welch gave orders to attack the praying monks first.

Conditions of Prayer

1. **In my name**, which means praying according to **who you are**: A Christian gets their name from adoption into God's family. The nature of prayer is to speak to "Our Father," indicating a familial relationship. Prayer is a right of the child. Although God may at some time choose to hear a prayer from a non-believer, he is not obliged to do so, as he promises to do for his child.
2. **Not in your name**, which refers to **why you come** - motives are key. The promise of prayer depends on your heart. This is where "in my name" means "**not in your name.**" The example of R.A. Torrey's response to a question about unanswered prayer. He pointed out the man was praying in his own name, from his attitude of deserving his prayer to be answered.
 - We must come humbly, knowing that God owes us nothing.
 - James 4:3 – one reason we ask and do not receive is that we ask from our own selfish ambitions. In such a case, God is not answering our prayer because what we ask is not good for us.
 - James 4:2 – "You have not because you ask not." God has many good things to give us. However, if they come to us without our asking, 1) we will not appropriately recognize them as from him and think we came to them of our own power; or 2) we may not be able to handle them; they may destroy us.

3. To us this seems to mean there are qualifications to getting our prayer answered. So perhaps there are some unanswered prayers. Or is there misunderstanding regarding the purpose of prayer?

Purpose of Prayer

1. Jesus states the purpose of prayer – **that the Father be glorified**. Is this the purpose of prayer for you? Don't complain about failure if you use something for a purpose for which it was not intended. Is your purpose in prayer to set your heart on God, or to get your needs fulfilled? Always use prayer to glorify God, or to see his glory.
2. St. Augustine suggested: **To begin in prayer**, settle in your mind, account yourself, desolate in the world, no matter how wealthy you are. The love you seek is only in God, in loving him for who he is. This is the only way you will ever be happy. **Where to start in prayer:** Ask, God give me a happy life. Then you may ask for some things you need in life but only in line with what he wants you to be.
3. Think of the kernel and the husk. The kernel is what you want, the glory of God. The husk is the way it will be provided. God always answers that prayer, even though not as you may expect. He will always give you what you would have asked for if you knew everything he knows.
4. How to get there? Seek his glory. Pray to seek his glory. See it. Pray for it again. Keep it up until it becomes your habit of prayer. You will begin to understand the foundation of prayer.

Foundation of Prayer

1. The foundation of prayer is this: "**In the Son.**" The number one way God is glorified is in the death of his son. You won't ever want to pray for the glory of God unless you see what Jesus did to give you the privilege of prayer.
2. Our foundation for prayer is based on Jesus' unanswered prayer in Gethsemane. Jesus, knowing what is coming and how hard it will be, asks if there is another way. In Psalm 69 we read God does not hear anyone who harbors iniquity in their heart. This is what we deserve, but Jesus, who doesn't deserve it, received it in our stead.
3. Luke 11 tells us God is a better father than humans, who will still give their children what they ask. He gave Jesus terrible reality so that we could have our prayers answered.
4. These things help us see the beauty of what we get through Jesus. They increase our perspective to understand all that has been provided to us.
5. Fix your heart where your joy is found and then ask!