



OKOTOKS EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

GOD'S PROMISE FOR YOU
GOD'S PROVISION IN UNCERTAIN TIMES
SEPTEMBER 18-24, 2016

MAIN POINT

Instead of letting fear and anxiety direct our lives, we need to express our faith in God's ability to hear us and answer according to His purposes.

THINKING THINGS THROUGH

Connect the sermon to the study.

1. What distractions most often keep you from focusing on God?

2. On Sunday, Pastor Rob talked about the fullness of God's provision for us in Christ. Where do you most often struggle to trust Christ's provision in your life?

Leader: God expects us to depend on Him and ask Him for what which only He can provide. In the history of the church, few have embodied this practice better than 19th century Christian George Mueller who cared for thousands of orphans at the Ashley Down orphanage in Bristol, England. In doing all of this, he never asked for money or went into debt. Instead, he simply followed God's instruction to care for orphans (James 1:27) and prayed for hours each day for support and provision. During his lifetime, Mueller recorded over 50,000 specific answers to his prayers. He was undaunted by fear and anxiety and trusted God fully. Today he stands as a testament to trusting in God and His provision.

DIGGING DEEPER

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 7:7-8.

3. What does it teach us about God that you can approach Him in order to ask for what you need?

4. Re-read verse 8. What do we gain the more often you take things to God in prayer? What does Jesus promise to all who approach Him in prayer?

5. What holds you back from asking God for the things you need? Why should we keep praying even if we don't get the answer we want? What do you learn about God through the practice of prayer?

Leader: The verbs that Jesus chose in these verses show a continuous action. Jesus is telling us to continually ask, continually seek, and continually knock. They are not "one-and-done" activities in the life of a Christian; rather, they are the continual posture of a Christian. As we ask God for the things that we need and look to Him for provision, we place ourselves in a position to trust His work in our lives. When this happens, even when the answer is "no," our faith is built as we learn to trust and accept all that God gives us.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 7:9-11.

6. What example did Jesus use to illustrate His point that we need to go to God more often in prayer? What does this analogy teach us about the posture we assume as we approach God?

7. Do you ever feel like you are bothering God with your many requests? How does Jesus' example change your perception? How do children approach their fathers? How do fathers respond to their children?

Leader: Jesus used the example of a child petitioning to a father to explain our relationship with our Father. Those who are parents know that they would never deny their child any good gift. Instead, it is the joy of parents to provide for their children, at their great expense. As God's children, we approach Him as a young child approaches a parent, with utter trust and belief in His provision. A child rarely stops to think if his or her request is possible; a child simply trusts that his or her parent is able to provide.

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> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MARK 10:46-52.

8. Jesus asked the simple question: “What do you want me to do for you?” Imagine you were in Bartimaeus’s position (not blind, but needy)—what would you ask for? Why?

9. We know Jesus is God, and because He is God, He knows everything. So why does Jesus ask this question? What does this truth tell us about the nature of trust, dependence, and prayer?

Leader: Jesus asks this question to get at one thing: the truth. He wants to see the disposition of Bartimaeus’ heart—and for Bartimaeus to know it, too. When we come to Jesus asking for something, He already knows what we need. But He wants us to ask Him anyway because He’s interested not only in what we ask for, but also the heart behind our request. Bartimaeus’s request shows two things: humility and trust. He trusted Jesus to do something he couldn’t imagine. To present a true, honest, gut-level request like this before Jesus took a tremendous amount of trust. In our case, experiencing freedom requires the same kind of trust. But trust isn’t easy.

DOING LIFE TOGETHER

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

11. What do you want most out of life, and what do you need to bring to your Father in prayer?

12. How can we help one another see God’s provision in our daily lives and learn to trust Him in an increasing way?

13. What changes about a person’s life when they learn to trust God enough to ask for the things you need? Do you know anyone that you would describe this way? How could you model their faith?

PRAYER

Thank God that we can ask Him for the things we need. Ask that He would meet your

SERMON BASED GROWTH GROUP

needs and help you realize your ultimate provision in Him. Pray that you would learn to trust Him as you learn to give your cares to Him through prayer.

MEMORIZE

If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! -Matthew 7:11

SPOTLIGHT ON THE PASSAGE

MATTHEW 7:7-11

7:7-8. The principle of persistent reliance on the Father as loving provider certainly applies to all these “good things.” But Jesus probably had the disciples’ temporal needs in mind. This is the simplest, most obvious meaning, and it would further underscore Jesus’ teaching against anxiety over daily needs (6:25–34). This is Jesus’ third of four “final exhortations” (7:1–12), addressing possible misconceptions people might take away from the sermon.

Verses 7 and 8 have six symmetrically arranged verbs paired first in a triplet of commands (7:7) and then in a triplet of affirmations (7:8). There is no need to try to distinguish different kinds of activity between ask, seek, and knock. Jesus was probably using the three verbs to refer to the same activity of petitioning the Father. His use of three different verbs added emphasis to his message. This three-pronged approach, together with the fact that all three verbs are in the present tense, conveys a clear picture of persistence in prayer.

The other three verbs in 7:7 (will be given, will find, and will be opened) are in the future tense, while in 7:8 receives and finds are in the present tense, and will be opened is in the future. With these tenses in mind, we could translate 7:7–8 as, “Keep on asking, and it will be given to you; keep on seeking, and you will find; keep on knocking, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who keeps on asking will continually receive, and he who keeps on seeking will continually find, and to him who keeps on knocking it will be opened.”

Some other passages on prayer (e.g., Matt. 21:22; Mark 11:24; John 14:13–14; 15:7), emphasize the manner in which the human activity is to be conducted. Here the emphasis is on the generosity and faithfulness of the Father. There is no condition placed on the promises (as “if you believe” in 21:22). James 4:2–3 gives some reasons why prayer sometimes does not “work.” Other passages that teach persistence in prayer are Luke 11:5–8; 18:1–8.

7:9-10. Verses 9 and 10 are rhetorical questions, implying that no parent would pull such tricks on their sincere children. A stone can resemble a loaf of “bread” (4:3), and some “snakes” can resemble “fish.”

7:11. In 7:11, Jesus brought his argument of verses 9–11 to a point. Because even the most evil parents provide the basic necessities for their children, how much more can we trust the Father in

SERMON BASED GROWTH GROUP

heaven, who is free from sin. Jesus' description of humans as you... who are evil disproves the modern concept that people are basically good. Although Jesus acknowledged that humans may perform gracious acts like providing for their children, He insisted that they do so contrary to their sinful nature. God's gracious acts, on the other hand, express our heavenly Father's perfect nature. (Note the assumption here of universal sinfulness; see Rom. 3:23.)

MARK 10:46-52

10:46. Jericho was Jesus' last stop on His way to Jerusalem to die. Afterward, Jesus and His disciples left and joined a large crowd traveling to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. Beside the road sat a blind beggar, a common sight in the ancient world. The passing of religious pilgrims would provide a good time for beggars to seek assistance. In Aramaic bar means "son," so the name Bartimaeus [BAHR tih MEE uhs] literally means "son of Timaeus." Mark may have provided Bartimaeus's name because he became a believer and other early believers knew him.

10:47. Apparently Bartimaeus had heard of Jesus and the miracles He had performed, because he began calling out to Him as Son of David. Bartimaeus may have heard Jesus' ancestry went back to David, which meant Jesus was a Son (descendant) of David. More importantly, based on what he had heard, Bartimaeus believed Jesus was the special One from David's line whom God sent to Israel. Though physically blind, Bartimaeus could see clear spiritually. He recognized Jesus as the Messiah and knew only He could provide healing for blind eyes.

10:48. Excited about journeying to Jerusalem for Passover, especially with Jesus, many in the crowd perceived Bartimaeus's cries as an unwelcome interruption. They tried to silence him, but he intensified his cries. Knowing Jesus could heal him, Bartimaeus refused to be quiet.

10: 49. Jesus certainly would have had much on His mind. Yet on hearing Bartimaeus's cries, our Lord immediately stopped and told the people around Him to call Bartimaeus. Knowing what He faced in Jerusalem, Jesus still took time to help one in need. People from the crowd called out to Bartimaeus. Their initial disgust had become excitement as they realized Jesus might perform a miracle. They encouraged Bartimaeus, telling him to get up and go to Jesus.

10:50. Bartimaeus responded in a positive manner. As others had immediately left their nets to answer Jesus' call, so Bartimaeus immediately left his place and went to Jesus.

10:51. Asked what he wanted, Bartimaeus addressed Jesus as Rabbouni, meaning "my teacher," and asked Jesus to enable him to see. Yet Bartimaeus certainly believed Jesus was more than merely an Interpreter of the law. What Bartimaeus had heard of Jesus convinced him Jesus was the Teacher. Bartimaeus knew that only in Jesus could he find healing and words of life.

10:52. Recognizing the blind man's faith, Jesus instructed Bartimaeus to go his way because his faith had healed him. Immediately he could see. healed can also be translated "saved," thus giving a double meaning to Jesus' words. Jesus had healed Bartimaeus's blindness so he could see; but through his faith and Jesus' grace and power, Bartimaeus received a greater gift—salvation and eternal life.

Bartimaeus joined the crowd traveling with Jesus to Jerusalem. Some Bible students suggest he simply joined the crowd so he could go to the temple, present the thanksgiving offering for his sight, and fulfill the law. Most Bible students agree Bartimaeus followed Jesus on the road to Jerusalem, because he desired to follow Jesus for the rest of his life.