



"Suffering is actually at the heart of the Christian story."
—Tim Keller

29-Jan-16

Ask God for the Little Things

In a conversation with a friend sometime back, we could not help but notice the difference in people in both [the world](#) and church over the last forty or fifty years. A change has taken place, and I had to admit that this change had taken place in me as well.

People used to look to [God](#) for more than they do now. It was not uncommon at all for people to take all their needs to God, confident that He would listen to and provide them. But today, people tend to rely on themselves or on the services available to them. Many do not even think of God, much less of praying for His help.

Perhaps we do this because our society has become so wealthy, sophisticated, and self-sufficient that subconsciously, we feel we do not need God's help. We rely on ourselves. The world around us seems to function just fine without God's help. Our movie and television heroes do not rely on God; they just toughen up and force what they want from life.

This is the way of life we are used to. The world's system has taken [faith](#) from us and weakened us. It has happened to me and it has happened to you.

In 1971, I heard a sermonette that produced wonderful results. It was a simple message, and despite our sophistication, it is not too simple for us today. A [Sabbath](#) or two prior to departing for the [Feast of Tabernacles](#), a deacon spoke about prayer. More specifically, he told us to ask God for the little things that we needed at the Feast. What the "little things" are is different for each of us, but whether our requests are big or little, God wants to answer them positively.

The principle the deacon wanted us to keep in mind is that God is a giving God, and He truly wants to give right things to us. He went on to encourage us to ask God as a child asks his father for his needs, because asking our Father for our needs brings us into a more intimate relationship with Him. [Jesus](#) tells us to do a similar thing in [Matthew 7:7-8](#), 11:

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 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!

So what should we do? We should ask God for what we need with confidence and humility. We are to seek those things with care and apply ourselves, and we are to knock with earnestness and perseverance, that is, persist with our requests before God. Even though He has a universe to govern, He is not too busy to hear our prayers and help us out. If He took the time to help Elisha's helpers recover an ax head that had fallen into the water ([II Kings 6:1-7](#)), He will do similar "little things" for us.

Armed with this much basic knowledge, my wife and I went to the Feast with our three children, who were still in grade school. As soon as we arrived in Squaw Valley, California, our son, Brian, came down with strep throat. We had our son anointed, but his throat remained almost swollen shut. At that time, we learned that fresh pineapple reduces swelling in the body.

I went to Safeway, but no pineapples were for sale. Then I remembered that I was told to ask for the little things, so I said a quiet prayer and then asked the

clerk to check in the back. He came out saying that they were out. I started to walk away, but all of a sudden, the clerk called me and told me that he had found one! It had been buried in a peanut barrel, of all things, with only one small leaf showing. I was stunned and thankful.

At another Feast, a good friend of mine longed for a wife and asked God to supply one for him. He was just about the last person left in the meeting hall one day when an attractive woman came up behind him, asking, "Were you looking for me?" She had mistaken him for someone else, but one thing led to another, and they have been happily married for close to forty years! Surely, a wife is no "little thing," but it cannot be denied that God heard and answered my friend's request.

Asking God for the little things need not be done just at Feast time. God wants us to ask Him to supply our needs at all times. A pastor traveling by air in the Midwest in the dead of winter had a terrible sore throat. After the plane landed, he asked a janitor in the terminal if he could use his storage closet for a short prayer. He told God of his condition and how he really needed to ease his throat with a lemon. He left the closet and stopped at the closest gift shop, and there was a pyramid of oranges with one lemon on the very top.

A friend went hiking in the middle of nowhere without wearing socks, a big mistake. Soon, his heels were rubbed raw. He got on his knees on the trail, asking for a little thing, a pair of socks. A short while later, he turned a corner in the trail, and there on a rock lay an abandoned pair of socks. They were not new, but they were what he needed.

Only each individual knows what the needs of his heart are, but it is a certainty that God knows those needs and wants to fulfill them. He wants each one of us to ask, seek, and knock. And as a loving Father, He will supply those needs in [love](#).

II Chronicles 14 tells the story of King Asa of Judah, who had an army of 580,000 men. His nation suffered an invasion of an Ethiopian army of a million men and hundreds of chariots. He called for help, and God faithfully delivered him, his army, and his whole nation. They brought a great deal of wealth back to Jerusalem.

In II Chronicles 16, we see Asa again being threatened, this time by Baasha, king of Israel. Unlike the former occasion, Asa did not call on God for help but took silver and gold from the Temple treasury and from his own palace funds to give to the Syrian king, Ben-Hadad, to buy his services to draw the armies of Israel from Judah's borders. God's response through His prophet is instructive:

Because you have relied on the king of Syria, and have not relied on the LORD your God, therefore the army of the king of Syria has escaped from your hand. Were the Ethiopians and the Lubim not a huge army with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet, because you relied on the LORD, He delivered them into your hand. For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. In this you have done foolishly; therefore from now on you shall have wars. ([II Chronicles 16:7-9](#))

While correcting and punishing Asa, God affirms that He wants to show Himself strong for those who are loyal to Him. Our hearts are to be committed and wholly integrated with His. He does not want us to waver but to be constant, consistently seeking Him and His will—and His help.

God does not want distant children. He wants us to come to Him in humility and love to make our requests known ([Philippians 4:6](#)) that He may act decisively in our behalf. The world around us has pulled back from God, but we who are called by Him in this age should be working to draw close to Him, asking, seeking, and knocking even for the little things.

- John O. Reid

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by John W. Ritenbaugh

We must not have an apathetic relationship toward God (Revelation 3:15), but instead to ardently, earnestly, diligently, and fervently seek God in order to imitate His behavior in our lives. The fervency of a passionate courtship and marriage relationship provides the grounds for comparison of the kind of relationship God wants with us. Jesus, David, and Jacob exemplified the passionate fervor and heat (both to purify good and to destroy evil) God demands of us. If we search for God with all our hearts, looking for something which is a vital necessity for us (Deuteronomy 4:29; Jeremiah 29:12-13; Hebrews 11:6) God will reward us, giving us what we are seeking: a warm, ardent relationship, transforming us into what He is.

From the Archives: Featured Article

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by John O. Reid

An explanation of Luke 11:9, Ask, seek, knock.

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