

Come Follow Me
Elo Viz production
Week 9
Matthew 6-7

As Jesus continues His teachings we have a plethora of topics to choose from in these 2 chapters. One that has been on my mind and that I continue to ponder is the power of prayer. I feel as if this is something a lot of us struggle with. How we get answers or help from the heavens. Jesus said:

“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” (Luke 11:9)

Sounds simple; I'm sure you have asked and it wasn't given. You have sought and did not find, and like I have you have knocked and it wasn't opened. So, what are we missing? Why isn't it as simple as it seems on the surface? This is what I hope to address today and give some practical and powerful tools to actually receive answers to our prayers and truly call down the powers of Heaven.

Elder Boyd K. Packer taught: “Learn to pray. Pray often. Pray in your mind, in your heart. Pray on your knees. Prayer is your personal key to heaven. The lock is on your side of the veil.”

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2009/10/prayer-and-promptings?lang=eng>

This visual image of a lock I have found to be true in my life. There are certain things we can and must do in order for God to be able to answer our prayers. I have found that this lock is a simple one. The Heavens are not a high security compound where you need a special ops team to get you inside (though it may feel like that sometimes). It's a simple 3 tumbler lock. Three things is all you need to open the gates of Heaven and to receive an answer. Let's look at each one:

First is your heart: This is the knocking part of prayer. Jesus taught: “for *the Lord seeth* not as **man** seeth; for man looketh on the outward **appearance**, but the **Lord** looketh on the **heart**.” (1 Samuel 16:7)

He also said: “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” (Matt 6:21)

The heart is what God is asking us for. This is important when it applies to our prayers. If our heart is set on power or riches or vengeance, which are all contrary to the laws of Heaven do you think that God will be anxious to grant your request? Our hearts need to be turned to God and to His will. This is the first step to receiving an answer.

“behold, I say unto you, that you must **study** it out in your **mind**; then you must **ask** me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your **bosom** shall **burn** within you; therefore, you shall **feel** that it is right.” (D&C 9:8)

This verse suggests that before we kneel to pray that we consider what it is that we are praying about. Is what we are asking for something that God wants as well? Are your desires aligned with His desires according to His gospel? This is the first step.

The Second which we will call the “seek” part is our life is how we are living. I have a quote in my office by Ralph Waldo Emerson that says “Who you are speaks so loudly, I can’t hear a word you say”. This principle is our outward manifestation of our inward heart. How we spend our time, what occupies our mind, how we treat others. These are all outward evidence of who you are on the inside. And though none of us will ever be perfect at it. We must be willing to try. Listen for the clause or the splash of grace in this verse:

“For verily I say unto you, they (speaking of the Gifts of God) are given for the benefit of those who love me and keep all my commandments, and him that seeketh so to do; that all may be benefited that seek or that ask of me.” (D&C 46:9)

That grace of God is all that saves us from our fallen state, our natural man. God is reaching out asking us to give up our natural, worldly self and we on our end must willingly hand it over. He will never take it from us. Our agency requires us to give it to Him, so that He can replace it with our real self, our Godly self. This includes giving up anything that ties us to the world, meaning; any addiction, or desire that keeps us from Him. The process of this change can take a lifetime to achieve. The important part here is not that we are perfect but that we are trying, that we are walking in that direction. That we are working to become better, kinder, more like Him every day.

The third part is the Ask portion of the key. How we ask and what we ask for is very very important. We have some great examples from the scriptures. Alma is on a mission among the Zoramites who had adopted some very apostate traditions. Listen closely at Alma’s prayer and the words he uses:

“O Lord, my heart is exceedingly sorrowful; wilt thou comfort my soul [in Christ](#). O Lord, wilt thou grant unto me that I may have strength, that I may suffer with patience these [afflictions](#) which shall come upon me, because of the iniquity of this people.” (Alma 31:31)

Did you notice that Alma didn’t ask to have his trial or afflictions removed. I think that if that was me in that situation my prayer would be asking for a way out. God these people are too far gone please let me go somewhere else and just send down the fire from Heaven and destroy them. Not Alma, give me strength to suffer with patience these afflictions. This same principle is in a story relayed by Elder Bednar:

“Daniel W. Jones joined the Church in California in 1851. In 1856 he participated in the rescue of handcart companies that were stranded in Wyoming by severe storms. After the rescue party found the suffering Saints, provided what immediate comfort they could, and made arrangements for the sick and the feeble to be transported to Salt Lake City, Daniel and several other young men volunteered to remain with and safeguard the company’s possessions. The food and supplies left with Daniel and his colleagues were, to say the least, meager and were rapidly expended. I will now quote from Daniel Jones’ personal journal and his description of the events that followed:

“Game soon became so scarce that we could kill nothing. We ate all the poor meat; one would get hungry eating it. Finally that was all gone, nothing now

but hides were left. We made a trial of them. A lot was cooked and eaten without any seasoning and it made the whole company sick. Many were so turned against the stuff that it made them sick to think of it. . . .

“Things looked dark, for nothing remained but the poor raw hides taken from starved cattle. We asked the Lord to direct us what to do. The brethren did not murmur, but felt to trust in God. We had cooked the hide, after soaking and scraping the hair off until it was soft and then ate it, glue and all. This made it rather inclined to stay with us longer than we desired. Finally I was impressed how to fix the stuff and gave the company advice, telling them how to cook it; for them to scorch and scrape the hair off; this had a tendency to kill and purify the bad taste that scalding gave it. After scraping, boil one hour in plenty of water, throwing the water away which had extracted all the glue, then wash and scrape the hide thoroughly, washing in cold water, then boil to a jelly and let it get cold, and then eat with a little sugar sprinkled on it. This was considerable trouble, but we had little else to do and it was better than starving” (Daniel W. Jones, *Forty Years Among the Indians* [Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1890], 81).

All that I have read thus far is a preparation for the next line from Daniel W. Jones’ journal. It illustrates how those pioneer Saints may have known something about the enabling power of the Atonement that we, in our prosperity and ease, are not as quick to understand: “We asked the Lord to bless our stomachs and *adapt them to this food*” (Jones, *Forty Years*, 81; emphasis added). My dear brothers and sisters, I know what I would have prayed for in those circumstances. I would have prayed for something else to eat. “Heavenly Father, please send me a quail or a buffalo.” It never would have occurred to me to pray that my stomach would be strengthened and adapted to what we already had.”

<https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/david-a-bednar/strength-lord/?M=A>

I, like Elder Bednar, tend to ask God to change my circumstances. I have learned though that what we ask for has a great impact on the answer we receive to our prayers. Perhaps it is not God’s will to change our circumstances. Perhaps there is something to learn from the trial you are sitting in. And maybe, just maybe it would be well for us to accept God’s will and learn the lesson He so graciously offered us, in order for us to become like Him.

With These three principles we’ve discussed we can now see the patterns more clearly when Jesus teaches us how to pray:

“9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven.

11 Give us this day our daily bread.

12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.”

“No Father would send His children off to a distant, dangerous land for a lifetime of testing where Lucifer was known to roam free without first providing them with a personal power of protection. He would also supply them with means to communicate with Him from Father to child and from child to Father. Every child of our Father sent to earth is provided with the Spirit of Christ, or the Light of Christ.¹ We are, none of us, left here alone without hope of guidance and redemption.”

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Of this truth I testify, In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.