

# If God knows, why do we ask?

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*A person sent me a question asking, “Peter, If God is all knowing, why do we have to ask anything in prayer? Doesn’t he already know what we desire?” Jesus said, “Ask, and it shall be given you;” He also said, “for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.” Is this a contradiction?*

Do we really need to ask God our needs when he is all knowing? The Psalmist plainly says, “For *there is* not a word in my tongue, *but*, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.” (139:4). God is all knowing, yet Jesus says, “Ask, and it shall be given you;” (Matthew 7:7)? Is there even really a point in asking if God already knows? What is the answer?

## Context is Key!

When one looks at the *context* in which Jesus said this statement, “for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.” (Matt 6:8); one can understand what Jesus is saying. Jesus is *not* telling his disciples *not* to ask, he is telling his disciples *not* to ask God *like the heathen!* It is about **how** we ask!

Notice the context, “But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, **as the heathen do**: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

“**Be not ye therefore like unto them**: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.” (Matthew 6:7-8). Jesus is basically saying, “God already knows what you are going to say ahead of time, *therefore do not pray like the pagans.*”

The Jamieson Fausset and Brown commentary states, “for it is not men, as such, that He is addressing in this discourse, *but His own disciples*...What a view of God is here given, in *sharp contrast* with the gods of the heathen!” (emphasis added).

We do *not* ask God **using** *endless repetitions and thinking that long prayers are going to get God to answer our prayers*, “and for a shew make long prayers: the same shall receive greater damnation” (Luke 20:47). This is how the *heathen* do it. “But that which is here forbidden, is an opinion of being heard for over long prayers, and using vain repetitions, as the priests of Baal continued from morning

to night crying, *O Baal, hear us! O Baal, hear us!* as if their god had been asleep, or gone a journey, as the prophet mocketh them, 1 Kings 18:26,27. *Repetitions are then vain*, when they are affected, and flow from some *irreverent thoughts* we have of God; not when they are as it were forced from the heat and intention of our affections.” (Matthew Poole’s Commentary, emphasis his).

The Jews fell into this trap as well, “Rabbi Levi said, ‘Whoever is long in prayer is heard.’ Another saying has it: ‘Whenever the righteous make their prayer long, their prayer is heard.’” (Barclay).

In Acts 19:34 a mob in Ephesus shouted, “Great is Diana of the Ephesians” for two hours. The heathens pray this way, but the true God isn’t impressed by the length or eloquence of our prayers. God *knows* what your needs are, but *we have to ask the right way!*

### **How to Ask**

People were praying *before* Christ even taught His disciples how to pray. Matthew chapter 6 was basically the Lord’s *correction* on the subject of prayer. Here He was simply teaching His disciples what prayer is and *how* it should be offered.

Jesus is saying the Father is *eager* and *ready* to answer. “For thou, Lord, *art* good, ***and ready to forgive;*** and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee” (Psalm 86:5). *How you ask is the key!* Repeating a certain mantra or scripture over and over again is vain, empty and useless. Jesus however taught that one *cannot* pray to God *without* and loving relationship with the Father. The heathen gods are like this, but *not* the true God of the Bible. We must “love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.” (Deut 6:5). The reason why God wants us to ask in prayer, even though he knows, is to acknowledge Him as our provider and to *interact* with him.

However, as Clarke says, “Prayer is *not* designed to *inform* God...” We must ask God in a way that is *acceptable* to him. Jesus taught we must go to God as a child asking his Father. “Our Father which art in heaven.” (Matthew 6:9)

The Apostle Paul also reveals *how we should ask* in prayer, “Be anxious for nothing [Jesus said the same in Matthew 6:31-32], but in everything by prayer and supplication, *with* thanksgiving, *let your requests be made known to God;*” (Philippians 4:6). Notice “*with* thanksgiving, *let your requests be made known to God.*” We must express our needs and concerns to God through prayer, *not* with

worry or fear like the heathens, but with *gratitude* and faith in His ability to provide. Gratitude has always been a key to answered prayer; gratitude for God's blessings, both in the present and in anticipation of His answers to our requests. Prayer *with* thanksgiving is a prayer of faith. We have to become strong in the faith, "and be filled with thanksgiving." (Colossians 2:7 GNT).

"Keep on praying and guard your prayers *with* thanksgiving..." (Colossians 4:2 CEB). We can actually pray ourselves into darkness and hopelessness if we don't, in full faith, praise and thank God from our hearts. The saints in the Old Testament won the victory over their enemies because they firmly believed and *thanked* God, even when it looked impossible.

When Jonah was in deepest darkness, in the fish's belly, we read, "But I will sing praises to you; I will offer you a sacrifice and do what I have promised. Salvation comes from the Lord! Then the Lord ordered the fish to spit Jonah up on the beach, and it did." (Jonah 2:9-10 GNT).

"Let the giving of thanks be your sacrifice to God, and give the Almighty all that you promised. Call to me when trouble comes; I will save you, and you will praise me." (Psalm 50:14-15 GNT).

In essence, Philippians 4:6 encourages a mindset of trust and reliance on God, even in the midst of difficult situations, by bringing your concerns to Him in prayer, with a heart full of gratitude and faith.

### **According to His Will**

There is nothing *wrong* with desiring things. Solomon plainly says, "And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it *is the gift of God*.... Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour; *this is the gift of God*." (Eccl 3:13; 5:19). God *freely* gives these things *when* we ask the *right way*.

Jesus tells us, "Which of you, *if your son asks* for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 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 7:9-11). God is our Father and will give things to his children *knowing* that it is good for them *when we ask*. This is what Jesus *also* meant when he said, "for your Father knoweth what things ye

have need of, before ye ask him.” God already knows what is good for you, just like earthly fathers *instinctively* know what is good for their children and give to their children when they ask!

The Apostle James speaks about *unanswered* prayer and says, “From whence *come* wars and fightings among you? *come they* not hence, *even* of your lusts that war in your members?

“*Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.*

“Ye ask, and receive not, **because ye ask amiss**, *that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*” (James 4:1-3). James tells us the two reasons why we don’t have what we need-it is because one, we haven’t asked, or two, because *we are asking selfishly!*

Our prayers need to “please the Lord” for them to be answered. Like an earthly Father when his child asks for something. If we seek our own *personal gain to satisfy our sinful desires* God will *not* answer. Your wants need to be in sync with God’s righteousness, “...if we ask any *thing according to his will, he heareth us:*” (1 John 5:14). A question we must ask ourselves when we pray, “Will we be happy and joyful because *God’s will has been done* in our lives and on the earth?” Think about that next time you pray! The Psalmist said, “***Delight thyself*** also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.” (Psalm 37:4). This is the *difference* between the Heathens and the true God-Relationship! The fact that we do find our happiness *in him* will be a reason why he will grant our desires. This is not the case with the heathen gods. The people that worship them live in fear and oppression, lust and greed, *not* love and delight. God is *not* some fairy godmother, or a genie in a bottle just waiting to serve you and give you your every desire *without* responsibility or accountability as the heathen gods do. “For unto whomsoever *much is given, of him shall be much required:* and to whom men have committed much, of him *they will ask the more.*” (Luke 12:48). God is the Father of us and gives to us as a *responsible* earthly Father gives to his children. Is that maybe why some people do not receive an answer to prayer? Maybe people need to work on themselves so *they are ready to receive* what God will give them?

God truly will answer our prayers abundantly above all we ask think or desire, because we are asking boldly, looking for our joy and satisfaction *in Him*, and that *we use the treasures he has given us not just for our satisfaction* but to serve others an glorify *Him* in the process, and *not* for just self-gratification, “If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do *it...*If ye love me, ***keep my commandments.***” (John 14:14-15). “Thy will be done.” “***Commit*** thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring *it* to pass.” (Psalm 37:5).

## A Right Heart

King Solomon is a great example of God answering prayer. *Before* God blessed him with wisdom and riches Solomon was obedient and he *loved* Yahweh with all his heart. The scriptures say, “And Solomon *loved* the LORD, walking in the statutes of David his father...a thousand burnt offerings did Solomon offer upon that altar.” (1 Kings 3:3, 4). Solomon’s heart was right in God’s sight and the 1000 burnt offerings he offered to God meant in a *spiritual* sense, “A burnt offering, also known as an olah, is a spiritual act *of total dedication and commitment to God*...It symbolizes the *complete surrender of one’s life and possessions to God’s will*, with the animal being a representation of the person offering it. The entire offering, including the animal’s body, was consumed by fire on the altar, *signifying its complete devotion to God*.” (Article: Burnt offering (Judaism)Wikipedia, emphasis added). Solomon *loved and was completely devoted to God* and was going to use everything that God gave him to glorify the God of the universe. He was ready to do things according to *God’s will!*

With this *mind set*, with his heart totally *devoted* to God, notice what God says, “In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, ***Ask what I shall give thee.***” (1 Kings 3:5). God was *ready* to give him anything he wanted-a blank cheque (Can) check (USA) as it were. God *knew* Solomon’s heart was right and he was willing to answer his prayer and give him anything he wanted and he did. God *knew* Solomon’s will, *was in line* with *His will*. As Isaiah says, “And it shall come to pass, that *before they call, I will answer*; and while they are *yet speaking, I will hear*.” (65:24). In the end time like Solomon, *Israel’s heart* will be right in God’s sight, and their prayers will be answered *before and during* their calls to God because Israel will want what *God wants!*

Solomon *wanted* wisdom to govern such a great people as Israel. “Give therefore thy servant an *understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad*: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? And the speech *pleased the Lord*, that Solomon had *asked* this thing.” (1 Kings 3:9-10). Solomon wanted wisdom to govern Israel, he knew this *pleased* God to govern Israel in righteousness and justice, and of course God answered-God *wanted* that too!

*Added to that* God gave him what he *didn’t* ask for, because again his heart was right, “Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment;



“Behold, *I have done according to thy words*: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee.

“And I have also given thee that which thou hast *not* asked, *both riches, and honour*: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days.

“And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days.” (1 Kings 3:11-14). God answered according to *Solomon’s words*-why? It was in line with the will of God.

### **Do not be Ashamed to Ask**

To conclude we *still* ask in prayer-it’s *how* we ask that’s what matters! We ask in faith, humility and love as we would do with our earthly fathers (Matthew 7:11). God is our loving Father, who wants to give us good things and has our best interests in mind. It is okay to want things. But our hearts must be to “*love me, [and] keep my commandments.*” It is *not* okay to want things *more than* you want the One who created all the things.

Solomon, Elijah, Jesus, David and others had their prayers answered using their *own words* because their words were in line with the will of God-there is the key!”...that, if we ask any *thing according to his will, he heareth us*.” (1 John 5:14). “*Thy will* be done.”

The opposite of that God will *not* hear, “Behold, the LORD’S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: “*But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.*” (Isaiah 59:1-2). Love him and seek his will, delight in God and give him thanks, with a heart like this prayers will be answered.

When we pray, “Let us therefore come ***boldly*** unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace *to help in time of need.*” (Heb 4:16). *Don’t be ashamed* of what you want, or God will *not* manifest it in your life, so be bold. If it is according to his will, *why* should you be ashamed to ask? We are the children of the Kingdom, living in Christ’s righteousness, covered by his blood; we are *worthy to receive* because *Jesus* made us worthy! “...and they shall walk with me in white: *for they are worthy.*” (Rev 3:4).

So even though God *knows* what we are going to ask he still wants us to ask him, because it’s a relationship and He wants us to communicate and acknowledge him

as our provider, asking in faith, thanksgiving, boldness and with a right obedient heart.