

What Are Our Prayers Really Like?

International Bible Lessons

Mark 10:35-45

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L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

“James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to Jesus and said to him, ‘Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you’” (Mark 10:35—NRSV).

“James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, came up to Jesus, saying, ‘Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You’” (Mark 10:35—NASB-U).

“And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldst do for us whatsoever we shall desire” (Mark 10:35—KJV).

Many may be prone to skip over this request of James and John to find out what they wanted from Jesus; however, what they asked may typify the relationship too many want to maintain with God. In general, how many of our prayers degenerate to little more than our telling God what we want God to do for us? True, Jesus came “not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). Still, Jesus did not say, “Tell me whatever you want and I will go and get it as fast as I can.” Jesus came to bring forgiveness and eternal life, not just “things.”

When James and John told Jesus they wanted to sit with Him in the highest places of honor, Jesus told them and the other disciples, “Whoever wishes to become great among you must become your servant” (Mark 10:43). Following Jesus’ advice and example, our prayers need to include the request, “God, tell me what I can do today to bring you joy and meet the real needs of others.” Rather than seek high places among God’s people, perhaps we need to ask Jesus to open the way and enable us to help others wherever possible. People around the world have a variety of needs, and Jesus gives His followers varieties of gifts. Those who trust in Jesus can always ask him to help them meet the needs of others with the gifts He has given them. God will always answer our prayers for help to serve others more effectively. — © Copyright 2011 L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

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Thinking Further

1. How many people come to Jesus or pray to God, even as a primary part of their prayers, saying, “We want you to do for us whatever we ask of you”? How can we avoid falling into that habit?
2. What would happen to the churches where you live and to the churches in other places around the world, if people were encouraged to come to Jesus and join the church based on the promise that Jesus will do whatever you want? How might this promise be preached today in ways that can be harmful?
3. If Jesus pledged to give you whatever you wanted, what are some of the things you would want from Him? Why would you make these requests of Him?
4. Think of the politicians where you live (people from more than fifty countries read these Bible lessons). In what ways are politicians today similar to or different from what Jesus expects from His followers?
5. What leadership qualities did Jesus say a leader of His followers should maintain? Are these qualities still relevant in the church today? Why or why not? How might we help leaders in the church today become better leaders?

Read the verse by verse commentary on this lesson at the BibleLessonForum.com. See the recommended study and worship resources at SmallChurchResources.com.