*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

January 9 - 14

“Confidence in Prayer”

**Monday, January 9 Matthew 7:7-11**

*“Keep on asking . . . seeking . . . knocking”*

 The walk with God is a walk of prayer, a life lived in fellowship with the Lord through daily communication. And as we pray we need to understand the kind of God to whom we are praying. It is this knowledge which undergirds our faith, for faith is not a blind wish; it is response to evidence. The more we understand God the more our faith is developed. It has been said that it is better to have a small faith in a great God than a great faith in a small God. In verse 11 Jesus tells us that our God is a heavenly Father who gives good gifts to those who ask him.

 The threefold statement to ask, seek, and knock is both command and invitation. These verbs are present imperatives in the Greek which mean continuous action. Ask and keep asking. This may suggest persistent effort, but more likely it is the recognition that we need to continually come to God. We should not think that, having asked once, we are presumptuous to ask again. In fact the progression suggested in the words “ask,” “seek,” “knock” may suggest growing confidence in our approach to God.

*I will not grow tired, Lord, of spending time with you in prayer. Amen.*

**Tuesday, January 10 James 1:5-8**

*“When you ask, be sure that you really expect him to answer”*

 James tells us that God will gladly tell us what he would like us to do (this is what the Bible means by receiving God’s wisdom), so all we need to do is ask and he will show us. But it must be the kind of asking that is based in faith that trusts God when he says that he will answer our prayer. We can’t expect to receive God’s wisdom if we are unwilling to accept the truth that he knows what is best for us and will act only on that basis. Prayer is opening the door and allowing God to direct our lives.

 To pray is to let God into our hearts. It is not our prayer which moves God. It is God who moves us to pray. He knocks at the door of our heart, offering us his loving grace and his power to do what is best for us, and our prayer is a response to that knock. To pray is to let God into our needs. To pray is to give God permission to use his powers to help us in our times of distress. To pray is to let God glorify himself in the midst of our situation. To pray is to find rest for our soul in God alone. To pray is to make our home with God.

*Even as I am praying, Lord, I will begin to look for your response. Amen.*

**Wednesday, January 11 Matthew 18:18-20**

*“I am with them”*

 The narrow context for these verses is the discipline of fellow believers. The church is to seek the Father’s will about the activities of brothers and sisters who are accused of sinful behavior and then bring God’s will to bear on the situation – does or does not God consider what they have done to be a sin? While God alone can forgive sins, the church has the authority to “bind and loose,” that is, to declare the will of God concerning believers’ behavior. In verse 19 Jesus reiterates that God will affirm the community (even if it is only two people) which agrees that a sin has been committed and God has forgiven that sin, or that a sin has not been committed. Jesus’ statement in verse 20 indicates that the fellowship that the community enjoys in reaching consensus about disciplining a fellow believer is actually brought about by the presence of Jesus.

 The principle underlying Jesus’ words goes beyond the matter of church discipline. Regardless of the issue confronting the community of faith, the promised presence of Jesus in their midst is a real empowerment for understanding God’s will.

*Whenever I join my sisters and brothers in prayer, Lord, you are with us. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

January 9 - 14

“Confidence in Prayer”

**Thursday, January 12 Ephesians 3:14-21**

*“I pray that . . .”*

 The main intent of Paul’s prayer is this: He wants his readers strengthened by God’s Spirit so that they may personally know Christ’s presence and love. If this happens, all else will fall into place. “Power” and “Spirit” are so commonly associated throughout the Bible that they are virtually synonymous. The Spirit is the power of God at work in people. Paul prays for his readers that the Spirit will be so strong an influence at the controlling center of their being that their lives will show it.

 Christ is present in us through the work of the Spirit, which means that God’s love is present in us. God’s love is the wellspring from which we are nourished and the foundation on which we find stability. Being rooted and established in love enables us to perceive love, and from knowing love we are able to love others. Love is both the source and the goal of our life. The doxology (verses 20-21) sums up Paul’s intent. We praise God for his astounding work of loving us in Christ Jesus, which empowers us to love God and one another.

*May my life reflect your love, Father, which is in me through the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

**Friday, January 13 Luke 11:5-8**

*“Teaching them more about prayer . . .”*

 How should we approach prayer? Jesus has told us what to pray (in the previous verses), but how should we come to the throne of grace? Since God is holy and the Creator of the universe, should he perhaps be approached rarely and only in moments of dire need? Not at all! We should pray with a spirit of dependence and humility, looking for God’s gracious provision. God is approachable, gracious, generous, and ready to hear our requests.

 Jesus emphasizes confident persistence in prayer by telling the story of a man awakened by his friend’s knock. At first, he is reluctant to respond. We need to remember here that a parable is meant to teach a particular lesson. This parable teaches us to about prayer and the importance of our faithful diligence in communicating with God. It is not a story about the nature of God. God has not gone to bed, asleep and reluctant to “wake up” and answer our prayers. Jesus is telling us to approach God boldly and to ask repeatedly without giving up. If our sleepy neighbor will answer our knocking, won’t God all-the-more reward our perseverance?

*I will not give up praying to you, Lord, for you answer me. Amen.*

**Saturday, January 14 Luke 11:9-13**

*“If your son asks for a fish, will you give him a snake instead?”*

 God desires prayer that is bold, even shameless, in its approach to him. It is not shameless in the sense of coming to God for all the wants that we have. But it is brash and bold in making use of the access he gives us to seek his face and call on him to develop us spiritually. He desires prayer with nerve. Our requests can be set before his table. The response, of course, is up to God, but the Lord desires we share our heart with him and come with an intense desire to knock at heaven’s door.

 I had the gift of a father who loved me. I knew what it meant to be able to walk into his room, his office, the living room, or wherever he was, and know that if I had a crucial need he had an ear that was ready to hear and a heart that was open to my concerns. The great lesson of a good father is that it gave me a glimpse of the heavenly Father I now have, even in the absence of my human father. I knew what it was to receive fish or eggs when I asked for them, just as I know now what it is to receive good gifts from my Father in heaven.

*You are a good God, Father, and you give me good gifts. Amen.*