

PARENTING THROUGH PROVERBS

Matthew 7:7-11



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If it hasn't happened already in your journey as a parent, it will. God will take you through something as a parent that will be so painful, you will wonder if you ever will be able to recover.

1. Your child is diagnosed with a disability. Your precious child's life is now going to be characterized by waiting rooms, blood tests, and painful interventions.
2. Your son who grew up in the church, won AWANA awards, and was a leader in the youth group now announces every Christmas and Easter, "Jesus wasn't God, because God doesn't exist and neither does anything supernatural."
3. Your daughter tells you that she has been using her babysitting money to buy Vicodin from a friend from school to numb herself through the anxiety of her day.

As a parent, at some point you will be confronted with your inability to rescue your child from the pain of their decisions or the pain of this world. You've spent every minute of your parenting life believing that if you were a good enough parent, you could prevent certain things from happening to your kids. But you didn't prevent it; you couldn't prevent it. And here you are - overwhelmed with feelings of powerlessness.

When we as parents feel powerless, there are a couple of paths we can take. We can demand that life turn out exactly how we think it should. We can despair and give up on life. We can get cynical and complacent about our children and stop praying and stop hoping because none of it works anyway.

In one of the greatest passages in all of Scripture, Jesus declares what our greatest calling is as parents. Our new path isn't demand and it isn't despair; it is dependence. What does dependence look like? It looks exactly like praying, waiting and watching.

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Is there anyone among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you then, although 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!" –Matt. 7:7-11

At some point in this parenting journey, we must believe that God is infinitely righteous and good and desires to orchestrate good gifts for our children. We must believe that when we ask for bread for our kids, He won't give a stone, and that when we ask for a fish, He won't give them a snake.

This same infinitely strong, righteous, good and loving God tells us to do something - ask, seek, and knock. The repetition and emphases communicates, "I mean this. I want you to do this." The point seems to be that it doesn't matter whether you find God immediately close at hand or if He feels hard to see. HE WILL HEAR AND WILL GIVE GOOD GIFTS TO YOUR CHILDREN.

The three imperatives/commands are amazing, but listen to the seven promises: *It will be given you. You will find. It will be opened to you. The asker receives. The seeker finds. The knocker gets an open door. Your Father will give you good things.* Jesus not only encourages us to pray, but says everyone who asks, receives. If you pray, wait and watch, your heavenly Father will pick your child up, carry her and make his/her life sparkle. He wants to dazzle you with the wonder of His love.

Jesus isn't attacking fathers in this passage; He is attacking skeptics of prayer and the good gifts God wants to give. Our fathers are fallen and sinful, but have enough fatherly instincts to give good things to their children. There are terribly abusive fathers, but in most places in the world fathers overall want to do good for their children and will go to great lengths to give good gifts to their children. Jesus' point is that God will infinitely outdo our earthly fathers in love and grace. Sometimes He will do just *what* we asked, *when* we asked for it and *how* we desire it, but other times He gives us something better.

POWERLESS PARENTS PRAY

As you take Jesus at His Word and ask, seek and knock, here is some advice:

1. Your prayers for your kids are not isolated requests; they are a part of a larger story that God is weaving.
2. Don't demand or despair. It might be so much better if things don't go as planned.
3. Look for God and His movements and pray accordingly.
4. Stay in the ambiguity of your child's story by praying, waiting and watching.

I'm not going to leave any of those promised gifts from the Father on the table because I would not ask. I would caution you to not leave any of those good gifts on the table because you did not ask. You know how to give good gifts to your children, but they are nothing like the Heavenly Father can give you!

- If Jesus stood in front of you and asked, "What do you want me to do in your child's life?" - what would you say?"
- This week, how can you begin to take Jesus at His Word and pray powerful prayers on behalf of your children?