

Prayer
Obedience and Answered Prayer
February 20, 2011
Text - Various
Scripture Reading - John 15:1-11

I've always loved Jesus' metaphor of the vine and the branches, and I've always been especially intrigued by the promise of verse 7.

- **John 15:7 (ESV)**
⁷If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, *ask whatever you wish*, and it will be done for you.

3 important truths about answered prayer

- 1) If we want God to answer our prayers, we must be connected to the vine
 - a. **John 15:7 (ESV)**
⁷If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.
 - b. We get connected to the vine by faith
 - i. **John 15:3 (ESV)**
³Already you are clean (connected) because of the word that I have spoken to you.
 - ii. **John 14:6 (ESV)**
⁶Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.
 - iii. **John 3:16 (ESV)**
¹⁶"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.
 - c. Nowhere in the Bible does God promise to answer the prayers of those who are not connected to the vine
 - i. **Proverbs 15:8 (ESV)**
⁸The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is acceptable to him.
 - ii. **Proverbs 15:29 (ESV)**
²⁹The Lord is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous.

iii. Who are the wicked?

1. **Psalms 9:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷The wicked shall return to Sheol, all the nations that forget God.

2. **Psalms 10:4 (ESV)**

⁴In the pride of his face the wicked does not seek him; all his thoughts are, "There is no God."

3. **Psalms 10:13 (ESV)**

¹³Why does the wicked renounce God and say in his heart, "You will not call to account"?

4. **Proverbs 28:9 (ESV)**

⁹If one turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination

d. That doesn't mean God can't answer the prayer of an unbeliever.

i. M's answer to prayer

ii. "If you seek me you will find me when you seek me with all your heart." Jeremiah 29:13

e. It does mean that He has made no promise to do so.

i. You shouldn't expect God to answer

2) If we want God to answer our prayers, we must abide in Him and His words must abide in us

a. **John 15:7 (ESV)**

⁷If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

b. The Bible teaches that God's will is always done. The more we abide in Jesus and the more His words abide in us the more our will is conformed to His will and the more our prayers are answered.

c. For more on this January 16, 2011 sermon "Ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you"

3) If we want God to answer our prayers, we must obey

a. **John 15:7-11 (ESV)**

⁷If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸By this

my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. ⁹As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. *Abide in my love.* ¹⁰*If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.* ¹¹These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

Last week I mentioned Francis Chan

- Most impactful speaker at DGM Pastor's Conference for me
- Told story after story of amazing answered prayers in his life
- Was actually surprised when God didn't answer his prayers
- *Abiding in Jesus, by being obedient to Him, was Francis Chan's number one explanation for why God says yes so often to his prayers, and it is the number one place he goes when God says no.*

When God says no to Francis Chan, the first place he looks is at himself

- He looks at his relationships
 - **1 Peter 3:7 (ESV)**
⁷Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.
 - **Matthew 5:23-24 (NIV)**
²³"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.
 - **Mark 11:25-26 (ESV)**
²⁵And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses." ²⁶
- He looks at his motives
 - **James 4:1-3 (ESV)**
¹What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? ²You desire and do not have, so you murder. You

covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. ³You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

- He looks at the way he is treating others
 - **Isaiah 58:1-9 (ESV)**
³'Why have we fasted, and you see it not? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it?' Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure, and oppress all your workers. ⁴ Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to hit with a wicked fist. Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high...⁶"Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? ⁷ Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?...⁹Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, 'Here I am.' If you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness,

- He looks at his own personal holiness
 - **James 5:16-18 (ESV)**
¹⁶ ...The prayer of a *righteous person* has great power as it is working. ¹⁷ Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. ¹⁸ Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.
 - **Psalms 84:11 (ESV)**
¹¹ For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold *from those who walk uprightly*.

- He looks at his faith
 - **James 1:5-8 (ESV)**
⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given

him. ⁶ *But let him ask in faith, with no doubting,* for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸ he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

o **Mark 11:22-25 (ESV)**

²² And Jesus answered them, "Have faith in God. ²³ Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' *and does not doubt in his heart,* but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him. ²⁴ Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

Why is God more apt to answer yes to His children who obey? I think it is for the same reason we as parents are more apt to say yes to our children who obey.

- God, like us, wants to say yes to his children because He loves them

o **Matthew 7:7-11 (NIV)**

⁷ "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. ⁹ "Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? ¹¹ 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!

- But God, like us, is willing to say no to His children for their good

o **Hebrews 12:6-11 (ESV)**

⁶ ...the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." ⁷ It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? ⁸ If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹ Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who

disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live?

¹⁰ For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, *but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness.* ¹¹ For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

- o One of the primary means of discipline we employ as parents is to say no to our kids when they are being disobedient. Though we want to say yes, we are willing to say no in hopes of changing their behavior and teaching them to do what's right. I think God does the same with us.
- o If we're being disobedient to our Heavenly Father by not honoring our wives and treating them in an understanding way, by living with broken relationships and unforgiveness in our hearts, by being selfish, by treating others unfairly or unkindly, by doing what is wrong rather than what is right, or by doubting God and His faithfulness, should He give us all we ask of Him, or should He say no to some of our requests in order to encourage us to examine our bad behavior and repent?
- Finally God, like us, is eager to reward His children for doing what is right
 - o I think God is just itching to say yes to us!
 - o **James 5:16-18 (ESV)**
¹⁶ ...The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.
 - o **Psalms 84:11 (ESV)**
¹¹ ...No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly.

In summary, if God isn't saying yes to our prayers as frequently as we'd like, what should we do?

- 1) Make sure we're connected to Him by repenting of our sins and putting our faith and trust in Jesus Christ.
- 2) Make sure our will is being conformed to His by abiding in Him and making sure His words are abiding in us.

- 3) Make sure we're abiding in Him by checking our obedience.
- 4) Trust Him and keep on knocking
 - a. Francis' daughter
 - b. Francis' grandma

Continuing a series four messages from DGM Pastor's Conference

- <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/conference-messages/by-conference/2011-pastors-conference>