

# Times Square Church Pulpit Series



## How Not to Come to God!

By David Wilkerson January 30, 1995

I believe that most people who call themselves by God's name have learned to go to Him in their time of need. Indeed, most Christians believe in the necessity of prayer. Many seek the Lord diligently, coming to Him with tears, godly sorrow and repentance. They pour out their hearts to Him with weeping and heartrending supplications, convinced, as David was, of God's Word:

\*\*\*\*\* "When thou saidst, Seek  
ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek" (Psalm 27:8).

\*\*\*\*\*

You probably agree with me that many Christians are praying seekers of God. Yet I have a question for you: Does God hear every child of His who cries out to Him? Does everyone who comes to the Lord seeking His blessing and favor get an answer? Do all who ask receive?

What of those who come to God with much fasting and tears? There are believers who sometimes fast for twenty, thirty or even forty days. Some African Christians fast for long periods, believing God to raise the dead.

And what of those who spend long, agonizing hours calling upon God? Are they heard for their diligence, determination or sincerity alone?

Many Christians have the idea that all they need is "more, more, more" - more time shut in with God, more tears, more brokenness, more zeal for His Word. Something within urges them: "If I could just fast more, pray more, cry more, then I'd be a better Christian, and God would answer my prayers."

David testified,

\*\*\*\*\* "In my distress I called upon the  
Lord, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him,  
even into his ears" (Psalm 18:6).

\*\*\*\*\*

Scripture tells us that because David cried, God came down, thundering from the heavens:

\*\*\*\*\* "Then the earth shook and  
trembled... He bowed the heavens also, and came down... The Lord also thundered in the  
heavens... He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters" (Psalm 18:7, 9, 13,  
16). \*\*\*\*\*

I ask you: Is that all there is to it? You simply go to God, cry aloud to Him, and He will hear and deliver you?

~~~~~ **I Believe There Is a "Missing Link" in Our Prayer Life!** ~~~~~

There is a crucial link missing in many of our lives. And often this is why we do not receive answers to many of our prayers - why our unsaved loved ones still haven't come to Jesus, why we go year after year without deliverance or direction.

Beloved, that missing link is faith!

\*\*\*\*\* "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6).  
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James instructs:

\*\*\*\*\* "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord" (James 1:6-7).  
\*\*\*\*\*

If a person entertains doubt, it doesn't matter how many rivers of tears he cries. He won't receive anything from God!

David was heard and delivered by the Lord not merely because he came to Him with tears. No - it was because David came with a heart full of confidence and trust in God! The Psalms abound with this man's testimony of total trust:

\*\*\*\*\* "Blessed be the Lord, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications. The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped..." (Psalm 28:6-7).  
\*\*\*\*\*

Of course, God wants us to cry out to Him. He calls us to issue up gut-wrenching cries to Him, from our innermost being. Yet He hears no such cry unless it is accompanied by faith! David said:

\*\*\*\*\* "...he is our help and our shield...\*because we have trusted\*..." (Psalm 33:20-21, emphasis mine).

"The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust..." (Psalm 18:2). \*\*\*\*\*

David is saying here, "I will wait on the Lord - He's going to deliver me - because I trust in His holy name!"

David states clearly that all of Israel's fathers - those who were delivered from the very beginning - were heard by God because they trusted in Him:

\*\*\*\*\* "Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded" (Psalm 22:4-5).

"...I have trusted also in the Lord; therefore I shall not slide" (Psalm 26:1).  
\*\*\*\*\*

David determined never to give up, because his trust was anchored in the Lord. Indeed, it was

David's unwavering trust that moved God to deliver him:

\*\*\*\*\* "For thou hast delivered my soul from death: wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling... In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me" (Psalm 56:13, 11).  
\*\*\*\*\*

Nearly every time David cries out to the Lord in prayer, we hear his testimony of trust: "God hears me because I trust in Him! I cry out to Him with tears from the foundation of trust He has put in my heart."

Beloved, the Holy Spirit made this matter of faith very real to me during a recent season of brokenness in prayer. I had a week alone to spend fasting and seeking the Lord. There were certain things I wanted to pray for - physical needs, more power in my preaching, the burdens of the church, an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in New York City. I wanted to be open with the Lord about all these needs.

During that week, I quoted all the Scriptures that speak of crying out to the Lord and laying hold of the horns on the altar. I brought my flesh under subjection. I spent several days fasting. And I came to the Lord with great crying - with my heart set on Him, wanting only to please Him. I paced about the apartment, shouting and crying at God, "Oh Lord, You have to answer me!" I spent many futile hours seeking assurance that my prayers were prevailing. But, finally, the Spirit of God spoke lovingly yet firmly to my soul: "David, stop it! Wipe your face and stop crying."

I thought, "What? Lord, I thought You desired a broken, contrite spirit."

The Spirit continued: "Stop crying - stop walking around this apartment! Go, sit down. I have something to say to you: Don't ever again come into My presence with unbelief! I will not hear your weeping, crying or pleading until you believe My Word. You are begging Me to do what I have already promised. You are not taking Me at My Word!

"You can weep till there are no tears left - but it's not going to do you any good. No prayer, tears or fasting you offer Me without faith can ever please Me. None of your struggles or strivings for answers will work, David - until you come to Me in faith!"

\*\*\*\*\* "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6).  
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This brings me directly to my subject: how not to come to God! I feel compelled of the Spirit to share with you several things not to do when you come to the Lord in prayer:

~~~~~ **1. Do Not Come to God Expecting Him to Do Any Good Thing for You Unless You Come to Him With Childlike Faith in His Promises!** ~~~~~

We hear so much preaching about the need for prayer. And we come under condemnation when we neglect to pray. So we grapple with our flesh, bring it under subjection, discipline ourselves to pray, and get alone with God to call upon Him.

Yet we cannot conceive that God could be displeased with our hours spent in prayer, our days of

fasting, our many tears. It is unthinkable that He would not hear us after such great struggles - that all of it could be in vain, giving Him no pleasure whatsoever.

However, the Word of the Lord is clear:

\*\*\*\*\* "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord" (James 1:6-7).

\*\*\*\*\*

Beloved, grab hold of this word: It is impossible for you to please God without faith! Abraham is one man who developed a faith that didn't stagger at what God promised him:

\*\*\*\*\* "And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform" (Romans 4:19-21).

\*\*\*\*\*

Now we are talking about "impossibilities" - believing God for what seems humanly impossible. The Lord promised a child to these two people who had "dead" bodies. What a challenge to faith! It was a humanly hopeless situation. Abraham was now ninety-nine years old, his reproductive glands were dead, and his wife Sarah's womb was dead.

\*\*\*\*\* "And God said...Sarah shall her name be. And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her...she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her...Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed..." (Genesis 17:15-19). \*\*\*\*\*

God was saying, "Even though your bodies are dead, you are going to have a baby boy. And all My promises of faith are going to come through this child. Abraham, you're going to be the father of many nations!"

## ~~~~~ Why Did God Wait Until Abraham and Sarah Were Too Old to Give Them a Son? ~~~~~

Why didn't God give them Isaac thirteen years before, when Ishmael was born - when the couple's bodies were still very much alive? Why did He wait until the situation had become humanly impossible - and only absolute faith in Him could bring about the promise?

It was because this seed was to be one "of faith" - birthed completely in faith. Abraham's faith was not yet ripe. He staggered at God's promise!

Yet Sarah knew the promise. And after waiting ten years with still no children, she got impatient and devised a plan. She said to Abraham, "I will give you my maid, Hagar, as your second wife. Go into her and bear me a child by her." Abraham agreed, reasoning, "After all, the promise is to come out of my seed." So he went into Hagar, and she bore him a son, Ishmael.

But Sarah raged at her husband with jealousy: "My wrong be upon thee" (Genesis 16:5), meaning, "It's all your fault." And she was right! Abraham should have trusted the Word of the Lord that Sarah would bear his child. But he didn't wait on God - and he bought into the shortcut,

trying to make the promise come about himself. He sinned against the light He had been given. And God flatly denied his request that Ishmael be the heir.

You see, Abraham had yet to develop a faith that didn't stagger, that was unshakable. And that would come only through testing and trial. In the end, God's Word testifies of him:

\*\*\*\*\* "...he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief..." (Romans 4:20).  
\*\*\*\*\*

Yet the promise God made to Abraham didn't come to pass for another nineteen years. This time, however, Abraham believed God "...against hope..." (Romans 4:18). Scripture says, "...he considered not his own body now dead..." (verse 19). Abraham now trusted that God "...quickeneth the dead..." (verse 17) and he had no doubts whatsoever. He was "...fully persuaded..." (verse 21) that what God promised, He would do. He and Sarah were given their miracle child - born in the womb of faith alone!

Have you stopped "considering" your circumstances, as Abraham did? Have you stopped trying to reason and figure out how God will meet your need? Or are you still bogged down, thinking about all the impossibilities and hindrances?

Do not come to the Lord in prayer until you have stopped "considering" all the impossibilities! Don't come to Him until you are "fully persuaded" He is able and willing to do all He has promised. You don't have to live in fear or the bondage of unbelief any longer. God has given us everything pertaining to life and godliness:

\*\*\*\*\* "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness... Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature..." (2 Peter 1:3-4). \*\*\*\*\*

Beloved, any "staggering" you have comes from unbelief. To stagger means "to dispute" - to compute, figure it out, argue your merits, debate the issue. The meaning of "...staggered not..." in Romans 4:20 is this: "Abraham offered no debate; he raised no arguments or reasonings that would have weakened his confidence."

Having faith means you've settled all your arguments. When you come to God, you must leave behind all debate, all reasoning, all hopelessness, all questioning, all doubt. And you must be fully persuaded He will keep His Word. God wants to do the impossible - because the more impossible the situation, the more glory He receives!

~~~~~ **2. Do Not Come to God With Any "Ifs"!** ~~~~~

We are afraid to step out in faith to believe God's promises. So we add this phrase to our prayers: "If it be Thy will, Lord..."

That phrase is mentioned only once in the Scriptures. It was spoken by Jesus, in the Garden of Gethsemane:

\*\*\*\*\* "...O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39).  
\*\*\*\*\*

Now, some say God did not hear this prayer - that Jesus did drink the cup. But I believe - as did Finney and others - that God did hear Jesus' prayer, and that the cup did pass from Him.

Let me explain: The cup Jesus mentions has nothing to do with the Cross. Rather, the cup was His fear of dying in the Garden from anguish. "...My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death..." (verse 38).

You see, Christ always embraced the Cross. For three years He told His disciples He was headed there, and He never tried to shun or avoid it. He knew humankind could not be saved without the Cross and without the shedding of His own blood.

So He could not have been asking to "pass" the Cross. Rather, the cup He spoke of was anguish, a sorrow unto death. It was sorrow over humankind's rejection of God's offer of grace - sorrow so deep it caused Him to weep bloody tears.

And this cup did pass. Jesus came out of His prayer agony with a peace, a calm, a readiness to go to the Cross. Something wonderful came over Him, and He knew He would be sacrificed on the Cross. The cup had passed - because God had answered His prayer!

The apostle John states:

\*\*\*\*\* "...if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us" (1 John 5:14).  
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I believe we may substitute the word promise in this verse for will. Why? Any promise of God is a revelation of His will!

Take, for example, God's promise to "...keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24). Why would you go to God asking, "If it be Thy will, Father, keep me from falling" - when He has already promised to do this for you? That kind of prayer is a disgrace!

Yet we think we give God an "out" when we pray this way. And later, after we've given up on praying because we lack faith, we explain, "It must not have been the Lord's will." We give God a safe exit - an excuse not to answer!

Beloved, we dare not come to God praying, "Lord, if it be Thy will, meet my needs." God's Word states clearly:

\*\*\*\*\* "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).  
\*\*\*\*\*

And we dare not come to Him praying, "Lord, if it be Thy will, give me Your Spirit" - because God promises to pour out His Spirit upon all who ask!

Indeed, God gives us great and precious promises so that we will learn to trust Him with boldness:

\*\*\*\*\* "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:19).  
\*\*\*\*\*

To many Christians it sounds very spiritual to pray, "Lord, if it be Thy will..." But too often this attitude is born of unbelief. Such people become weak and tentative in their faith. Though they possess a great, glorious promise - with God's will perfectly clear in it - they are afraid to take a

stand on it!

The truly spiritual way to pray is to dig into God's Word and find His revealed will in His promises to you. Then pray His will, His promise. Hold it up to Him!

What I have just said may sound like error to some. But the truth is we have become very lazy in teaching God's Word to know His will. All I am saying is that His will can be known by studying His promises - and in knowing them, we will know God's will and will truly be praying "according to His will."

~~~~~ **3. Don't Come to God Until You Are Ready to Believe for Exactly What You Ask for!** ~~~~~

\*\*\*\*\* "...What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mark 11:24).  
\*\*\*\*\*

God is not a tease, a "come on" God. He's not like those department stores that advertise a huge sale on an item but tell you when you arrive, "Sorry, we're sold out" - and then try to sell you a more expensive item.

No - God makes no substitutes! If you ask Him for bread, He will not substitute a stone. If you ask Him for fish, He won't surprise you with a snake (see Matthew 7:9-10).

When the blind man was asked what he wanted, he shouted, "That I might see!" Jesus didn't answer, "Here, let me do something even better for you. Let me give you spiritual insight, so you can read people's minds and know the deep things of God. That will be much better." No! The Bible says Jesus gave him specifically what he asked for - his eyesight!

James says that if any person asks wisdom of God, He will give him wisdom - not patience, nor longsuffering, nor discernment, but wisdom! (see James 1:5). When you get specific with God, He gets specific with you. Why? He wants to answer us exactly as we ask - so that we will watch for it in faith!

Often we reason to ourselves, "If God doesn't grant me what I asked for, then whatever He does give me must be as good or better." A favorite saying of mine used to be, "If God shuts one door, then He has a better one to open." No! This is not right theology. It sounds spiritual, but it is based in doubt!

Jesus tells us:

\* "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matthew 21:22).

\* "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it" (John 14:13-14).

\* "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7).

God wants you to be specific with Him. So, I ask you: Exactly what is it you are praying for?

Is it the salvation of your family? Then lay hold of His promise to save you and your household (see Acts 16:31). Go to God boldly with His promise. And don't be satisfied until you are heard

specifically!

An entire city may get saved. Unsaved friends all around you may come to Jesus. But that cannot be enough for you! You must hold on, believing, until your request is heard and answered. You must say, "Lord, that's all wonderful - but it's my loved one You need to save!" Be specific with Him - and keep asking until it happens!

Do you have financial needs, debts? A hundred people may testify to you that their needs are being supplied, and that's fine. But you have to hold onto God in prayer until your needs are met! You have to say, "That's not an answer to my prayer, Lord. I want You to do it for me!"

Yet you cannot ask with a heart of lust.

\*\*\*\*\* "Ye lust, and have not.... Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (James 4:2-3). \*\*\*\*\*

God's desire is to have you so walk with Him that you seek those things He births in your spirit. Over time, you'll find yourself seeking His kingdom first, praying for lost souls. And suddenly you'll see other things happening that you haven't even prayed for.

God blesses you when you don't ask selfishly - when you ask for things close to His heart!

#### ~~~~~ 4. Let Me Show You How To Come to God Rightly! ~~~~~

1. Come to God with a forgiving heart. If you have a grudge against someone, you can forget all about faith, fasting or prayer. It is impossible for God to hear you if you do not forgive.

\*\*\*\*\* "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:15). \*\*\*\*\*

God has dealt with me on this issue. I know what it's like to be hurt and wounded without any provoking. Yet if I go to the Lord while holding something against someone, I know my prayers won't even rise above my head. Now I don't even try to pray until it's all settled in my heart.

2. Obey God's Word. Do what He says.

\*\*\*\*\* "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight" (1 John 3:22). \*\*\*\*\*

The Holy Spirit will show you anything in your life that is displeasing to God. He promises to reveal it all to you, if you'll simply go to Him in faith.

3. If you're married, treat your mate lovingly, intelligently and with honor, "...that your prayers be not hindered" (1 Peter 3:7).

If you go to God while fighting with your wife, you can forget about ever being heard by Him. Your prayers will be hindered by your unjust heart!

4. Come to God in simple, childlike faith.

\*\*\*\*\* "...Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3). \*\*\*\*\*

This verse does not mean you will be lost for eternity. Rather, Jesus is talking about the kingdom of heaven on earth. Without childlike faith, He says, you will never appropriate or enter into all the provisions He has made. You will never know heaven on earth - the things God has prepared for them that love Him - unless you come to Him believing as a little child.

By God's grace, I intend to go to God every day during this new year, taking His promises to the throne of grace and laying them before Him. I want to tell Him, "Here's what You said, Lord - Your revealed will. And I believe what You said. So I'm going to start thanking You for my answer right now. I'm not going to beg You to do what You've already promised. I'm going to thank You for fulfilling Your Word to me!"

Dear saint, let this year be your year of faith, of believing. Appropriate God's promises. They're all yours! Jesus promises,

\*\*\*\*\* "...whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you" (John 15:16).  
\*\*\*\*\*

Believe God for your loved ones' souls. Believe Him for His Spirit to be poured out in your life. Believe Him for your physical condition, your financial situation. He will not abandon you. Stand on His promises to you, though a million people say otherwise. Let God's Word be true and every man a liar! He promises, "I'm taking care of all things. And I will meet your every need." Amen!

\*\*\*\*\* "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you..." (1 Peter 5:7).  
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