

Faith: What Are We Missing? 3

Go Beyond Hope and ASK

(preached 9/24/23)

Please turn to *Philippians 4:6, Matthew 7:7-8, Luke 11:5-8, Luke 18:1-5.*

SO FAR...

- Belief and Faith are a married couple, but they're NOT the same thing.
- Belief is human and takes place within the heart.
- Belief is a choice.
- Faith is a supernatural gift and fruit, and is only given by God.
- We cannot produce it, achieve it, or work for it.
- When we believe, God grants faith.
- We don't have faith because we don't believe.
- We believe in JESUS because He is willing, able, intends to bring Heaven to earth, He gets us/can relate, He's supernaturally wise, is consistent, and dependable.

TODAY: the element we may be missing is this: ***we need something tangible to believe in for faith to be given.***

Just hoping for a good outcome isn't enough, is not belief, and won't result in faith.

WE MUST APPROACH GOD AND ASK FOR A PROMISE.

[Phi 4:6 NKJV] Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, **let your requests be made known to God;**

Here are some examples:

Johnny's sneakers are wearing out and soon to fall apart. Which is going to get a result and be more effective?

1. Johnny inwardly hoping that his parents will notice, without him saying anything, and buy him new sneakers.
2. Johnny approaching his parents, showing them his sneakers, and asking for new ones.

There's a position at work Mary wants and knows she's qualified for. Which is more likely to get her the job?

1. Mary inwardly hoping her supervisor chooses her.
2. Mary approaching her supervisor and asking for the job.

I submit to you that in our relationship with God, **we do more hoping than we do asking.**

- Maybe we're more like Johnny with sneakers that are falling apart, hoping God will notice, and just get us a new pair.
- Perhaps we're like Mary who really wants the job and we're thinking God should just give it to us.

It doesn't work that way with God. He wants us to come to Him. He's open, willing, and welcomes us to approach Him. Let's review the verse of Scripture from Philippians.

[Phi 4:6 NKJV] "Be anxious for nothing..."

When Paul tells them to "be anxious for nothing" **he's referring to NEEDS the Philippian church has**...what those needs are, we don't know. But whatever they are, no doubt some of them are worried...anxious. Will God step up? Will He provide? Will He open a door that's shut? So Paul starts out by saying "don't worry about it" but he goes deeper. He tells them WHAT to do to have their needs met.

[Phi 4:6 NKJV] "but in everything by prayer and supplication..."

The "everything" is everything the Philippian people need. Whatever that is. How will they get the "everything" they need? Paul goes on: prayer and supplication.

Prayer is talking to God.

Supplication is ASKING God.

The word "supplication" means "seeking, entreating, asking, whether to God or man."

It's not enough to just hope. It's not enough wait. We must ASK.

Time for me to test your Biblical knowledge! I'm going to quote some famous verses and I want you to tell me if I'm quoting truly or if I changed God's Word. Ready?

[Mat 7:7-8 STV] 7 "HOPE, and it will be given to you; ASSUME, and you will find; WAIT, and it will be opened to you. 8 "For everyone who HOPES receives, and he who ASSUMES finds, and to him who WAITS it will be opened.

ARE THESE THE TRUE WORDS OF JESUS OR DID I CHANGE THEM? What are the real words He used?

[Mat 7:7-8 NKJV] 7 "ASK, and it will be given to you; SEEK, and you will find; KNOCK, and it will be opened to you. 8 "For everyone who ASKS receives, and he who SEEKS finds, and to him who KNOCKS it will be opened.

HOPE vs. ASK

ASSUME vs. SEEK

WAIT vs. KNOCK

HOPE DEFERRED. Would you like to know a verse of the Bible that I find very frustrating? And many other Christians do as well? It's this one:

[Pro 13:12 NKJV] Hope deferred makes the heart sick, But [when] the desire comes, [it is] a tree of life.

While God does not say "yes" to everything we may ask for, ***I believe the main reason hope is deferred*** is because we 1) haven't asked for anything and 2) we haven't gotten a promise from God. I'll preach about the latter next week.

Hope is passive, asking is active. Stop being passive and act.

I'm about to quote another famous verse that passive people misinterpret all the time. Here it is:

[Mat 6:8 NKJV] "...For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him."

Passive people read this verse and are tempted to think that, because God knows what we need before we say a word, ***that He'll just give it.***

NO

Please notice what Jesus says at the end of the verse: **we still ask.**

He did NOT say: "*Don't bother asking, your Father already knows what you need, so you can just assume that if He's truly loving, He'll just give it!*"

ASSUME vs. SEEK. I'm well aware there are many good people who just see what others need and give/serve without having to be asked. I understand they consider this to be a higher form of love and maybe it is.

Yet God commands us to ASK and SEEK, not hope and assume.

Assuming is passive, seeking is active. Which do you believe yields a better result?

The assumer says "I shouldn't have to ask. If God really loved me, He would just give/do."

Jesus says "ask and then you will receive [from God.]"

I'm going with Jesus because I have needs.

SEEKING is to actively look for signs that God is responding to our request or a promise He's made.

JOHNNY. After showing his parents his falling apart sneakers and asking for new ones, Johnny sees his parents heading into a shoe store and looking at sneakers.

MARY. After asking for the position at work, Mary sees her supervisor reviewing her file and making a call to the boss at the department she wants to work in...signs.

ASKING and SEEKING are faith based and this sermon series is about faith.

Belief & Faith are ***BEFORE the fact***...in other words, it hasn't happened yet. Johnny still doesn't have his sneaks and Mary still doesn't have the position she wants.

Asking God for things is belief, and seeking signs that it's coming true is belief, and God loves it when we believe! He responds with the gift and fruit of FAITH!

Last is KNOCKING vs. waiting. People who hope and then assume tend to wait...and when nothing happens they get frustrated. Where is God and why isn't He stepping up? Let's read the following parable:

[Luk 11:5-8 NKJV] 5 And He said to them, "Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; 6 'for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; 7 "and he will answer from within and say, 'Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you'? 8 "I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs.

Here's the scenario. A fellow needs food for his guest but its really late at night. He goes to his neighbors door, at midnight, and knocks. "I need some bread for my buddy!" he shouts through the door, still knocking. The neighbor is sleeping, its midnight, and he doesn't want to be bothered...and tells the first guy exactly that. YET he gets up and gives him the bread anyway. Why??

Look at verse 8 that I underlined. The neighbor with his door shut and who has lots of food is God. The person knocking on the door needing something is us. Not only do we need to ask and seek, but we need to knock.

Unlike the neighbor in the parable, we know that God IS willing. He wants us to knock on His door!

KNOCKING IS PERSISTENCE. Johnny knows his parents love and care about him and don't want him running around with holes in his sneaks. He asked, looked for signs, and then persisted. *"Hey mom and dad, how about them sneaks? Have you had a chance to go to the store or order them online?"*

Mary knows her supervisor is for her getting the new position at work, now she follows up and asks for an update. There's an old saying: ***"the squeaky wheel gets greased."***

I've heard others say that it LACKS faith to keep asking but there's nothing in the Bible that says or indicates that's true. ***Persistence would only lack faith if the person asking is motivated by doubt.***

BTW do you know the verses in Luke's Gospel which follow this parable of persistence? It's these:

[Luk 11:9-10 NKJV] 9 "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 10 "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened."

We already quoted these from Matthew's Gospel and they appear also in Luke. Here's another parable:

[Luk 18:1-5 NKJV] 1 Then He spoke a parable to them, **that men always ought to pray and not lose heart,** 2 saying: "There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. 3 "Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary.' 4 "And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man, 5 **'yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.'** "

SCENARIO. A lady's husband is murdered and she wants justice. Local judge is corrupt, isn't afraid of God, and doesn't care about people. The lady asks for justice and he ignores her. Then he gets thinking to himself *"this lady is never going to stop bugging me about this, so I'll just give her what she wants to get her off my back."*

Jesus is comparing the judge to God. No, He isn't saying God is corrupt and doesn't care. God is holy, just, and cares about us. He's willing to hear our prayers and what we're asking for. That being said, we must knock and knock until He opens up and gives us what we're asking for! We cannot lose hope and stop asking & seeking.

Passive people wait, active people knock. Which do you think yields a better result?

[Mat 21:21-22 NKJV] 21 So Jesus answered and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' it will be done. 22 "And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."

[Mar 11:24 NKJV] 24 "Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive [them], and you will have [them].

[Jhn 14:13-14 NKJV] 13 "And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 "If you ask anything in My name, I will do [it].

CALL TO ACTION:

- Have been asking the Lord for things, or have we been hoping?
- Have we sought signs that He's working, or just assuming?
- Have we been knocking persistently on His door, or just waiting for Him to do whatever?