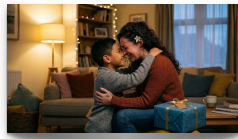


The Potter's Christian Life Center

SERMON NOTES
with Pastor Greg Formey



Focus On The Giver

Matthew 7:9-11

Sunday, September 20, 2026

Many of us worry that we do not know how to pray correctly. We sit down to speak with God and wonder if we are using the right words, saying things long enough, or having enough faith to even be heard. We treat prayer like some kind of complex code that we have to crack. We think that if we get the formula wrong, God will not answer.

The good news is that Jesus completely changes how we view prayer. He teaches that effective prayer does not depend on the exact words you use or how big your faith feels. Prayer rests entirely on the character of the one who receives it. Prayer is not about our performance; it is about the goodness of the God the giver.

Matthew 7:9-11

Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 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! NIV

FROM THE LESSER TO THE GREATER

To understand the depth of the Lord's words, we need to look at how Jewish rabbis taught. Jesus uses a logical argument well known at the time Called moving "from the lesser to the greater." He points out ordinary, imperfect human parents and compares them to God.

Jesus reminds that human fathers are broken and flawed. In verse 11, He bluntly describes human beings as "evil" in comparison to God's absolute holiness.

People make mistakes, act selfishly, and fall short daily. Even so, a human parent still deeply loves their child. If a hungry child comes up to a dinner table and asks for a simple piece of bread, what parent would hand their child a rock? If a child asks for a piece of fish to eat, what parent would hand them a rattlesnake?

A stone might look like a round loaf of bread, but it will break teeth. A snake would bite and likely inject poison. The point is simple: even imperfect, sinful people do not trick or harm their children when they ask for help.

That is the lesser argument; now comes the "greater" argument: If flawed, broken human parents naturally want to protect and feed their children, *how much more* will our perfect Heavenly Father give what is truly good to those who ask Him?

THE CHARACTER OF GOD

There must be a basic Old Testament understanding of who God is. Throughout Scripture, God's identity is that of a loving, reliable Father.

When He revealed His nature to Moses on Mount Sinai, He did not emphasize His raw power first. He emphasized His disposition and temperament.

Exodus 34:6-7

And the Lord passed by before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin..." NKJV

God's true nature is that of His patience and trustworthy character. Later, King David uses the exact same that Jesus uses.

Psalms 103:13-14

As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him. For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust. ESV

God does not expect us to come to Him with perfect words or ultimate strength. He remembers that we are flawed human beings. He approaches us with the compassion of a loving Father who knows our limitations in detail.

Imagine a five-year-old child who wants to surprise her father on his birthday. She decides to make him a hand-painted card. She accidentally spills paint on the carpet, misspells half the words, and hands him a piece of paper covered in smudges and messy scribbles.

Does the father throw the card away because the spelling is bad? Does he reject the gift because the art is imperfect? Absolutely not. He proudly hangs it on the refrigerator. He loves the gift because he loves the child, and he sees the heart behind the mess.

Our prayers are like that smudged card. We stumble over our words, we get distracted, and we do not fully understand what we are asking for. But God does not judge our prayers based on grammar or perfection. He receives us gladly because He is a good Father.

Luke 18:10-14. Jesus tells a story about two men who went to the temple to pray: a respected religious leader (a Pharisee) and a despised tax collector. The Pharisee prayed a long, impressive prayer full of polished religious words, bragging about his own good works. But the tax collector stood far off, would not even look up to heaven, and simply beat his chest, praying: "God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

Jesus said it was the tax collector, not the religious leader, who went home justified before God. The tax collector did not have a fancy formula or big public standing. He had simple honesty, and he threw himself completely on the merciful character of God. God accepted him because He looks at the heart and delights in showing mercy.

Conclusion

When you come to God in prayer, stop worrying about whether you have the "right" words or enough faith to make things happen. If you ask God for something, and it feels like the answer is slow or different than what you expected, remember who He is. God never tricks His children. He will never hand you a stone when you need bread. Because He is infinitely wise and perfectly good, He will always give you what is truly best for your life, even when you cannot see the whole picture yet. Trust His character, come to Him simply, and rest in the love of a Father who never fails.