



When Hearts Align

The Mutual Side of Prayer

by Chris Tiegreen

A father had two sons.

One son was always asking his father for things. Some of them were legitimate needs, others were extravagant wants, and most were a combination of the two. The son frequently didn't know ahead of time how his father would answer, but he knew he always had a shot at getting what he asked for. And sometimes he did. So whenever a desire came to mind, he asked it—just to see what his dad would do.

The other son also asked his father for a lot of things. Like his brother's requests, some of them were legitimate needs, others were extravagant wants, and most were a combination of the two. The son had spent so much time with the father that he and the father usually wanted the same things. Most of the time, the son knew ahead of time how the father would answer. And because the father had the pleasure of so much time with his son, he usually gave him whatever he asked for.

Each example is a portrait of prayer. Most people take the hit-and-miss approach, giving thanks with every "hit" and shrugging their shoulders with every "miss." They'll scan the horizon for a glimpse of His will, and will pray it in faith whenever they find it. But finding it doesn't happen on a regular basis.

Some people, however, take the saturation approach. They spend time "marinating" in His

presence, filling themselves with His Word, absorbing His character, and praying what's in their hearts. The will of God becomes much less of an investigation and much more of an identity.

The enormous difference between the two kinds of prayer is not the amount of faith with which prayers are uttered, the content they contain, or the legitimacy of the desire. The difference is where the prayer originated.

Prayers from Above

In John 14-16, Jesus reiterated the same promise over and over again: Anything a disciple asks in His name will be done. There are some conditions attached—abiding in Christ and His Word abiding in us, for example—but none of the conditions are complicated. The problem is that many of us haven't realized how deep the conditions go.

If a son spends a lot of time with his father, loves his father's company, desires his father's agenda, and develops his father's character, the father is zealously inclined to satisfy the heart of his son. Fathers dote on children like that. He gladly lets himself be wrapped around their little finger.

If we apply that principle to our relationship with God, it looks like this: whenever we're truly passionate about God's will, God becomes truly passionate about ours. God dotes on those who adore Him. He'll give them just about anything.

He can do that because He knows that children who adore and absorb Him like that are going to develop a heart like His. And, not coincidentally, a heart like His is going to come up with desires like His and an agenda like His. Their prayers are going to come from His Spirit.

Where Your Heart Dwells

A heart saturated in evil is going to reap the fruit of evil. A heart saturated in the world is going to reap the fruit of the world. A heart saturated in a mixture of things is going to reap a mixture of fruit. And a heart saturated in God? It's going to reap the fruit of God—His attributes, His blessings, His agenda, and, yes, His favor. He showers extravagance on those who are extravagant toward Him.

Scattershot prayers are sometimes answered, but they do little to bring us into closer relationship with the Father. Not only that, they rarely see the fullness of God's kingdom.

Saturation prayers, though, are mutual. The deeper our desires are rooted in God, the taller they grow in fruitfulness. The more our hearts move into Him, the more His favor moves onto us. The more a holy Father sees godly passion in His child, the more zealous He is to fulfill it.

Which kind of son or daughter would you rather be? One who throws out prayers like a shotgun and hopes they hit God's target? Or one who has soaked in the Spirit of the Father Himself? As a parent, which kind of child would you be more delighted to bless?

Every day in your prayer time, ask yourself two questions: "What's in my heart?" and "Where does it come from?" Marinate in the Spirit and let your heart take on His aroma. Then ask whatever your heart desires.