



JOHNSON AVENUE  
*Church of Christ*  
WHERE *God's Family* BUILDS ETERNAL HOMES

## A Spiritual Encouragement Message March 18, 2021

### Listen

By Andrew Lemus

I often get a kick out of when my kids ask for sweets right before bed. “Can we have some ice cream dad?” is not too unusual to hear around the Lemus house, even minutes before it’s bedtime. Don’t they know me by now? I suppose there might be a time when I say sure, but I don’t see that happening anytime soon, especially for my smaller children. I am sure we have all experienced someone asking us for something and in our mind we think, don’t you already know what the answer will be? Don’t you know me by now? Have you not been listening or paying attention to me?

Yet, we as disciples of Christ, full grown adults go to God asking for things like ice cream before bed. No not literally, but we ask for things that God has repeatedly spoken to us about and given His rules on. That’s not the extent of it either, we as Christians often go to God in prayer when, if the shoe were on the other foot, we would probably scratch our heads and say “really?!?”. Like a good father, God’s promise to answer petitions and supplications are conditional, here are some of those conditions.



**Be Righteous:** If we want the Lord to answer our prayers and fulfill our requests we must live righteously. The Lord closes His ears and turns His face from the prayers of those who do evil, but His eyes and ears are open to those who are righteous (1Peter 3:12; Isaiah 59:1-2). Can you imagine a child asking their parents for some blessing or something special while they are obstinately disobeying their rules? Unfortunately, we probably can but that doesn’t make it right! If we want God to answer our prayers we need to make sure we are being obedient children, listening and obeying His will (1John 3:22; John 9:31, 15:7).

**Have Faith:** Why would we ask God to do something if we doubted His ability to answer us? God forbid we treat God like a wishing well where we throw a coin in, making a petition,

unsure whether or not He hears and will respond. James tells us if we go to God in prayer, doubting Him, we will not receive what we are asking for (James 1:5-8). Sadly, if we doubt the character, omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, and eternal nature of God we are missing out on a wealth of comfort, security, and overwhelming blessings. We are missing out on freedom (John 8:31-32). When we talk to God by faith, we are confident that He hears us and will answer (Matthew 21:22; James 1:6, 7). God will not answer our prayers if they are not by faith.

**Have A Loving Spirit:** Jesus rebuked the hypocrites for pointing out the speck in their brother's eye while being oblivious to the plank protruding out of their own (Matthew 7:1-6). It is extra frustrating to find out that a child pointing a finger at another's wrongs, is guilty of the same thing. Are we abiding in the Lord and loving our neighbors or are we like a little Eddie Haskell who approaches God's throne as a sweet boy while being mischievous when God's not looking? When we talk to God and ask Him for help with our sins, struggles, and hardships, we need to make sure we have a loving spirit, treating others the way we want God to treat us (Matthew 6:15; Philippians 2:3; John 15:7; 1Corinthians 13:1-3; James 4:3). God promises to treat us the way we are treating others (Matthew 6:15; Matthew 7:1-6; Ephesians 4:32; John 15:12; 1John 4:20-21).

**Pray In Harmony with God's Will:** Like the ice cream before bed, I find it amusing that my kids ask me for things that they should already know what the answer will be. Sadly, I think we never truly grow out of it. So here we are, as disciples of Christ, asking God for things that we should already know the answer to. We want to get rich so we can sit around and coast through the rest of our life bathing in entertainment and luxury. We don't want any trials or challenges because we are content with the imperfect person we are. Maybe we want the church to do things our way and we ask God to make it what we want so we can be pleased. There are thousands more of these, often catered to our own personal temptations, and like our naive children I am sure we occasionally offer them up to God hoping He will answer our vain petitions. No, He will not answer our prayers when they are not in harmony with His will (1John 5:14). When we talk to God it needs to be in harmony with His character, attributes, nature, and authority (John 14:13). Surely, we don't expect a parent to give a child whatever they want. Why would we expect anything less from our Father in heaven (Hebrews 12:7)? Can you imagine how much more insane this world would be if He did? God promises to answer our petitions, supplications, and prayers, and we should be grateful that He doesn't answer prayers that are not in harmony with His will.

We need to talk to God, humbly asking for help, showing our gratitude, and petitioning our king (1Timothy 2:1). We serve an awesome God in whom we live, move, and exist (Acts 17:28). As we abide in Him we have the opportunity and blessing of talking with Him, being blessed by Him, being led by Him, and having Him help us as we navigate this dark world. So, as we talk with our Almighty God, let us make sure that the words we speak to Him are made by a righteous child, by faith, by one who has a loving spirit, and talks to Him in harmony with His will. Let us listen to God, so that He will listen and respond to us.