

## What Should We Ask From Our Heavenly Father?

By Nathan Warner

The family unit is the earthly picture of the heavenly relationship God has planned for believers. God is our loving and compassionate Father, and we are His adopted children. God's only Son, Jesus, is our tender loving and defending Brother, who loves His adopted brothers and sisters and looks out for them. When we approach our Heavenly Father, do we demand things we think we need from Him, like a child that thinks a new toy will make them happy? Or do we recognize He is what we need?

"Lord, please give me Strength, renew my Hope, and restore my Joy." Who among us has not prayed such a prayer? So often when we pray, this is how we address God, requesting the Lord's provisions and asking for help to be sent along the way. Sometimes, though, when we pray like this, we pray as if we are addressing a God that is on the other end of the phone or across the country. Sometimes, we expect God's response to arrive as if by mail from somewhere far away.

I often used to ask God to give me things that I thought would help me be more like Him. Sometimes I even demanded them – "Why won't You give me the strength to deal with the things that I'm facing?" That changed one day, years ago, when I was walking the concrete sidewalks of Industrial Circle where our business was in Elk River during my lunch break. I was demanding an answer from Him about why I felt so weak towards sin. Couldn't He give me something better than what He was giving me to overcome the things I was facing?

Most of us have had these moments of wishing we had a little bit more help in our struggles. Maybe we ask for some larger spiritual muscles or maybe a new suit of armor? How about faster legs, so we can run the race with speed and endurance? Maybe we'd be able to deal with our struggles if we had some Christian superpowers, or, better yet, couldn't God just vaporize our issues directly from Heaven?

Perhaps this is a bit of an exaggeration, but my simple prayer on that day was "Lord, give me strength! Why won't you give it to me?" I heard clearly in my heart on that warm August day, "I've given you more than you need in my Son Jesus. He is your Strength, your Hope, your Joy, your Help." I heard Paul echoing what God had told him – "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). In that instant, Jesus opened the door and stepped into the dark, dingy lodgings of my heart. His light shone inside my heart.

I realized I hadn't felt His presence like that in a long time – I had been keeping my distance from Jesus! And when I did talk to Him, I had tried to keep it a long-distance relationship. I don't think that I could have verbalized it before. I think I thought I was doing what I was supposed to be doing in my relationship with God. But too often, I was keeping Him standing outside the door to His own House!

"Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple" (1 Corinthians 3:16-17).

Perhaps we're afraid at times of what He might find inside our heart, His Father's House. Perhaps we subconsciously like the idea that God is sending "child-support" in the mail but never stops by to see how we're actually getting on. That imagined distance can make us feel more comfortable with our sin. But God is not an irresponsible father who walks away from His responsibilities. He is our perfect Heavenly Father who sacrificed Himself in human form to purchase us from our sins and is raising us up into eternity.

There can be no comfort in darkness when Jesus comes near, for it cannot inhabit the space where His light radiates. We are no longer living under the Old Covenant, but under the New. No longer do we live miles away from the Temple of God where His Spirit dwelt. No longer can we feel “safe” in that distance, knowing that we only have to go there and be near His presence once a year. As Christians, we are that temple! We are the dwelling place for the Spirit of God, and there is no escape from Him.

There is nothing wrong with asking things of God if we recognize His proper place in our hearts. For me on that lunch break, I felt the Lord telling me that He was what I needed in any and all situations I found myself in – “Lord, be my Strength! Be here with me now, be my Joy, my Peace, my Hope, my Love! Jesus be within me! Amen.”