

I. The Practical Side of Christianity

What I want to talk to you about today is the practical side of Christianity. A Christian walk is not easy if you have a full-time job that demands your full attention, raising your kids and helping them with all their endeavors, and then on top of it, you are supposed to maintain a good marriage with your spouse. You talk about a balancing act. Then you come to church and you hear preaching, and you feel guilty sometimes. You think you should do more; you need to do more, and you get your priorities all mixed up. Then everything else goes out of kilter.

As I thought about that, I thought, "How many times in my life have I seen good, sincere Christians fade away?" They just walk away, and it breaks your heart. As a pastor, and I know how Bob feels, you put your life into them, and you watch them become successful, though the world said they couldn't be used. You see them turn their lives around. Then all of a sudden, the devil sneaks in, and he sneaks in on those little things. It is those little things that destroy us over and over.

You know, those subtle little things that we do and don't do, those are the things that damage relationships. I looked up the word "subtle," which we all know. It first appeared in Genesis 3 when God said that the serpent was more subtle than any of the other beasts. I said, "Okay, what does that word 'subtle' really mean?" I found out the word "subtle" has another word called "beguile," and they only show up in Genesis and then they show up in 2 Corinthians, where he is talking about Eve in the church. As I went through and said, "What does 'subtle' really mean?" I know it is kind of sly and cunning, but I found out it was deceitful and it was very crafty and cunning. In fact, it was very skillful in the art of deceiving. You have seen people like that, and as a police officer, I used to see it all the time. I would see it more even in Christianity because they would come in for counseling, but they would never get honest with you. Then I found out "subtle" meant they were crafty in their lying; they had sneaky agendas.

I remember going through all the tragedies that hit one time in my life, and what that led me to do was step aside and let the church survive, and I just took the hit and moved on. I remember at that time God showed me clarity of a verse. Over in 1 Peter 5:8, it talks about the devil, and he says he is our adversary. He is so anti against us, it is unbelievable, and we do not realize it. I remember the word that got me; it talked about how he would devastate things and devour. I remember looking up the word "devour," and I found out that it meant it was not even recognizable. I remember looking, and I carry a picture around where I married my granddaughters, and I did all this and had all my kids and my last granddaughter. I married her, and we filled this whole area and had this great picture. Then I remembered what I was left with, and it was me and a puppy dog. I remember looking at that picture, and God says, "That is what the word 'devour' means: unrecognizable."

As I thought about that, that is what happened to these Christians that fade away. That adversary goes after them, and he devours them where they are not recognizable anymore. You see that,

and you see the devil's whole purpose is very clear. His one purpose is to separate us from God. That is all. He does not care what he has to do.

II. The Little Foxes

The second part of these little things, I thought of the phrase where the Song of Solomon writes about the little foxes spoiling the vines. As I read the story of Solomon, Solomon is a love story, and so many times we get so caught up in the Bible, we try to look at it as a math book that we try to figure out all the stuff, and we miss the love story. It is a love story of a man for his bride. It is a love story of the Lord Jesus Christ and His church. It is a love story of every born-again believer with Jesus Christ. That song of "Who am I?" When I have to sing that song, I have to put myself in a position, "Who am I?"

You see, I found out those little foxes, and all you have to have is a new puppy dog, and you can find this out: they devour everything. Foxes, you need to understand, when he says that they spoil the vines, those little things are not interested in the fruit, but they kill everything in there. They will just go on and go on, and they eat the bark, they eat windows, they eat bed frames, they eat everything. But you know what? If you ignore them, the damage increases because it is the little things. It is those subtle little things that we do and ignore.

Coming from the business world, you do not know how many businesses I have watched go to ruin because, you know what they did? It was the subtle little things that they gave up on. I watched marriages be destroyed, businesses, I have watched churches being destroyed. When I had the honor that I was sent out to go and fill pulpits at other churches when we were doing that at KCBT years and years ago, I would see churches, and I would go in these churches and I would hear how they got on fire and then died. I saw that all the time. If you are not paying attention to those details, that is what happens. In fact, Herod is called by Jesus that fox, who is the type of the Antichrist. So we know where these little foxes are coming from and who brings them.

III. The Importance of Communication

Let me give you a key example of subtle things in your life. These are the things that not only will affect you spiritually with God, it affects your marriage. It is in the area of communications and relationships. I want you to think about that. You cannot have a relationship without communication. When you go out in the dating world, you know they just do not go up, "Okay, I will take number five there. I like the way he looks." It does not work that way. You have to talk and communicate and get to know each other.

You remember the guy that you married? He just talked your ear off, and he was so kind and all that. Then once you got married, he goes, "Football is on. You cannot do that during football. We do not talk during football season." Then if you are in baseball, you do not do that. Then you have NASCAR, you have all these other things, because we have a tendency to get distracted in those little, subtle things and stuff. You see, I had to experience something I really did not ever want to experience in life when I lost a wife. You take things for granted. Seven years at the

Cancer Center, I watched people die. Good people died. I thought, "I am not going to ever take that for granted." You do, that is what we do. Then you are left with all the heartache and all the pain afterwards.

You see, those little foxes, those little things, go through everything in our life. If you do not have good communications, you will not have a good relationship, whether it is with your spouse or with God. It just will not work. You have to talk. I know some people say, "Well, that is not my gift, is talking." You have to talk if you want a good relationship. If your priorities are right, then you have got to have your first communications with God. I mean, the day you did that sinner's prayer, you connected. Without that communication, I promise you, your relationship with God and your spouse will not exist.

Back in Genesis 2:7, when God was creating man, it says:

Genesis 2:7

7 And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

That is his body. He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. That is the spirit. He became a living soul. But there is a part that you need to read in between this. That spirit that man got was different than an animal spirit. An animal spirit goes back into the ground. But what God did with that spirit, it says He breathed into his nostrils life. That is the spirit, and he became a living soul. You know what God did in our soul? He put a conscience in us. It is God's conscience in us. It bears witness in Romans 2:15. It is the one that has the law that is written in your heart that tells you right and wrong. You do not have to tell a kid right and wrong. They know how to hide. My kids, I did not have to teach them some of the things. I go, "Who did that?" And I swear every time I would swear, we had four kids, because none of those three did anything. They would tell me, "It was not me, Dad. I do not know who it was. Probably her." You just find all these things going, and it talks about that spirit, that it is that spirit that is accusing and excusing us. It is also the same spirit that gives that feeling of guilt or conviction. You see, the devil will give you the guilt, and that is already in there. But the conviction the Holy Spirit brings to your life, and that is what makes you guilty because you are not doing anything about it.

You see, God puts that in man because, you know what God did? God, of all the creatures He made, He designed man to communicate with Him and each other. That is so important for us to understand that we have an ability that my Creator loved me so much, He says, "Not only do I want to create him, I want to communicate with him." Why? Who am I? You see, that is the thing. That is that voice, that little simple voice inside you and I that God, when He speaks to you in those times that you know it is Him. When He is the one that comes in and says, "It is okay, I am with you. You are not alone." It is those times that you cannot explain the peace that comes in, and it is God just letting you know, "I am here."

You see, God made man a little lower than the angels, so we have got nothing to brag about. But the fact that communication is what God wants, and it is great that we saw in Psalms how God creates through the visible things. We see the heavens, we see the stars, and God speaks to us,

and you see that you cannot help deny what you see. Who could not believe that? As a policeman and my wife a nurse, we talked sometimes, and she says, "I do not know how anybody in the medical field could not believe in God." She says, "It starts talking about how the processes work." Then I start saying, "Well, I said, if you are doing air conditioning, that is this and this and this, and this is a pump, and that is the fluid, and that is the heart, and then you have main arteries," and you call them, we call them main lines. We start talking about how God just connects all of that.

He also connects with us through the Bible. It is called the written Word, but He also connects with us another way, and it comes in a form of a simple conversation. Remember when you got saved, it was a simple conversation that somebody shared with you about Christ, and all of a sudden that little voice inside that you have never heard before says, "He is telling you the truth. It is right, it is right, it is right." You see, that is the way God works, and He communicates with us. In fact, He communicates this through His written Word that He calls His Son the Word. You find that in John 1:1. It is one of the greatest verses. It talks about Jesus Christ, of who He is, and He shows you as He comes through time. Then the one I love the most is in John 1:14: "And the Word was made flesh." Is not that something? God made that Word of Jesus in written Word, and then He brought Him here in the flesh for us to see the visible Jesus and see how history has been changed since He showed up.

But you need to realize, verbal communication not only conveys words, it conveys our feelings and our emotions. I always knew that, especially being a policeman, that we would, I wanted to sit down with them and talk, and you need to understand, they are not in there spilling their guts. I want to know who they are. How did you get in that predicament? What caused that? It is funny, I did that so good that I got so convicted I started a church because of it. I remember coming home and saying, "Candy, God spoke to me." "What?" "I am tired of breaking up couples and taking somebody to jail. I want to start a Bible study every Friday night and invite people." Through that, the church started. Within three months, we had to hire three babysitters in our house because, you know what? I am sharing the Gospel, trying to reach them, getting to know them. The convictions of the police department would come itself because half the time they would say, "Yeah, I did it. Let me tell you where we are." That is what conveys feelings and emotions, and you hear the heart of the matter.

That is why I want to make it very clear: texting is not communicating. Texting is sending the message. It is not communicating. I mean, I would be divorced two or three times with my texts and with autocorrect sending, correcting the word it thought I needed to say to my wife. In fact, many times I will text her, "I did not say that, that autocorrect did it again." Texting will get you in trouble, and if you have got a serious issue, do not text about it. Just say, "This, we need to sit down and talk." What I will do with my wife, I will say, "Let us go to dinner so we can talk. Let us find a neutral ground and talk this over to make decisions." You see, the devil has come along again with those little things, and it is called texting, and we call it communicating. It is not. Do not get caught up in that. Those are the things that do it.

Now, if you lose the art of communications with each other, you will lose God and you will lose your relationships. How about an example from the Bible of that? How about, let us say, let us

go, we are not going to turn there, but I will tell you about it. It is called Genesis 11, it is the Tower of Babel. You know what was going on back then? Everybody was one language, one speech. When God came down, looked at that mess, He says, "There is nothing that can restrain them." Why? Because they could communicate and talk everything over. So He said, "We cannot have that. I have a timeline." So, you know what it says He did? He confounded their language. What He means was He took and mixed up their dialects and mixed up their language where they could not understand. I love the thing that follows in Genesis 11:8, it says this: "So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city." You realize what happened? They lost communications, everything stopped, and they got scattered. That is what happens when you quit talking. I do not care how mad you are, I do not care how hurt you are, when you quit talking to God, guess what? Everything in your life will stop, and guess what? You will become scattered, and it will then trickle down to your marriage, and it will just go on down. That is why you have got to talk about things; you have got to get them out.

IV. A Practical Way to Pray

You see, that is why I brought us to this passage I want us to look at today. If you look with me in Luke 11, I am going to show you a verse there, and this is one of those verses that changed my life. We are going to look at Luke 11, and we are going to look at two verses today, 9 and 10. I am going to ask you to write down just a few words today, but I will point them out as we go there, because what I want to do is show you today a very practical and simple way of prayer. We get so caught up in trying to figure out and put everything in order: "Well, I need to enter here with thanksgiving, and I need to do this, and I need to do that." You need to understand, this is very practical what I am going to show you.

Now, I want to say this so nobody can ask me this: I am not an authority or expert on prayer. I am just an old sinner saved by grace, trying to learn the Word of God and trying to get a good relationship with God, because I am going to meet Him soon, and I am planning on the meeting. So let me say this: prayer is not a special language. Prayer is not a certain time. Prayer is not a certain position of your body. It is not a certain place. It is not a certain tone of your voice. Prayer is simply nothing but a conversation and communication with God. The best way I have got it is what I used to teach my kids: when you got saved, God gave you His unlisted telephone number for you to get in touch with Him anytime, anywhere, about anything. You have a direct line straight to God, and that is what He gave you. That is your access, because He knows all the problems that come.

What I have done in my own personal life is develop my own categories, my own system when it comes to prayer. I have a prayer that I do every time I preach. My prayer is found in Numbers 22, and I will tell you what it is, it is very simple: "God, You spoke through that ass, speak through this ass." You see, as long as I realize I am no better than Balaam's ass, God can use me. The minute I get in this pulpit and start preaching and say, "I am preaching to you all, not to me," you see, I have a prayer, and it was a simple one God gave me back then. I remember as God started working in my life, and I said, "God, with..." and He says, "Do you not realize, Terry, I

can use anything to preach?" "Really, Lord?" I looked at that, and I said, "Okay, Lord, that is my prayer from now on," because that will put me in the right perspective when it comes to You.

I shared with you the last time my prayer of urgency and concern when you go through things, and there are times that you have got to get an answer from God, and you just do not know what is happening. There are times when God is testing you and taking you through a test, and He is not answering. I tried to show you what it is like when you go through those times. He will answer, but He will answer on the other side. Like I shared with you then, all those months, and I could not get God an answer. He had done this to me time and time. He did the same thing on the police department. Every time I got ready to go into service, I would say a prayer, say, "God, I want to be effective tonight. I want to do this." All of a sudden, I got a cold spot in my prayer life with God every time I got in that car. You know why? He was getting me out of the police car to put me in a pulpit. I did not know it, but you have to have, you have to get that relationship with Him that you know that. I remember when after losing my wife and I stepped down from the church, and everything was gone, I remember, "God, where are You?" I found out that in a time of testing, no talking during the test. "I will tell you later." That is the greatest thing. I mean, some of you have seen that swim pool in the backyard. I did so much talking, I talked that dirt out. Let me tell you, I was so frustrated by then, and I said, "You know what, God, I am getting back to the basics. I am going to work in that yard. I am going to do all this myself, and I am going to be out there back in the garden, whatever you want to call it. We are going to talk about it." I can almost tell you every fence post about every conversation we had: "Why did You not answer this? Where were You there?" But that is what you have got to do, and those times of urgency, that is a whole different thing. "Yeah, that is one, God, I am not leaving You alone till You give me that answer."

Then I have a third category for my prayers. It is called an all-day conversation. I used to tease my kids. I said, "We would be driving down the road," and I said, "Okay, let us have a word of prayer." "Who is going to drive while I close my eyes?" "No, Dad, do not do it." I says, "You see, you do not have to have your eyes closed to pray. You just talk to God." I wanted them to understand that it is an all-day conversation. Let me just, for those that work, you will understand this: do you talk with your co-worker all day? I mean, you talk. Do you stop and say, "Father, our in heaven"? You are not going to do that. You are going to say, you will be working, you say, "Hey, how did we go the other night at work?" "Well, I will tell you this." You just talk back. That is exactly what your prayer life should be with God. It should be an all-day conversation. It should be those times of just talking, telling Him things He needs to know, and boy, He knows that. It is like standing there with an old friend. Spend the day with a friend you have not seen somebody for years, and here they are with you, and you are spending the time with them, and you are just talking about everything, and you are jumping all over the world and subject, and you are doing that. That is a relationship with God. It is like my time for complaints and frustrations and my gripes. I tell all the things, I tell everything that is happening to me. I tell everything that irritates me. I tell Him everything. You know why? He wants to know. I want that relationship with Him. He is my best friend. He has never deserted me once. When I found out I was born in an orphanage and they baptized me Catholic and everything, I found out that God was there with me then. When I went through the struggle of trying to deal with it and trying to

understand things, God said, "Do you not know what I did for Moses? I did the same thing for him. I am going to use you." "Okay, Lord." You see, those are the times He will tell you, "This is why that happened, because I want to use you." So when every time I go to work at a Catholic church or something, they say, "Are you Catholic?" "Yes, I am. I was baptized by John Conley over at such and such church." Then by the time we get through talking, they go, "You are a Baptist." I go, "Why? Because I said book, chapter, and verse? What is wrong with that?" But you see, it is a conversation you have. You tell Him everything that is going on, and that is what you have got to do, and so many times we make it.

Now, I can tell you right now, the greatest privilege a Christian has is prayer. That is the greatest privilege God has granted us. It is the greatest service you can do for God. Over in 2 Corinthians 1:11, it talks about, "Thank you for helping us with your prayer." You realize you cannot go over there, you can send your bucks over there, you can send your prayers over there, and you can be as effective there by praying. I understand all the things that the devil does on those things, but do you realize prayer is the greatest failure of the Christian life? It is the greatest failure we have. People say, "Is this a praying church?" I do not know, is everybody in here praying? You pray every day about something. Tell Him about things. I mean, tell Him about the things you do not like. That is the only way you get it changed. Gripping and complaining do not do it, but telling God does. He will get it changed. You see that, that is one of the greatest failures in Christianity, and one problem I see that we have, and I understand how the devil works in the discouragement when you look around the world and you see all the effects and stuff, and you are just overwhelmed by it. You go, "Okay, well, here is what I am going to do. I am going to pray for everything all day." Well, let me tell you what that is like: trying to bail out the ocean with a teacup. You will never get it done, and you will become discouraged, and you end up praying for nothing and then feeling guilty because of it. God never intended that.

Let me tell you what to pay attention to, though. The Lord will give you what to pray for and who to pray for. Let me tell you, pay attention to what I call divine appointments. Some of you may not know him, a guy by the name of Herb Newton. He used to go to Graceway. Herb and I were friends. We used to go on visitation together, and I am at Costco getting gas, and I hear this car pull up, and this guy gets out with an oxygen tank. He says, "Hey, Terry, Herb." I said, "Herb, this must be a divine appointment. We have got to get together and start talking." I used to go over and visit him and pray for him till he passed away a while back. You know what that was? A divine appointment that God gave me because I had a personal relationship with him, I cared about him, and God does not make mistakes. I will pray for him, and see, that is the kind of things, those are the things you pay attention to. Let me tell you, there is no coincidence in the Bible or with God. "Oh, that is a coincidence." No, it is not. The Jewish people said it is not even a word that exists. The Gentiles do, because that is how we try to explain around God. God makes no mistakes, and you need to understand, those divine appointments happen to all of us. When God brings certain people in your lives or certain opportunities, take advantage of it. My wife sometimes gets frustrated with all the stuff of the bureaucracy of the hospital, and I tell her, "That is a divine appointment." I said, "The greatest thing God can do is seen you in there to talk to that family about hospice. You will have the compassion and the understanding that God sent

you." It makes all the difference in the world when you are doing your job with God. You see, that is how, that is how important all of that is.

Now, let me say one other thing talking about prayer. The greatest problem that we face in prayer is not unanswered prayer. It is not. The greatest problem we face in prayer is the unoffered, unasked prayer. James says it very clear: "Ye have not, because ye ask not." You know what? One of my kids was notorious. She always, they always believed that I was just going to say no. "You know, that is Dad, you know Dad." I said, "Why are you not going to this event?" "Well, I figured you would tell me no." I said, "No, I had already told your mom if you want to go, we are going to make arrangements so you can go." You know, and I thought, "How sad, missed out on that because he assumed what God was going to say." Some of us, we just, we miss out on a lot of stuff. "You know, God, I would like to be used." "Really? Okay." You see, not praying, it is not only you are missing out on blessings, but it is rebellious. What you are trying to do is run your life without God's involvement. "Ye have not, because ye ask not."

Now, and see, I would give, I have been to so many seminars, and people teach it on some of the things, and it is like, "Good night, how come we cannot stay basic?" Now the question is, why would God ask us to pray? You ever wonder why that? Why would God want us to pray? I mean, I mean, face it, He already knows everything before we ask, right? We cannot impress Him with our prayers. I mean, no matter how vain repetitions and all the quote words and the gracious words that you do, and some of the guys I hear them pray, I have to get a dictionary, say, "What in the world did you say?" I wonder God understands that. You cannot impress God. You cannot inform God; He already knows everything. You cannot instruct God, because it is His will that gets done. As a matter of fact, you cannot bend God's will in prayer to fit your prayer. So why does God want us to pray? Here is the reason why: prayer is God's way for us to invite Him into our lives. He wants to be involved. You know, it is like a parent, "You do not want me, well, I, I do not want to force myself, because they already think I am too bossy on them." You kind of sit back and let them. You know what your loving Father is saying? "Just invite Me. I will go to every game with you. I will be there with you. I will go through everything. I want to be involved in your life. After all, I saved you. As a matter of fact, I look down and I see My Son in you. I see the future. I want to be involved." He says over in Psalms 37:4:

Psalms 37:4

4 Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.

He says, "I just want you to invite Me in, and when you invite Me in, we can do like, you can delight yourself in Me, and I can give you those desires of your heart. That is what I want to do." You see, it is prayer that helps us and causes us to depend on God. God does not want us to live our lives independent of Him. If God simply blessed us without asking, that would teach us to live our life independent. God said, "I really want to bless you. I, you know, I mean, I have seen people in my church, and I know God will be here saying, 'You are so stubborn. If you would just talk to Me about this, and you and I get together and you get serious with Me, I will bless you unbelievably.'" They go, "Well, I am not going to ask God. I do not want to bother Him. I do not want to trouble Him with my problems. He already knows about them." He wants you to

invite Him in. He wants you to ask Him in. You see, you need to realize that the devil cannot keep God from answering prayers, but the devil will do everything he can to keep you asking. That is where he wins. That is his greatest thing of winning, is to do that.

Now, you need to understand, if you get into prayer, a prayer warrior in battle is what you are. Probably the technology now makes it even better, but they have, I had friends that were over in some of the wars now, and they, they told me they were spotting targets. One day I was thinking about that, that is exactly what a prayer warrior has. I am spotting targets. All I do, when you spot a target, you spot the target, you mark the target, and you call it to command center, and you just, it is up to them what they do with the target. It is like praying for people. I mean, is not it hard to pray for people that are sick? Now think about if they are Christians, the best thing that could happen is for them to be with the Lord. So what do you pray? I used to get that question a lot. It is a pastor. I said, "You know what? God taught me the greatest thing when I lost my wife. It is a day I knelt down, it said, 'God, do what is best for her and not me.'" Boy, it was not probably a month later, I went to one of the people in the house church, and her husband was dying, and she asked me the same question. I says, "Let me tell you what I had to learn. You see, I do not know what to say when I hear that somebody is sick. I do not know what is best." But here is what I do: I spot the target, and I said, "God, I am bringing up their name. You do what is best for them." You see, you do not know, you have to say this and say that. There is nothing wrong with that, because you do not know what to pray, but you are better off to spot the target than not mention them, because that is what makes the difference. That is what makes the difference in people's lives, and you see that over and over.

V. The Golden Nugget of Prayer

Now what I want to show you today is what I call my golden nugget. You remember Jonathan back there, and he found the honey, and he ate a little bit. It said, "It enlightened him." You went, "Wow." I used to say, "God, I would like to have that. Let me, let me see what that." Well, I have found this, it is really interesting. Now I want, I want to say this here, this verse in that we are going to see is in Luke. There is a similar and parallel verse exactly similar to it in Matthew 7. So I just want you to know, I, for you guys that are real strong in the Bible, I understand the doctrine of this scripture I am going to teach you today. I understand the doctrine of it, but I want to show you what I call the inspirational and their practical applications, because sometimes we cut off certain things because, "Well, I cannot do that, that, that is wrote through this and that." This little passage here in Luke, I want you to realize, here are some of the truths that I found.

First of all, Luke is a Gospel who has a whole emphasis to Gentiles. Luke is the only book in the Bible where disciples ask Jesus to teach us to pray. I thought that was pretty important. I thought, "Man, nobody else bothered to ask Him," and they decided to, "Let us learn, teach us to pray." Okay, so I thought, "Okay, that is a good one." You know what I also found in the book of Luke here? That John, John the Baptist, had taught his disciples to pray. Wow, that means two groups had to be taught to pray. So, "Okay, then I need to be taught to pray." Then I found out what Luke does: he has two illustrations of persistent prayers. One in Luke 11:5-8, just ahead of this, and one in Luke 18:1-8. Then I looked, and Luke 11:1-13 is entirely on prayer, one of the longest

passages you will find. Most people like it, and Luke 11:2-4, most people call it the Lord's Prayer. I know what it really is, but that is fine, that is what the world says to this. Luke 11:5-8 is a prayer that deals with being persistent in your prayer life. Then what I call Luke 11:9-10 is the defining verses to teach prayer to the Christian. Then he follows it up in Luke 11:11-13, which is prayer between a father and a son.

Now follow along as I read here in Luke 11:9-10, and this is what he says here:

Luke 11:9-10

9 And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

10 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

Then Jesus follows that statement with what I call a confirming statement. He says, "What I just said, pay attention, because I am going to say it again and let you know I mean it." But He changes one thing, because He says, "I say unto you," but look what He says in verse 10: "For every one." Oh, really? Not a certain group. "For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." You see, as you start reading through these little things like this, and all of a sudden the Lord starts lighting them up, and you see it.

Let us go back to Luke 11:9, because I am going to show you what the basic prayer is of your everyday prayer: "And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." See, basically that is what prayer is: you are asking, you are seeking, and you are knocking. That is the three parts of prayer. He says, "If you ask, it is going to be given. If you seek, you shall find. If you knock, it shall be opened." So I have defined this in my own personal life; this is the defining verse on prayer.

But here is where I want you to get a piece of paper, and I want to call you to this and write down these three factors that go with this, and this will help draw it together, because I want to teach you to have a daily prayer and have a daily prayer with goals in mind, which you are doing, which you are dealing with in life.

Now on the first one, just write the word "Ask."

➤ Desire Element

Then write "Seek."

➤ Direction

And write down "Knock."

➤ Determination

Those three things will help you with your prayer life in your daily life, in your daily walk with God, because you will understand what they mean. You see, desire element for "ask" is expressed in desires. The direction element in "seek" is expressed in a direction for God. The determination is the element of knocking and exercising. We are going to go through each one of them, because I want you to get this down, because this should light your prayer life on fire and a daily conversation with God. Let me tell you, the more you start talking to Him and the more you communicate with Him, you are having a smile on your face, and no one else will understand, because you are talking with Him. You are never left alone. My wife will tell you, I am notorious, I carry pocket recorders around in every car, in my pocket all the time, because, you know what? When God starts whispering, I am recording it, because I read back there, back in Samuel, he did not let one word of God fall on the ground, and I do not want to let one thing that God tells me fall on the ground. You see, that is when it starts making sense.

VI. Desire, Direction, Determination

Let us talk about the desire factor of prayer. That is where you express it. I read you Psalms 37; that is a good one. But here is, you need to have a good idea, because it says "desire," and here is the idea: we have an idea that you are to separate spiritual things from sacred things. We want, we want to have the, we have secular things over here, spiritual things over here, and we have got to separate them. God never does, you know that? God never does that. He would say, "Well, you pray for, you ask spiritual areas and you ask secular." God says, "No, I said your desires. What do you desire?" "Well, what happens if you are desiring something wrong?" "Tell God, 'I have a wrong desire here,' and God is, 'Okay, I will show you how to change your mind. Here is why I do not want to give that to you, okay?'" But He says, "I want to know what you want. I want to know what is on your heart, because we can deal with it together, you and I. I will start showing you, 'You desire this?' He goes, 'No, you do not want that.'" You see, those are the kind of things that He starts doing in your life. He never divides them, and He says, "You need to understand, as far as I am concerned, every day is a holy day. Every task is a holy task." He said, "Have you not read over in Colossians 3:23?"

Colossians 3:23

23 And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

Now He says, "I understand, Terry, had these desires. That is nothing wrong with a desire. Tell Me about it, and we will talk about it. But you have got to tell Him, you have to tell Him." He says, "If it is wrong, I will fix your what problem?" He says, "It is not a problem, but you have to be honest." Have you not ever read Psalms 139? Psalms 139, that changed my prayer life unbelievably. In Psalms 139, I will just read what some of the stuff it says about in verse 2:

Psalms 139:2-4

2 Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off.

3 Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.

4 For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether.

It says, "Thou knowest my downittings," that is my depression times, "and my uprisings," my high moments, "and understandest my thought afar off." Then drive you off. "You already know." "Yeah, God says, 'I know what makes you happy.'" What does it? He goes on in verse 3, He says, "Are acquainted with all my ways." Really? This is the one that always gets me. This changes my words in my prayers, you know, because I used to try to clean up my prayers for God. You know, I did. I would say, "You know, You probably do not want to hear a cuss word." And God says, "Why? I already have you thought it." He said, "And this is the one that just used to drive me up the wall." He says, "For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether." I would say, "Lord, I think that guy is a bleep." And God says, "Oh, really? A bleep? That is not what you called him." "Well, I still think he." He says, "Tell Me." I remember I had a guy that I could not stand, and you know what God says? "But look what you have done more than he has ever done, and look how I have used you more than that. So is he really worthy to go to hell?" You know what I ended up praying? I said, "Okay, God, very simple. I do not like him. I would run over him if he stepped in front of my car without a problem. But I do ask this: do not send him to hell. Get him saved first before I run him down." You know what? Pretty soon I got so I just did not care. But you know what? The more honest I got with God, the more honest God got with me, and He would say, "Have you looked at yourself lately, Terry? Have you looked at your heart?" "You are right, Lord." All of a sudden, you get a whole different view on life, because, you know what? My wife does not want to hear some of my problems, my issues, but God will. My kids do not want to talk about those things, but God will. It might have hurts. I said, "You know that, God, that really bothers me. I missed out on a." "I know." And it starts showing me things, and you see, it starts changing your, your whole view on things. We, we pray to communicate to God our desire, and you need to understand, it is our responsibility to ask. It is God's responsibility to give, and if He does not give, you say, "Okay, why, God?" He has no problem explaining it.

Let us move to the second element: direction. That is where the "seek" comes in. There are many times we made all kinds of plans in our life without God. You know, I mean, if you told me I would be doing this, I, I already had my, I had my life laid out, my plans laid out, everything all laid out, ready to go, and all of a sudden God says, "Whoa, I appreciate your plans." He said, "Now what are you going to do now?" "I guess I start over, Lord." You know what? It is when He messes up your plans, He is going to test your commitment to Him. That is when He comes through the best. That is when He comes through the best. You see, that is the thing. It is those times, and you know, every time you make your plans without God, you are at 100% at risk, and the consequences are yours. You could say, "Well, how would you know about that?" Well, it is very simple. I learned as a pastor and as a policeman, you know how I could tell poor decisions? I could look at the troubles, the consequences, and also that always confirmed and bore witness to it. I would see all the problems going on and go, "Hmm, poor decision." I used to tell, I tell my wife all the time, "Poor people have poor ways. They are poor by choice. That is why." But if they would start seeking God, you know what He would do? He would turn it around. He would love to. I mean, there is not a thing I try not to do anything without God. I try to stay with Him, and He is the one that is going to come through, and you see that is where you start seeking direction.

Well, when God, you need to understand, but when God sometimes wants to redirect you, at those times He will either open or close the door or redirect your plan. But you have got to say, "God, I need direction in this. I need to know where You want me to go. I need to know what it is." One of the problems is God's ways are not our ways. He does not follow human logic and thinking. It does not work. Isaiah 55:8-9. You need to understand, you have got to have a regular conversation with God about your life plans daily. The more conversations, the more He gets involved, and the more you start seeing His plan in your life, and you get that direction of that, and all of those things.

Seeking, I will give you an example: as a young Christian, and this is what I got to the Baptist Temple, I quit the police department because I knew God was active in my life, and I quit that. There was a police officer there by the name of David Ripley. He was a world evangelist, and we hit it off like that, two old cops talking and everything. I thought for sure God wanted me to be an evangelist. I was ready to go. I had to get any dope. So I spent four years preparing. I went to Shepherd School, I went on, went on circuit riding, I did everything I could to be prepared, so when God said, "Okay, go, Mr. Evangelist, head out the door and go," because I was winning all kinds of people to Christ at work and police department thing. I thought, "Okay, this is what I am going to do." In four years, David Ripley and I tried to meet, plan, and do everything. He would get sick, I would get sick, plane would get canceled, this would get canceled, this would happen. In four years, I never met. I was so frustrated, say, "Now what in the world is going to go on?" One day I was with another guy named Doug Ripley, who was a pastor of a church, and he says, "Terry," he says, "Why do you want to be an evangelist? You are the best pastor I have seen." And God goes, "Duh, duh." And I said, "You are right, Lord." It was that time that God says, "You know what, Terry, I am going to have you as a pastor, and you are going to start a church, and it is going to be Blue Springs, and this is where you are going to go." You know what? It happened. He said, "God just shut all the doors with David Ripley," but He did that. One morning, guess what? All of a sudden, that wee voice of God came in the car on my way to work. I still remember where I was driving. I am driving to work, and I love going to work because that is the greatest prayer time you can have, and you can ignore the traffic, move on, and I am just praying, talking to God. It is about that time that wee voice came in and says, "You know what, Terry, you are going to start a church. Here is where you are going to call it. Here is where you are going to go." I remember I was so overwhelmed, I do not even know how I got all the way to work that day, and it was one of those times that God just started filling my heart and showing me things and laying, and He, and I said, "But Lord, You, You order steps of a righteous man." He said, "I have already got all that. It is coming your way." Just like that. I mean, it fell together so fast, and within 30 days we had a church. I forgot to mention, meanwhile at work, our attorney for the corporation, I had won him to the Lord. He is the one that set up all the records, set up all the legal files, and became the church attorney and still is to today. You see, God, it just happened. God opened the doors, and that is the way He does when you start seeking those things and you seek God's direction in those things. I mean, all these things happen, and it is those times when you are seeking directions that if it is not in God's plan, you keep seeking those directions until God shows you a different one. But you see, you have got to be that.

But that brings us to our third one, our third one is determination. "Knock" is an exercise of determination with God. The word "knock" means, "Do not ring the doorbell." It means pounding on the door, and it is funny because He has somebody just the two verses ahead of this in this thing talking about persistence. It means to be persistent with God. So many times we give up. "Why not?" "And He did not answer." "Oh, well, I tried, but He did not, He did not come through." You need to understand, it clearly shows our determination, and many times our answers from God are different ways. He may ask Him for one thing, and in love He does not give it, but He gives you something much better. Then there are times when He will delay His answer for you just to see if you are going to wait on Him. Then there are times where He seems to block the way in your life, and you see the roadblocks, and you seek God, and the doors close, and you keep knocking, you keep knocking, and then you have got to stay persistent and determined.

You see, Jesus knew about that, because when you see the illustration that He gives in Luke 11:5-8, it is somebody being persistent for a friend, and He is showing you, you have got to be persistent in your prayer. It is not, you know, it is like, you know, as a Catholic, one Hail Mary and there you go. You have got to be persistent. Why? It is a relationship. You do not want, it is like a relationship with a person. Sometimes, you know, I will tell my wife, I go, "Yo, the house is on fire, we are leaving. I just shot the dog." And then she will go, "Oh, what, what did you say?" Or with me, she does this, she goes, "Click, TV went off. What happened?" She goes, "I had the remote." "We are talking." See, she is a good wife. She knows a way to control a husband is with a remote control. Every woman in the world wants one of them. See, if we start talking then, and all of a sudden, see, we get, that is how you get the conversation going.

You know, you think of all the illustrations. There is another parable in Luke 18 about the unjust judge, and the woman keeps doing it. Then you have Abraham. Look how Abraham was persistent over Lot and Sodom and Gomorrah. "But Lord, what about if one more? Lord, how about five? How about Hannah's prayers? One a child." Man, was she not persistent? God says, "I have got to give her a kid to get her off of this." David, you read through the Psalms, David is persistent over God about his repentance. "God, I know You forgave me. I do not deserve it." He is over and over, he is persistent. You know what God says? "Man, he, that really bothered him. He cares about that." He sees those things, and you see that, and you see that passage where He is talking about, He is not saying, "Rattle the doorknob." He said, "Banging on the door." I think of the woman, the Canaanite woman, they had the demon-possessed daughter, and she comes to see Jesus, and the disciples snub her. "He does not want to bother with that. No, just, you just worry about more heavy things here." And Jesus then speaks a harsh, hard truth to her. He told her about, "You need to understand about the crumbs of the table." Her reply was this: "Yes, Lord, yet the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." You know what she said to Him? "You are right, I am a Gentile dog." And she still wanted the crumbs. She was persistent. It did not embarrass her. She said, "You are right, Lord." I said, "Is it?" And everybody, but look at that, say, "Oh, He was so cruel to her." No, He is trying to teach her, "You have got to be persistent with God." And He does not open the door, you know why? Because He said, "Knock, and it shall be opened." He did not, He did not say, "Could be, if you are lucky, if it is a good day." He said, "It shall be." And you see that, I saw that persistence, and those kind of things, and every

time I would ask her something, God would not give me what I want. I would say, "Well, God, do I need to adjust it here?" And you see, "Do I need to adjust over here?" And God says, "Yeah." And pretty soon, I saw what God wanted me to have. You see, it is those kind of things that, that change your life. Never the Apostle Paul, three times about the thorn in the flesh, three times. And God's answer was, think about this: "You have had this thorn in the flesh. It is really irritating. You are saying, 'You know, Lord, I could do a lot more, be more effective.'" And God said, "No, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness." I bet that is probably why the results was in Philippians 4:13. Paul says:

Philippians 4:13

13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

You know what? God did not answer his prayer, but God says, "I have got something better for you. I have got something better."

Now let us talk about the hard part of prayer: the answers of prayer. This is where people, "I do not think God answers my prayer." God answers every prayer, every prayer. I mean, He does. He, and some of them will be very direct, some of them will be different, some of them will be delayed, some of them will be a quick answer that will just come right on through. But let me tell you a little truth I found out when it came to prayer. I remember, in fact, so there are sometimes you pray things. I mean, three prophets in the Old Testament, all of them asked God to kill them, and God did not answer their prayer, probably a good thing. I found this over and over with God when it comes to answered prayer: if it is "no," I will, if my prayer will be either two places, I will have it in my hand or in my heart. God will hand you your answered prayer, or He will speak in your heart to give you the answer you need, and nobody else will understand it, but you will know it is from God. Then what He will do is He will confirm it and confirm it and confirm it, and you are going, "Okay, Father, it is You." You see, but the prayer gets answered, but we as Christians, we get caught up, and we do not pray. If there is anything that happens, I want you to realize that it is a daily conversation that starts from the time you get up. My simple, "Lord, thanks for letting me be able to get up. Thank you for my wife and let her have a good day." All this is in the shower and stuff, and then from then on, all day long. "And I am going to just skin my knuckle." "Lord, I cannot believe that happened." He says, "That is not what you said." "Now, okay, You are right." You just, it is just a conversation, and you know what? The more you do it, the more comfortable you get, and it will become so natural, people will look at you in the other cars and go, "Who is he talking to?" "Stay out of my conversation, it is personal," because it becomes such a relationship. You see, in order to have a good relationship, you have to communicate, and it is those little things that spoil us and ruin the vine. You see, when he is talking about the little foxes spoil the vines, that is the fruit of your life, because we get caught up in the little things.

Tell God, "Ask, seek, and knock." Three simple words, and those simple words just changed my life, and it turned my prayer life into a daily conversation that goes on all day. You know what? If you fall asleep talking to Him about things, what a way to go to sleep. What a way. Then I halfway, I will wake up either in the middle of the night or awake in the morning, I am in the

shower, I go, "Oh, Lord, I only got to this on the list. I am sorry, I have been, I have got to finish," because, you know what? There are some of those people that God has highlighted in my life that I pray for. There are some of those divine appointments I pray for, because I cannot pray for everybody. I am sorry, it is too overwhelming. I have got too much in front of me. I do this to encourage you to make this a praying church. We could fill this building up, we could fill the downstairs, and we could start more churches if we got serious with God of telling God what our desires are, what we want. If you want to win people to the Lord, tell God, it is not a problem. He will open the doors, and you would be surprised what God wants to do. Answered prayer is God's job. Requesting is on us.

Let us pray. Thank You, Lord, for today. Thank You for all You are doing. I pray everything that I spoke will sink into their hearts, that they will become a praying church. Father, I have delivered the message You told me to deliver. I have stayed true to that, and I pray that You take these words and You let them burn in their heart, that they develop a close relationship with You that cannot be explained other than a conversational relationship between You and them. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.