

Acts Lesson 12 Handout

The Time I Almost Stopped Praying... And Then God Showed Off – Blog by Lisa Cotter

“I don’t even know why I’m praying for this anymore,” I told my spiritual director between sobs on a cold winter morning. “It seems like every time I pray for something really big, God says ‘Thank you for your prayers, but that’s not My will; please accept this.’” I sat there perplexed, not angry or hurt, just perplexed, wanting to understand what was so difficult to grasp.

Shortly after I married my husband Kevin we easily conceived our daughter and then a few years later our son. When a few more years passed without another addition to our family we began numerous appointments, tests, and treatments that all ended in doctors scratching their heads and saying “I don’t know what to tell you, it’s all very weird.” Here I was a young woman, *desiring* to welcome more children, more souls, into a world that aborts “unplanned” children by the minute and for no apparent reason, I couldn’t conceive anymore.

That morning with my spiritual director I realized that my prayers for another child had become half-hearted and cold. I was ready to give up on what had gone from fervent discourses on my reasons for my request to mumbling a few words for the thing I wanted most because I didn’t really believe that my fervor or mumbling even mattered. If God wanted to answer my prayer, He would and if He didn’t want to He wouldn’t, so why waste my time, energy, and emotions on something that I had no control over?

I hated the place in which I’d found my apathetic heart; I didn’t want to be there. I wanted to believe that my

prayers were important to God, that He listened intently like a loving Father and considered my desires carefully. I wanted to believe that He was working for my good and not just answering prayer requests arbitrarily, like I pictured Him doing while He sat on his throne: *"One for 'to be answered', three for 'to be ignored', two for 'to be answered', ten for 'to be ignored.'"*

I'd been there before as I waited and watched my dad slip away to cancer and die at 45. I'd been there before as I tried to comprehend the news that my husband's best friend, and a dear friend of my own, was in a coma from a car accident that resulted in his death at 23. I'd been there before on several occasions and in that moment I felt like what I wanted was never what God had planned.

"Lisa," my spiritual director said with extra spunk in her voice, "God does want you to ask. I ask for things all the time and I'm bold and specific in my asking. I'll say I want this thing, on this day, in this way. (Of course, we have to be asking for things that are good, not for say, a million dollars because we want to be spoiled and lazy.) He wants us to tell Him the littlest details of our hearts, and He's waiting."

"Ok," I said nodding my head, but not quite convinced. "Always, always ask." She continued, "But be ready for any answer."

I took those thoughts home with me and spent the next several months grappling with them. I began to get specific and did my best to be bold in my asking, "I want another child Lord! Bless us again!" And the more I prayed the more I began to have peace, but not peace that made me feel confident that my prayers would be answered, rather peace with "any answer."

My heart's desires began to change and so did my request.

I no longer just wanted another child, I wanted God's Will for the growth of our family. My heart began to conform with the heart of my Father, I started to want only what He wanted, all because I started to really tell Him deep down what I wanted. I had found the grace to be open to His grace and was ready to accept His plan for our family, whatever it might be.

In February my husband and I made an appointment with a specialist as a final attempt to see if we could uncover the underlying issue of our secondary infertility. It was to be the last confirmation of our mysterious inability to conceive. After the appointment we were going to stop any current treatments we were pursuing and live life as if we were not going to be having any more biological children. The night before our appointment I took a pregnancy test because I wanted to be able to share with the doctor that I was 100% positive that I was not pregnant. I casually came back to confirm my negative results and gasped. The test was positive. Two, clear pink lines beamed back at me, something I hadn't seen in almost 4 1/2 years. I was pregnant. In the absolute last moment, God lovingly smiled down on me and said, "My child thank you for only wanting what I want; our wants are now the same."

I'm now 14 weeks pregnant and still in a bit of shock. Can it really be that this long awaited miracle has come to me? Learning to conform my heart to the heart of my Father was a long and purifying experience, one I hope I will not forget too soon, as it is easy to forget the good things He has blessed us with.

ALWAYS ASK BUT BE READY FOR ANY ANSWER.

"If the REQUEST IS WRONG, God says, 'No.'

If the TIMING IS WRONG, God says, 'Slow.'

If YOU ARE WRONG, God says, 'Grow.'

**But if the request is right, the timing is right,
and you are right, God says, 'Go!'**

4him – Why

They say that into every life

Some rain must fall

For the pain is no respecter

Of the mighty or the small

But sometimes it just seems so unfair

To see the One who's had more than His share

Oh, it makes you wonder why

And Lord I wouldn't second guess

Your mighty plan

For I know You have a purpose

That's beyond the scope of man

If You look inside my heart You will find

That I have always been the trusting kind

Oh, but still I wonder

Why do the rainy days have to come?

When the storm clouds hide the sun

I wanna know why?

Why when the reasons aren't clear to me

When it all is a mystery

I want to know why?

And though down here I may not understand

I won't let go of the unseen hand

For it holds the reasons why

The Lord has never been afraid of honest prayers

And He won't allow the burden

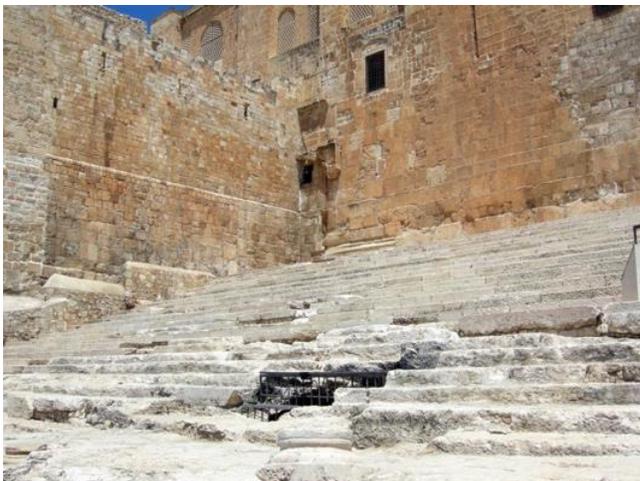
To be more than you can bear

When He knows that your trust is in Him

**He doesn't mind the questions now and then
Even if you wonder
Why do the rainy days have to come?
When the storm clouds hide the sun
I wanna know why?
Why when the reasons aren't clear to me
When it all is a mystery
I want to know why?
And though down here I may not understand
I won't let go of the unseen hand
For it holds the reasons why**

Acts 3 (NASB95)

1 Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer.



2 And a man who had been lame from his mother's womb was being carried along, whom they used to set down every day at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, in order to beg alms of those who were entering the temple.

Psalm 139:13 You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb.

Exodus 4:10 Then Moses said to the LORD, "Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in time past, nor since You have spoken to Your servant; for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue." 11 The LORD said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes him mute or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?"

1 John 5:14–15 (NIV84)

15 And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.

14 This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

Acts 3:3 When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he began asking to receive alms.

We need to change our perspective – instead of "God won't heal me and make my situation better – I can't do anything for Him"

To "God isn't healing me or making my situation better SO I can do something great for Him"

Acts 3:4 But Peter, along with John, fixed his gaze on him and said, "Look at us!"

5 And he began to give them his attention, expecting to receive something from them.

6 But Peter said, "I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!"

7 And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened.

8 With a leap he stood upright and began to walk; and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.

9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God;

10 and they were taking note of him as being the one who used to sit at the Beautiful Gate of the temple to beg alms, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

Mercy Me– Even If.

They say sometimes you win some

Sometimes you lose some

And right now, right now I'm losing bad

I've stood on this stage night after night

Reminding the broken it'll be alright

But right now, oh right now I just can't

It's easy to sing

When there's nothing to bring me down

But what will I say

When I'm held to the flame

Like I am right now

I know You're able and I know You can

Save through the fire with Your mighty hand

But even if You don't

My hope is You alone

They say it only takes a little faith

To move a mountain

Well good thing

**A little faith is all I have, right now
But God, when You choose
To leave mountains unmovable
Oh give me the strength to be able to sing
It is well with my soul
I know You're able and I know You can
Save through the fire with Your mighty hand
But even if You don't
My hope is You alone
I know the sorrow, and I know the hurt
Would all go away if You'd just say the word
But even if You don't
My hope is You alone
You've been faithful, You've been good
All of my days
Jesus, I will cling to You
Come what may
'Cause I know You're able
I know You can
I know You're able and I know You can
Save through the fire with Your mighty hand
But even if You don't
My hope is You alone
I know the sorrow, I know the hurt
Would all go away if You'd just say the word
But even if You don't
My hope is You alone
It is well with my soul
It is well, it is well with my soul**

I pray for what I want.

But I pray for what God wants more.

I know He will do what is best.

**I will be okay with that
EVEN IF IT IS NOT WHAT I WANT
IT WILL BE WELL WITH MY SOUL.**

***"He has chosen not to heal me, but to hold me. The more intense the pain, the closer His embrace."
– Joni Eareckson Tada,***

Always pray –

always ask –

always align yourself with His will over yours

Be ready for ANY ANSWER.

And be content.

***"Contentment ... has an internal quietness of heart that gladly submits to God in all circumstances."
– Joni Eareckson Tada***

NO MATTER WHAT....IT IS WELL WITH MY SOUL!