

The Relational Nature of Prayer

✘ We really are the children of God, and the dynamics of our relationship with Him are more similar to the relationship between earthly parents and their children than we might initially expect. We struggle with this because we all know that human parents don't have the same attributes and capacities as God. This, however, does not negate the similarities.

For instance, providing for the children is not a burdensome drain upon a loving and resourceful parent. Rather, it is a deeply satisfying pleasure and honor. So it is with God and His children (see Ps. 50:15).

Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35, NKJV). He, above all persons, seeks to experience this blessing (happiness).

God Himself has set the example of the blessedness of giving for us to emulate. Of course, this also means that "receiving" is a blessing; otherwise "giving" would be evil!

Therefore, God has ordained that we walk in the blessedness of receiving and also in the super-blessedness of giving. This is truly an ingenious basis for both an economic and a relationship system.

Just imagine what this world would be like if every person walked in the revelation of a cycle of life rooted in gratefully receiving and generously giving. It would be like heaven already is.

Happiness is not a limited commodity in the universe; it is like a holy virus that can and should be spread. Christians, above all other people, should be good advertisements for this

quality of happiness.

At times earthly parents “test the desire level” in their children regarding the things that they say they want so much. Wise parents do not always respond to their children’s requests the first time the children ask.

Sometimes good parents might hold back to make sure their children are serious, or they might require them to save their own money to buy what they desire. This way it becomes worth more to the children when they finally get it.

If parents will sometimes require their children to wait patiently for their desire to be fulfilled, then the answer, when it comes, will evoke a greater and longer lasting joy and gratitude in the children’s hearts. So it is with God and His children (see Luke 11:13).

There are other situations in which parents will not automatically provide something for their children until the children specifically ask for that thing. When the children speak up, and the desire is legitimate, loving parents quickly respond to the request without a trace of a begrudging or unwilling attitude.

The children receive what they’ve asked for, but they would have gone without it had they not asked. So it is with God and His children.

“You do not have because you do not ask” (James 4:2). This has to be one of the most profoundly amazing and convicting principles in all of Scripture.

Yet again, there are times when children’s persistence ultimately prevails over any reluctance in the parents to grant a specific request. The parents see the passionate desire in their loved ones, and they simply cannot withhold the request.

The parents will even rearrange other things to fit the answer to the request into their larger plans for their children's lives. The priorities of parents can potentially be altered by the expressed desire of their children.

God's children at times prevail upon Him through persevering prayer (see Luke 18:1-8). It is God's will that we prevail over His permissive will through prayer in order to see His perfect will established. This is significantly what prayer is about by its very nature—God truly listening to the voice of human beings and genuinely responding to them (see Josh. 10:14).

God likes that kind of bold "wrestling" in prayer—just as earthly fathers enjoy wrestling with their kids to affectionately bond with them and to help them develop their strength and agility. This is an amazing doctrine of Scripture that has been abused by many and ignored by most.

It remains true nonetheless. The almighty God actually desires to enter into a genuine interactive friendship with us—unmighty as we are.

Prayer is a conversation that really matters both in the heavens and on the earth. Certainly our relationship with God is the most important relationship we have.

Our Father wants us to experience the delight of an intimate relationship with Him, one in which we regularly see Him answer our prayers. Jesus said, "Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:24).

God is our Father, and He loves to hear our voices and respond to our stated needs. We must take the time and expend the energy to keep up our dialogue with Him.