

This is a confidence that is ours by faith. *"Faith is beings sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see" (He 11:1).* By faith we know with confidence that God is ready, willing, and able to help us. By faith we know with confidence that, just as God doesn't hold our sins against us, so does he not withhold his answer to our prayers from us. In fact, the very opposite is true. Jesus says, *"And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it" (Jn 14:13, 14).* By faith we know with confidence that Jesus is ready, willing, and able to do whatever we ask—whenever we pray in his name and according to his will.

Rest assured that God wants us to pray as bold believers. He wants us to pray as confident Christians. This boldness and confidence don't come from within us. They come from outside of us. They come from God. God gives us the faith to believe that in Christ we are forgiven. God gives us the confidence to stand before him as justified sinners, sinners who because of Jesus have been declared not guilty of their sins. When we come before God with our prayers, we do so as forgiven and saved sons and daughters of God. That is our identity. That is who we are. *"Dear friends,"* the Apostle John writes, *"if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask" (1 Jn 3:21).* God wants us to ask for the best. And so, since God gives us a blank check, let's shoot high, and let's do it confidently in Christ.

I find it incredibly amazing that Martin Luther includes so many things in his explanation to the Fourth Petition of the Lord's Prayer, *"Give us today our daily bread."* These are his words: *"Daily bread includes everything that we need for our bodily welfare, such as food and drink, clothing and shoes, house and home, land and cattle, money and goods, a godly spouse, godly children, godly workers, godly and faithful leaders, good government, good weather, peace and order, health, a good name, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like."* I also find it significant that in the Lord's Prayer this is the only petition of seven that deals with earthly things, things for the body, things for life, things for the earth. All the others are requests for spiritual things—things for the soul, things for faith, things for heaven. Since God gives us a blank check, since we can ask for anything we want, let's follow Jesus' example. *Let's shoot high, humbly and confidently in him. "Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever!" (Eph 3:20, 21).* Amen.

**1 Kings 3:5-13** – *Prayer Is Powerful* – 221, 409, 429, 310  
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What do we need? Not what do we want, but what do we need? There's a world of difference between the two, isn't there? Sadly, we often forget that and, because we don't get everything we want, we blame God for not keeping his promise. God is ready, willing, and able to give us whatever we need. Time and again in his Word he invites us to come to him with our needs, and he promises to provide us with everything necessary—for this life and for the next. And God always makes good on his promises. The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write, *"God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work" (2 Cor 9:8).* As we continue our series of sermons on the power of prayer, using as our guide the Lord's Prayer, we today consider a prayer of Solomon, and we're given this encouragement:

### **When God Gives a Blank Check**

- 1. Let's shoot high with humility.**
- 2. Let's shoot high with confidence.**

I've chosen these parts because last weekend we sang these words:

*Give deep humility; the sense of godly sorrow give;  
A strong desire with confidence, to hear your voice and live.  
(CW 412:3)*

1. Solomon is the poster child of a believer praying wisely. In his great mercy God had made Solomon the third king over the United Kingdom of Israel. Saul, David and Solomon each ruled for forty years, before there was a civil war, and the nation was divided into the Northern and Southern Kingdoms.

God knew that Solomon would need his help. And so, as Solomon begins his forty-year rule, God gives him a blank check. Our text states, *"At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, 'Ask for whatever you want me to give you.'" What an offer, huh? Anything in the world could be Solomon's—anything! God adds absolutely no restrictions or limitations. This isn't a conditional offer, where Solomon has to make sure he reads the fine print before he signs the contract. It's an open-ended offer, which makes it a very tempting offer. Just consider how you and I would answer if God were to make the same offer to us today.*

How Solomon answers reveals a number of things about him. First, he understands the great mercy God has shown to his father. **"You have shown great kindness to your servant, my father David,"** he says, **"because he was faithful to you and righteous and upright in heart."** Then he confesses that God's mercy has also been shown to him. He says, **"You have continued this great kindness to him and given him a son to sit on his throne this very day."** Solomon admits his own unworthiness, saying that he is only a **"little child"** in his experience as king and that he needs God's help, especially in light of the great number of people in his kingdom, **"a great people, too numerous to count or number,"** he says. Finally, Solomon humbly asks for wisdom to be a good and godly king. He prays, **"So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong."**

By giving Solomon a blank check, God is teaching him—and us—a lesson. He knows what Solomon needs. God is omniscient, he's all-knowing, and as such he knows everything. That means he knows what we need. Yet how often do we find ourselves not asking for what we need? As James says, **"You do not have because you do not ask God" (4:2).** Time and again God invites us to pray. There isn't a single place in the Bible where it says, "You've prayed enough; now stop praying." But God has to tell us to pray continually and to pray without ceasing, because we don't pray the way we should. We're sinful, we're lazy, and we cut God short when we pray. After giving the Lord's Prayer, Jesus holds out a tremendous promise: **"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks the door will be opened" (Mt 7:7, 8).** So, with Jesus' promise ringing and resounding in our ears, let's start asking and seeking and knocking. Agreed?

There's a reason why God wants us to pray, and that is that then he can answer our prayers. There's no other god like that in all the world. The love and mercy of God cause us to stand before him in humility. Think of it. Here is the Lord God Almighty, the Creator of all things. Here is the Lord God Almighty, who guides and directs everything in the universe, inviting us to come to him and ask him for anything—anything. How awesome is that? We bring only our sins and deserve nothing. Yet the Lord promises us everything. How humbling is that? As God says, **"Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?" declares the LORD. 'These are the ones I look on with favor: those who are humble and contrite in spirit, and who tremble at my Word'" (Is 66:2).**

Humbly we come before God with absolutely nothing to offer. *Nothing in my hands I bring* (CW 389:3) is the way our hymnal puts it. We come before God only because he graciously offers to give us whatever we need. Sadly, we often sell God short as we come to him with our long list of prayers and petitions. So often the things for which we ask are just so small and trivial. It's not that they're wrong, and it's not that God won't hear and answer them—Jesus says, **"Your heavenly Father knows that you need them" (Mt 6:32)**—but he wants us to have more, so much more—things like love and eternal life, forgiveness and faith, Jesus and justification. **"Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness" (Mt 6:33),** Jesus says. God wants us to ask for the best. And so, since God gives us a blank check, let's shoot high, and let's do it humbly in Christ.

And let's do so with confidence.

2. Solomon knows that God's promises and power are sure. He realizes that he doesn't deserve to stand in God's presence. And so, when it comes to his ability to rule over God's people, Solomon admits his doubts. He prays, **"Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people too numerous to count or number."** What Solomon is undertaking is an awesome responsibility. The task of ruling over God's people is enormous. It will take wisdom, godly wisdom, that wisdom that only God can give. And so, it's for this kind of wisdom that Solomon prays: **"Give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong."**

Oh, how Solomon's request makes God smile. **"The LORD was pleased that Solomon had asked for this."** Then, after listing a whole slew of things for which Solomon could have asked, but didn't, God promises him great blessings: **"I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be. Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for—both wealth and honor—so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings."**

As mentioned earlier, Solomon is the poster child for a believer praying wisely. And so, part of our prayer paradigm is that we pray confidently. We know our identity in Christ; we know that in Christ we are forgiven and are children of the heavenly Father. And so, Scripture says, **"Let us approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (He 4:16).** A believer praying wisely prays with confidence.