

**“...with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” *Phil. 4:6b***

I deliberately chopped up this verse, which is one of the most beloved in the Bible, because I wanted to focus just on the part that tells you what to do. “With thanksgiving” is on all our minds because of the holiday coming up, and it is a crucial part of the whole verse, but the simple instruction, the obvious thing God tells you to do through St. Paul and the Scriptures, is to tell God what you want. You might think that sounds suspiciously like a letter to Santa, but the inescapable fact remains that making requests of God is fundamental to a normal, healthy Christian life. If you can say “thank you” you shouldn’t be ashamed to say “please.”

Many Christians don’t like this part of the verse because even though it seems simple it can actually raise all kinds of problems. How can we possibly make anything at all known to God?

He already knows everything. Indeed, elsewhere in the Scriptures we are assured that God knows what we need before we even ask. So why ask? Here I can only point that Philippians 4 doesn’t hinge on whether you know all the whys and wherefores. I just says do it. Is it a pointless exercise? No! But are you really telling God something He doesn’t know? No. So why tell Him? You can argue in circles with yourself on philosophical points all day long, or you can follow a simple instruction. By prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. That God wants you telling Him things He already knows is His problem, not yours.

Another objection is that so many of our requests are selfish. We want our way, but everyone can’t have their way. True. God doesn’t promise to make everything go the way you want it to go. He does promise that He is your loving Father. So if it matters to you, it matters to Him. You don’t have to worry that by making your requests known to God you’ll be messing up His good plans. We always pray “Thy will be done,” which means we make our requests known to God, and we accept what comes with thanksgiving whether He did what we wanted or not. Again, don’t outthink yourself.

Some people say that they “don’t want to bother God with my petty little concerns when so many people have such bigger problems.” Don’t humor God. Don’t consider yourself above or below His concern. You aren’t going to irritate Him by humbly doing what He invites and commands you to do, which is to pray with thanksgiving and let your requests be made known to Him. He can handle it.

As we struggle with all kinds of strange new problems related to the pandemic and how it affects our lives, one of the most comforting things God gives us is the invitation to pray and the promise that He wants to hear our requests. Take Him up on it. Talk His ear off. About anything. If He didn’t want you to do that He wouldn’t have told you to do it. You might find yourself being the one transformed in the process, because telling God your will helps you discern His will and how to be thankful even when you face difficulties. Thanksgiving, don’t forget the importance of “please.”

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