

Maranatha Mirror Message

BREAKING THROUGH BARRIERS



“Ask, Seek, Knock” Sara Joseph lone time use
christian-artist-resource.com/sara-joseph.html

Once upon a time in a far away city there was a church that seemed to be in it's dying throes. Week after week as the congregation gathered for worship, all you could see was a shrinking sea of gray hair. "We're all getting old," they would say to each other, "What's going to happen to this church when we're gone?"

One Sunday a woman came to the service who looked to be in her 50s. She slipped out before the service was over and nobody got her name. The next Sunday she was there again, participating in the worship with joy. Week after week, there she was, ignoring the sparse numbers and the sinking morale.

"We're sure glad you're coming," the folks would say, "We can use a little youth in this church." "Youth?" she laughed. "I think I passed that some time ago. But I'm glad to be here." As the folks got to know this woman, they began to share their concerns. "You can see how we're all up in years. What will become of this church when we're gone?"

"Maybe God has plans for this church," she replied, and walked on with a smile.

Of course, nobody really knew this woman. They would have been surprised to learn about some valleys of trouble she had been through. They would have been doubly surprised to know that this woman had learned how to break through barriers with her prayers. All they knew was that she kept coming. Observant ones noticed that the atmosphere of the church was beginning to change. The man who did the preaching seemed to be going through a kind of revival. His words began to ring with an authority they never had before. Strangers kept dropping by, many of them kept on coming to worship.

In three years that church was full, alive with a mix of young and old, rich and poor. A place of joy. People looked forward to being there. And very few had a clue as to how this change came about.

All it takes is someone who knows how to break through the barriers.

Someone like Mary....

On the third day there was a marriage at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; Jesus also was invited to the marriage, with his disciples. When the wine failed, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

John 2:1-5

You know the rest. The servants filled the jars with water. When they dipped it out, it was wine. That wedding feast came back to life. All because Mary broke through the barriers.



The Wedding at Cana by Hanna Varghese permission of her daughters hanna-artwork.com/

"O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come."

Mary doesn't take "No" for an answer. She knows he'll come through.

"Do whatever he tells you," she says to the servants.

There are barriers that prevent us from getting through to God. Some of these barriers are in our own heads. Some of them are outside us. If we don't break through these barriers, our prayers fizzle out before they even get started.

Barriers of doubt.

What's the point of asking, when we don't really expect an answer?

Barriers of discouragement.

What's the point of approaching God, if we're going to slink away in discouragement, the minute we think God is giving us the run-around? Chicken-hearted prayers are not really prayers. They're little wishes that evaporate as soon as the sun comes up.

Here was this Greek woman. She wasn't one of the Chosen People. She didn't belong to the household of faith. But her faith put them all to shame.

And from there he arose and went away to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And he entered a house and would not have any one know it; yet he could not be hid. But immediately a woman, whose little daughter was possessed by an unclean spirit, heard of him and came and fell down at his feet.

Mark 7:24-25

Talk about barriers! Jesus was tucked away in this house, out of sight, out of reach. That didn't stop this woman. When she found out where he was, she got moving. If her daughter was ever to be healed, it would be through this man!



Lord Help Me by Hanna Verghese courtesy of her family
hanna-artwork.com/

So she breaks through the first barrier, and gets inside the house. She falls at Jesus' feet, begging him to cast the demon out of her little girl. But Jesus raises another barrier: She's a Gentile; his ministry is to Jews.

"Let the children first be fed, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." The "children" are the Jews. They deserve the bread. The woman is a Gentile. She's an outsider, a "dog". Why should she be given what is meant for the children?

This holy man, this man of God, is calling her a Gentile dog! Shutting the door in her face! Most of us would have walked away embittered. Not this lady! She knows in her spirit that her faith is being tested.

"Okay, Lord, so I'm a Gentile dog. Yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs."

And with those words this Greek woman breaks through the last barrier.

"For this saying you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter."

And it was so.

Who are these people who break through barriers and reach God's heart in their prayers? Are they super-saints? No. They are people just like we are, with all the distractions that we face every day. But these people are convinced of two things that give them boldness to break through the barriers:

1. They are convinced that God is good.
2. They are convinced that God is going to help them, no matter how bad things look.

They ignore the barriers and keep praying with thankful hearts, pestering God, until the answer comes.

They are convinced that God is good.

"Well, aren't we all convinced that God is good? Everybody knows that God is good!" We all say it with our mouths, and we sing it in our hymns.

But when it comes down to actually connecting with God in prayer, believing that the God of the universe is listening, that he is going to reach down with some help, that's when our confidence in God's goodness begins to waver.

Our mouths may still be saying the words, but our hearts begin to "chicken out." We're afraid to expect too much. "What if the door doesn't open? What will happen to my weak faith? I'd better not put all my eggs in this basket."

To believe that God is good is not a matter of theory, philosophy, or theology.

It's a matter of personal faith.

Is God the one who Jesus says he is?

Is he my Father?

Is Jesus, for real, a manifestation of the Father's goodness?

Is it true?---

"Ask and it will be given you, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you."

We will never break through any barriers until we believe that God is good.

Really good.

A Father like no other.

They are convinced that God is going to help them

People who break through barriers with their prayers are also convinced that God is going to help them, no matter how bad things look. They ignore the barriers and keep praying with thankful hearts until the answer comes.

They don't give up.

They don't turn cynical.

They don't wallow in self-pity.

They cling to the promise until it is fulfilled.

This Greek woman saw what no one else seemed to see. She saw the promise. God is good. Jesus is good. "Of course he's going to help me! Never mind how bad things look; he is going to help me!" She knocked on the door of heaven, and kept knocking until it opened.

Who of us does not have at least one burden that we need to bring to the Master? Some problem that we cannot solve. He has to solve it. "Lord, I need help!"

And there is one burden that we all share together. We want to see our church come alive with the fire of heaven. We want to see it grow in the power of the Spirit, and even in numbers. The answer to our prayer lies on the other side of those barriers.

We can break through, if we will allow the Spirit to convince us of two facts:

That God is good.

That God is going to help us, no matter how hopeless things look.

All we have to do is ignore the barriers and keep praying with thankful hearts, until the answer comes.

Ask, and it will be given you.

Seek, and you will find,

Knock, and it will be opened to you.



"Ask, Seek, Knock" Sara Joseph lone time use
christian-artist-resource.com/sara-joseph.html

Just keep at it, until the last barrier falls.

Prayer

Holy, Just Lord give us the boldness to breakthrough the barriers of doubt and discouragement that keep us from connecting to you in prayer. We trust your goodness, your kindness, your faithfulness. You hear us. You care. May we sense this with every fiber of our beings. And Lord we know that nothing is beyond your power. No matter how futile things feel, no matter how overwhelming the circumstances are, you can and will bring us help. May our hearts burst with thankfulness and confidence when we lay our cares at your feet. And merciful, all powerful Lord we lay the concerns about your faltering body before you, the shrinking church, the disinterested youth, and those who scorn religion. We also bring to you a major barrier to the growth of your church, the things that bring shame and derision to your body... the compromises organized religion have made with greed and evil, the disgusting false prophets and charlatans who make a mockery out of the cross by marketing your salvation, goodness and mercy. May the deeds, the obedience, the love of the true body of Christ overshadow these barriers. Lord raise us up, fill us so we seek you with an intensity and love like never before. Pour your Spirit out, twist the hearts of the young who scorn religion into hearts that are inflamed with your love. May your body grow so close to you and embrace your cross so tightly that your light radiates so strongly from us, that it ignites an inferno of love for you across this earth.



THE LAMB
WHO WAS SLAIN
HAS BEGUN HIS REIGN