

Asking for Help

Psalm 86:1-5

Incline your ear, O Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and needy. Preserve my life, for I am devoted to you; save your servant who trusts in you. You are my God; be gracious to me, O Lord, for to you do I cry all day long. Gladden the soul of your servant, for to you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. For you, O Lord are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call on you. (NRSV)

I am a mother of four boys. When I was told that kids go through terrible two's, I was naïve to think that after kids turn three, they are beyond the trouble zone. When my older son jumped over the terrible two's and hit even more terrible three's, a more experienced mother told me that problems grow as the child grows. So, when my one-year-old comes to me because he bumped his head, I know that a kiss and a hug will cure his pain, but when my four-year-old comes for help because he has problems with bullies, hugs and kisses are not enough. As a parent, I am able to offer access to remedies and solutions that my children do not yet have.

Just like children, we as adults may find ourselves feeling hurt by various experiences and situations in life. We may find ourselves saying, "I am poor and needy" just like King David did. However, since we are not children, our problems are much more complicated. In biblical poetry, redundancy shows intensity and redundancy of "poor and needy" points to the intensity of David's situation. The question is, when we go through difficult times, do we ask for help like David did? And if yes, who is qualified to offer us help? David thought that God was that qualified person. He expected God/Lord to listen to his need and respond appropriately. He called God "good, and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call on [him]" and expected to experience God's goodness, forgiveness, and steadfast love personally. The imagery of lords/servants may be difficult to comprehend. We would not refer to ourselves as "devoted" servants of anybody. In fact, we prefer to be independent, self-reliant, and self-sufficient. Equating biblical concept of "lord" with that of a "boss" is also inappropriate because if we "cry all day long," as David did, we cannot expect our bosses to be "gracious" to us and "lift [our] soul." The image of the Lord painted here looks very much like an image of a good parent, mother or father. Since the father of a biblical family/clan was also its lord and everybody, whether sons, daughters, or slaves, was considered his servant, we can justify our understanding of God/Lord as Parent, who is ready to offer love, protection, access to the goods, remedies, solutions, and the like for each member of the family/clan.

NHT

Point for Prayer:

Are you more likely to be self-reliant and independent or likely to reach out?