

Sermon for Sunday, February 16, 1975, by Andrew A. Jumper, D.D. Pastor
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HOW TO DIAL GOD'S NUMBER

St. John 16:16-24

Text: "Hitherto you have asked nothing in my name; ask, and you will receive,
that your joy may be full." St. John 16:24

Last Sunday I preached a sermon on the subject of how to live a daily Christian life, or how to stay filled with the Spirit. In that sermon I gave several steps for a person to follow if he wanted to keep life from driving him up a tree. Unfortunately, it is often the case that one cannot say all he would like to about a particular subject in a particular sermon. So, today I would like to hitchhike on last Sunday's sermon and add what I consider to be perhaps the single most important element in the Christian's life that helps him to stay filled with the Spirit and to live an abundant Christian life. That single most important element is to learn God's phone number so that daily he can plug in with God. Of course, you realize that I am talking about prayer. Actually, I wish we had some new word for prayer. Most of us have so many bad associations with prayer that even the word has a flood of poor associations. For example, if we played the little game of word association we would get some odd answers. If I said prayer and asked for a spontaneous answer we would get something like this: Prayer - what we do while the food gets cold; Prayer - something I feel guilty about because I don't do it; Prayer - that long period during the Sunday Service when I doze off; Prayer - learning to say "thee" and "thou" to somebody I can't see.

Because we do have that sort of association with prayer, I want to help us get a new vision, a new attitude about prayer that may be helpful to us. This morning let's think of prayer as a sort of telephone call to God. Now, a telephone call is a conversation with somebody we can't see but with whom we can have real communications. There is a link, a connection, between us. Prayer is our link with God. We have real communications. And most especially I want us to think of it in terms of conversation. So, as we talk about communicating with God, let's imagine it as picking up our spiritual telephone to have a chat with God. As a matter of fact, that isn't a bad definition. Let's think of prayer as a sort of God Chat when we dial God's number.

Now, a lot of people have trouble communicating with God. Many of us think he has an unlisted number. Some of us think that the phone rings, but nobody answers. You've heard the joke about dial-a-prayer for atheists. You dial this number and it rings and rings and rings. Others of us think God has so many people to take care of that all we will get is a busy signal. Well, let me assure you first that you won't get a busy signal. God's switchboard can handle all the calls that come in. You can't jam God's switchboard! And let me also assure you that God always answers when you call. As a matter of fact, if you don't mean business with God, don't call - he always answers. And if you think God has an unlisted number, here is God's phone number: 463-2428.

Actually, I'm being somewhat facetious. A moment ago I defined prayer as a "God Chat". On the telephone dial you have alphabetical letters as well as numbers and if you dialed the phrase "God Chat" on the telephone you would dial the number 463-2428. Now, if you will permit me this bit of foolishness this morning, I would like to use the phrase "God Chat" as a key to help you in dialing God's number everyday.

The first three letters of a telephone number are called the "exchange" or the prefix number. When you get ready to have a God Chat and to dial God's number,

spend a moment thinking about the prefix "GOD". Who is it you are going to chat with? What is he like? You see, your attitude as you dial God's number is very important.

Let's start with "G". First, God is a great God. Whatever need you have, whatever problem you are carrying to him, he can handle it. I had a lady come to me one day in great distress. "Dr. Jumper," she said, "my life is so messed up I don't believe even God can straighten it out." Well, our God is a great God. He is able as St. Paul writes, to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think. (Eph. 3:20) Do you remember the story of Daniel in the Old Testament? Daniel had been put in the lion's den by the king. But the king actually loved Daniel, so the next morning he went to the lion's den and cried out, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?" And from the depths of the lion's den came Daniel's answer, "My God is able." Yes, we have a great God. It does not matter how big your problem is, how complicated your situation, when you dial "G", you are dialing a Great God.

The second letter is "O". It stands for "our father". When you dial God's number you are dialing someone who is not aloof, not uncaring, not remote. No, he is like our father. The other day several of the officers and I were discussing prayer. One of them said that his little five year old was asking for binoculars! But he went on to say that the freedom of his little son to ask daddy for anything he wanted really helped him. It helped him understand that he could go to his heavenly father with any request, no matter how foolish it might be. As a matter of fact, Jesus once used that very image to discuss prayer. Do you remember what he said? He said, "What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father..." Yes, "how much more will the heavenly father." When the disciples of Jesus came to Jesus one day they said, "Lord, teach us to pray..." And Jesus said to them, "Pray like this: 'Our Father...'"

The third letter is "D". "D" stands for dependable. When you dial God's number you are dialing someone who is utterly dependable. The dependability of God means two things to me. First, it means that I can count on God to answer me. Jesus said, "If you ask anything of the Father, he will give it to you..." (John 16:23) And then he goes on to add, "ask, and you will receive." Yes, God is dependable. He answers prayer. But secondly, not only does God answer, he can be depended on to answer it in the best possible way. Now, that really helps me. Sometimes what I think is best for me is not the best thing at all. Often I don't even know what would be the best answer to my need. But God is dependable. He will do what is best. And that relieves me of having to know the answers to my problems in order to pray. I can just pour out my needs to God and he will give me the best possible answer and I can depend on a God like that.

So when we get ready for a God Chat and dial God's number, we need to think of the prefix - who it is that we are calling - for we are dialing a Great God who is able; we are dialing Our Father, who loves us like a Father and more wisely than any earthly Father ever could; we are dialing a Dependable God who can be depended on not only to answer our prayers, but to answer them in the best possible way.

Now, let's think for a moment about this conversation we are going to have when we dial God's number. Let's think about the "C-H-A-T" part - what are we going to say to God? What ought to be included in this conversation with God?

Well, let's begin with the letter "C". "C" stands for confession. Every prayer ought to begin with confession. In I John we read, "If we confess our sins, he is

faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Now, notice that the Bible does not say to confess our sinfulness. "Sinfulness" is a general term. God wants us to be specific and confess our sins. You see, it won't do to pray, "Lord, forgive my sinfulness and help me be a better person." No, you have to be specific about sins. You have to pray, "Lord, forgive me for being a gossip and help me not to talk about others." You have to pray, "Lord, forgive me for lusting after that woman and help me have a pure heart." You have to pray, "Lord, forgive me for cheating on my expense account and help me to be honest." St. Paul once wrote (I Tim. 2:8) that he wanted men to pray, lifting up holy hands.. Well, the only way you can lift up holy hands to God is to confess your sins. Get honest with God, and he will forgive you. So every chat with God begins with "C" - confession.

The next letter is "H" and it stands for "hearing." Every chat with God should include some time for hearing. When you call a friend on the telephone, you don't talk for five minutes and then hang up without giving your friend a chance to respond or to say something to you. If you called someone and said what you wanted to say and hung up, that would be very rude because you didn't give that person a chance to respond. Would you treat God rudely? Would you be more polite to a friend than to God? So chatting with God means a dialogue - a two-way conversation - in which you spend some time hearing as well as talking. Sometimes when we are praying our thoughts will wander - we will start thinking about something we need to do that day, about some business problem, or some friend will come to mind. Someone has suggested that this is God trying to communicate with us. He is trying to remind us of something or someone. This person has suggested that he takes a pad and when these thoughts come to mind as he prays, he writes them down. Did you ever stop to think that what you thought was a wandering mind during prayer might be God trying to communicate with you about some things in your life? Yes, every chat with God ought to include some time for hearing.

The next letter is "A". It stands for "Ask". Do you know what word Jesus uses in connection with prayer more than any other word? It is the word, "Ask." St. James writes, "You do not have, because you do not ask." (James 4:3) I have people come to me with problems and I say to them, "Have you prayed about this?" And often they will say something like this, "Well, I hate to bother God with something like that." Or they will say, "Well, it is such a little thing." But the Bible tells us to make all our requests known to God. As St. Paul writes, "in everything by prayer..let your requests be made known to God." (Phil. 4:6)

Jesus once spoke of asking and seeking and knocking (Luke 11). The Greek tense of those words means to ask and keep on asking, to seek and keep on seeking, to knock and keep on knocking. Don't be afraid to keep asking God about things on your heart. God will always answer your prayer. Now, he may say "no", but he will answer your prayer. Do you remember the experience of St. Paul? He had some physical problem that he called a thorn in the flesh. He asked God to take away the problem. And the fact is, he kept on asking. He tells us, "Three times I besought the Lord about this, that it should leave me.." (II Cor. 12:7) And do you know God answered his prayer. But do you know how God answered? He said, "No." St. Paul writes, "But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you...'"

So ask God for your needs. He will answer your prayers. And remember that he is a dependable God who will answer you in the way that is best for you. The final letter in a God Chat is the letter "T". That stands for thanks. The Bible tells us that whatever we ask in faith, we will receive. Therefore, every prayer ought to include thanking God for answering us. It is our act of faith to thank God for

it is on the other end of the line, we can do just that.

of the advertisement of the telephone company, "keep in touch."