

“God’s Phone Number”

Hebrews 7:23-28 and Mark 10:46-52

(www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=hewbew+7:23-28)

(www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=mark+10:46-52)

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Anyone can call God at anytime!

Blind Bartimaeus is seeking first to get Jesus’ attention. “Shut up,” you beggar the crowd yells. But, Blind Bartimaeus keeps on yelling. “Go back into your shell and stay quite,” someone yells back to him. But, Blind Bartimaeus keeps on calling out Jesus’ name. In our mind’s eye, we can see the spectacle unfolding. People from Jericho do not want this famous traveling Rabbi to know they have such “people trash” in their beautiful city. Perhaps one of the leading members of the ruling class sends an enforcer over to make sure this marginalized person becomes unseen. After all, we don’t want our beggars, our homeless, our hungry, our mentally sick, our physically handicapped, our sexually abused, and our culturally condemned people to be seen. The word is given, “Go quite that piece of human scum.”

Before the enforcers can reach him; however, Blind Bartimaeus changes his cry. “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” He yells. This is a Messianic title. No one has publicly spoken about Jesus using this title. Blind Bartimaeus isn’t so blind after all. He sees what others have missed. Only Peter, in the quite seclusion of the disciples has dared to speak out loud this seditious phrase. Jesus, Messiah of God, Chosen One, Beloved Son of David, have mercy on me, Blind and seeing Bartimaeus calls out.

Jesus stops. Jesus sees him. God’s phone number has been dialed and a response is surely coming. There is no taped message on an answering machine repeating the same sterile message again and again. There is no too busy signal. There is no secondary person answering to take a message so that God can get back to him. Jesus walks over to blind, but seeing Bartimaeus and replies, “What do you want.”

Do you find yourself like Bartimaeus? Do you want God’s calling card so that you can reach out and touch God? Do you want to know God’s phone number? Do you want to be able to get in touch with God at any time from anywhere? Then I suggest that you listen carefully as we explore this encounter between Christ and Bartimaeus.

God’s Phone Number: Jeremiah 33:3

Do you want to know God’s phone number? It is **Jeremiah 33:3** (www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=jeremiah+33:3). Call up the Good Book and check out the voice mail that God left there for you. “*Call to me and I will answer you; I will tell you the wonderful and marvelous things you know nothing about.*” Like Bartimaeus you can call Jesus Christ anytime. You have the invitation. God’s words are true. You have the where-with-all. God accepts collect calls. You have the opportunity. Call God from your inner voice. God will answer you.

Bartimaeus calls Jesus Christ. Nothing and no one will stop him from calling out. He identifies who will be his savior, teacher, and friend. He calls out, and in so doing, Bartimaeus begins a relationship. Does it matter that Bartimaeus is too young or too old? Does it matter if Bartimaeus is even close to death? Does it matter what anyone else thinks? Absolutely not! All that matters is that Bartimaeus calls out.

There was a young man who went to Scotland to do some serious fishing. He rented a boat on Loch Ness. He got up early in the morning to get out on the lake. Just as the mists began to lift off the water, he felt the boat rise out of the water. A dramatic force catapulted him into the air. As he was tumbling toward the water he looked and saw that his destination was the open mouth of the Loch Ness monster. With all he had in him he yelled out, “Lord God, save me!” Just like the old E.F. Hutton commercial, everything stopped. God answered. Son, you never believed in me before, why do you call to me now? To which the young man replied. I didn’t believe in the Loch Ness monster either.

You can call to God, anytime, from anywhere, and God will answer. God will provide you with wonderful and marvelous knowledge that you knew nothing about before. Bartimaeus called out. Then, when Christ answered, he threw off his cloak. (vs.50)

Bartimaeus wants a new start in life!

Within the tradition of Christian Scripture, this phrase has a special meaning. Throwing off the cloak is a symbol of leaving behind the old life. In **Mark 2:21** (www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=mark+2:21), Jesus teaches; *“No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse.”* The cloak symbolizes a new, fresh start. As Bartimaeus responds to Jesus’ invitation to dialogue, he chooses to leave behind his old life.

All of us carry with us old cloaks. We have long standing habits that hurt us, but that we seem powerless to stop.

- There are negative physical habits like eating too much, smoking, drinking, gambling, gossiping, and shop lifting to name a few.
- There are also negative mental habits. For example, some of us play the “yes, but...” game in order to not have to change. Some of us “mind read” so that we do not have to hear what the other person is saying.
- There are negative emotional habits. We have old hurts left over from family or friends that we continually nurse. Someone hurt us and we cannot let go of the hurt. Someone betrayed us, shamed us, or laid a guilt trip on us and we are determined never to have that happen again. We build mental defensive walls around ourselves.
- We have emotional pain, guilt, fear, shame, and rage left over from decisions made and experiences that went awry. We talk to ourselves telling ourselves that “God couldn’t love me.” Or, “I’m unlovable.”

We have these negative assumptions and emotions that we use to create our daily world. Let me touch just one thread found in each of our old coats. There is a negative mental theological habit that affects us all. Growing up in this culture we have learned to assume that God is out there. We distance ourselves from God through this assumption. We use phrases like: “The Big Man Upstairs,” “Christ will return someday,” “Look at the beautiful world God created.” We use physical signals to speak of God. We point up towards the heavens when we want to signal that we are thinking of God. Our assumption is based upon a synthesis of the Christian faith and the philosophy of Aristotle. In the Reformation period John Calvin for the Protestants and St. Thomas Aquinas for the Roman Catholics created this synthesis of thought that brought about the conditions for the growth of modern science and industry. The negative mental assumption was that God was in the heavens. We are on the earth. We are given the responsibility to do God’s work on the earth. God’s Son, Jesus Christ, came to earth and left in order to save us. God’s Holy Spirit came to the earth and left, in order to give us the Bible. After that time, we are responsible for doing God’s work here on earth. We can pray for guidance to know what to do, but God will not intervene with us. Does this sound familiar? Let me urge you to toss off this old coat today.

The God of the Holy Scriptures revealed through Christ and in touch with us through the Holy Spirit is not an absentee landlord. Our God is a 24-7-365 God. God is with us 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year. God is present within every particle of matter within the universe. God is as close to you as each breath you take. Christ is present through the Holy Spirit every moment of every day you live. God did not just create. God continues to create. God is not just up there. God is also in your heart, and every heart of every person on earth. Our God is a 24-7-365 God!!

Let me urge you to follow Bartimaeus example and toss off your old cloak. Throw away whatever mental, emotional, spiritual, or physical negative habit that is hanging on your shoulders. Let me urge you to call upon Christ, throw off your cloak, and run to Jesus .

When you call, Jesus will answer!

“*What do you want me to do for you?*” Jesus asks Bartimaeus. What would you ask when Christ asks you? If you call to Him, he will answer. What do you want Him to do for you? Within the last few months

numbers of people have reached out to Jesus Christ with their needs. And, just like with Bartimaeus, Christ answered.

- A mother asked for her son to find a renewed heart for God. He has!
- A brother asked for his brother to come to know Christ Jesus. He did!
- Friends asked for quick healing of another friend's heart attack. He recovered in half the time.
- Friends asked for an unfixable shoulder to be healed. It is in process of a full healing.
- A family needed transportation. God provided a car.
- A daughter asked for her father to survive surgery. He did.

I could go on with response after response. When Jesus Christ asks you what you need or want. Be prepared for a response. Christ is not way off in the heavens somewhere. Christ is closer to you than He was to Bartimaeus. And, Christ will respond.

Bartimaeus thankfully followed Jesus!

Once Bartimaeus was healed, he did not forget Jesus and run away rejoicing. Bartimaeus followed Jesus on the way up to Jerusalem. That particular phrase is significant for the early Church. Before people were called Christians, they were called people of the Way. They were committed to following Jesus. Jesus was not someone they possessed. They did not have a little Jesus in their hearts. Rather, they followed Jesus on the way of serving God!

- On the Way, Jesus' values became their values.
- On the Way, Jesus' servant lifestyle became their lifestyle.
- On the Way, loving God as Jesus loved God became their passion.
- On the Way, joyously praising God as Jesus praised God became the emotional foundation of their life.

It is not enough to just acknowledge that we believe in God. Even Satan believes in God. We need to follow Christ in our living day by day. Bartimaeus was healed and followed Jesus up to Jerusalem and the cross.

Will you open yourself up to a healing encounter with Jesus? Call out to Christ expecting a response. In fact, write down your prayer requests. Pay attention to your dialogue with Jesus. If you write down your prayer concerns and requests, you can more easily keep track of how God is responding to you. Our God is a 24-7-365 God.

Dial up God's number and celebrate God's presence in your life.

Memorize Jeremiah 33:3. *"Call to me and I will answer you; I will tell you the wonderful and marvelous things you know nothing about."*

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