



Ask, Seek, Knock

Our Father will never let us down
Matthew 7:7-12

⁷“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ⁸For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. ⁹“Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? ¹¹If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! ¹²So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. The first question which comes to mind is “Why are verses about prayer right after verses about judging?”
 - 1. The more complete question is “Why are both sections right after Matthew 6:33?”

Matthew 6:33 *But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*
 - 2. We talked in the Lifeboats last week about Matthew 7:1-6 which is titled “Do not judge” in most versions
 - a. All about being godly with people who annoy us or who find us annoying.
 - 3. Not possible to be godly in such situations without His help.
- B. Backdrop of vs 7-11 is the relational tensions in vs 1-6
- C. v12 is the bookend with 6:33 framing both 1-6 and 7-11.

II. CONTINUING ACTION

- A. The Greek tense indicates present and continuing action.
 - B. But preachers and theologians have lifted 7-11 out of the context of 6:33-7:12
 - 1. Frequently hear comparisons to persistent woman and the unjust judge (Luke 18:1-18).
 - 2. We are told parable of the unjust judge and v7-11 give us a basis for persistently asking God for something.
 - 3. It’s important to combine the needed persistence with believing prayer without doubting
 - a. James 1:6-8

⁶But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. ⁷That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. ⁸Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.
- C. In context, the persistent, continuing prayer has to do with seeking God’s help in our interpersonal struggles.
 - 1. Ask: for God’s help in overcoming personal tension in a Kingdom manner
 - 2. Seek: God’s wisdom in applying the Kingdom in our lives
 - 3. Knock: to soften hard heart-areas and overcome walled off places
- D. Asking is about a dialogue while seeking and knocking has to do with a persistent search and a journey to greater divine discoveries.
- E. The present continuous action indicates a continuing need to overcome our pre-judgements, our hard hearts, and our unforgiving natures.
 - 1. If we continue in our asking, seeking, and knocking we will find the wisdom to seek the Kingdom in all things (6:33).

2. Persistence in prayer leads to a healing of our heart issues **which leads to** a desire to mend strained or broken relationships **which leads to** a breakthrough in our ability to love others as we want them to love us.
- F. If we really want to manifest the Kingdom of God in our lives we will have to talk with Him on a regular basis.
- G. If we Ask, Seek, and Knock we are only doing what Christ Himself is doing.
- Revelation 3:20** ²⁰*Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.*
1. Jesus wants us to seek Him in all things because He is already knocking on the door of our heart.
 2. Matthew 6:33!
- H. Stay with it until the breakthrough comes!

III. A SPARKLING SET OF PROMISES

- A. In the wider scope of things persistence in prayer applies to other things too.
- B. Some think prayer is not for selfish ends but always for the glory of God.
1. It isn't selfish to ask for things; the natural relationship between child and parent.
 2. Maybe God is even puzzled by our refusal to ask.
- C. God wants us to talk to Him; tell Him how we are doing; what we need; wants to be involved with our lives.
- D. Isn't this a wonderful thing?
1. God is telling us to come to Him frequently, even fervently, with the most basic needs.
 2. Don't have to be tentative about it; can be bold and eager,
- E. Our prayers will be heard!

IV. ASK FOR THE RIGHT THINGS

- A. But must not be cavalier about it.
- James 4:2b-3 *You do not have because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.*
- B. A common problem:
1. We are too eager to ask for the wrong things: Wealth or frivolous acquisition
 2. We are not eager enough to ask for the right things.
 - a. We need to ask for daily needs; God wants them for us also.
 - b. Talking to God is the right thing in and of itself.
 - c. Asking for superfluous stuff misses the mark; asking for His righteousness is the fulness.
- C. Persistence in approaching God is what is in view here.
1. In these difficult times we need His guidance and direction.
 2. Also need to be in frequent communication to hear what He has to say to us.
 3. We are God's children and He wants to bless us as would any father.
 4. Talking with God changes us, softens our hearts, and opens our minds.
 - a. The answer to every dilemma or question.
 - b. Philippians 4:6-7

⁴*Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!* ⁵*Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.* ⁶*Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.* ⁷*And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

V. GOD IS NOT A BUREAUCRAT

- A. God refers to himself as our Father
 - 1. Why not treat Him like our Father.
 - a. He is not disinterested; still has time, space, and love for us.
 - b. Desires fellowship with us.
 - c. We are not a bother or distraction to Him.
- B. Care for world and others comes as a result of intimacy with Him.
 - 1. OK to seek personal relationship with Him.
- C. God instructs his children through conversation.
 - 1. Molds us to his ways.
- D. “What is fundamentally at stake is man’s picture of God. God must not be thought of as a reluctant stranger who can be cajoled or bullied into bestowing his gifts (6:7–8), as a malicious tyrant who takes vicious glee in the tricks he plays (7:9–10), or even as an indulgent grandfather who provides everything requested of him. He is the heavenly Father, the God of the Kingdom, who graciously and willingly bestows the good gifts of the Kingdom in answer to prayer.” (Carson, page unknown)

VI. PRAYER CAN BE A MYSTERY

- A. Often the answer is a long time coming.
 - 1. Are we asking amiss?
 - 2. Are we in a hurry?
 - 3. Is it really in our best interest?
- B. Sometimes the answer is no.
 - 1. Must be willing to accept no as the answer.
- C. But persistence keeps us involved; keeps us in communication with our Father.
 - 1. Always a good thing.

VII. APPLICATION

- A. We are completely dependent on the generosity of our Father.
- B. We can not only survive, but thrive, on the kindness of God.
- C. Prioritize God.
 - ¹¹For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. ¹²Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. ¹³You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. ¹⁴I will be found by you,” declares the LORD, ... (Jeremiah 29:11-14a)*
- D. If we don't fill our mind with what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, excellent, or praiseworthy the enemy will fill our mind with what is false, dishonorable, impure, ugly, corrupt, and wicked.
- E. Prayer is not pulling God to my will, but the aligning of my will to the will of God.

VIII. REFERENCES

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