

Ask – Seek – Knock

Matthew 7:7-11

This passage tends to be misrepresented in our culture by distorting the language of this passage into an individual prosperity gospel. It is argued that the goal of prayer is to ask, seek and knock to find the beauty of a life lived in submission to God and for advancing the Kingdom of God. Asking, seeking and knocking are the **language of desire** in Matthew 7:7-8 some will argue.

Proponents of the prosperity gospel often use these verses. The fundamental belief behind the prosperity gospel is that if you give enough and do it with enough faith you will in turn receive material possessions and personal comfort and safety. But if one looks at the life of Jesus and the Disciples, what they possessed seems to go against any prosperity gospel mentality. For Jesus and the Disciples, personal possessions and safety were extremely low on the priority scale.

“Keep on asking”, “Continue seeking” and *“Don’t stop knocking”* is the more accurate translation of these present imperative verb tenses in this passage. The world of Jesus and the Disciples was built within the context of relationship and each of the above verbs has a built-in relationship. Each verb **requires** someone who can provide and someone who wants something. There is also an inherent danger in people getting just what they want when they want it. We call children in this situation “spoiled” and the goal of Jesus is to teach us how to want what he wants in a world that implores us to seek out our own **individual** desires.

The entire Sermon on the Mount itself argues against a prosperity gospel interpretation of these key verses. Matthew 6:25-34 emphasizes the need to trust God for our needs and not worry about material possessions.

The often confused and difficult part of this main passage in Matthew 7:7-8 is what follows in verses 9-11 where Jesus emphasizes the good gifts that God will bring in response to our asking, seeking and knocking.

The trouble is that we all too often focus on the goodness of the gifts being promised while the primary emphasis of Jesus in his teaching to his early disciples was to emphasize to them the ultimate goodness of their Father. Jesus wanted to instill in his disciples, and He wants to instill in us, that the process of developing into the present Kingdom of God involves a process of discipleship that we need to work out in our lives. **This Kingdom of God is the thing we are to continue asking for, seeking and knocking to find.**

This passage is an important part of Jesus' teaching about prayer. It speaks about 3 kinds of prayer that should be a part of our Christian walk. Let's find out what did Jesus meant by ask, seek and knock.

1. Ask

For us preacher boys, Harry Pickup Sr. was the model of a man of prayer. He prayed about everything. He used to tell us, **“Ask not and you get not” and “if you go all the way to heaven to ask your Father for His blessing on you, then you will not leave empty handed.”**

The dictionary defines the verb “ask” – “to make a request as a favor.” Now, we can't ask from a stranger without doubting, but we can certainly ask our earthly fathers with the assurance that we will receive what we ask for. But there is a catch....according to Matthew 21:22 you must ask in faith and then act in faith. What does that mean??

To Ask in faith: “Faith has to do with things that are not seen and hope with things that are not at hand.” (Thomas Aquinas)

Let's not make the mistake of confusing faith with self-confidence. Faith is **not** an emotion or a feeling. Faith is not gambling, blind faith or leaving your life at the hands of uncertainty as some people would like to call it.

Faith is the conviction that the invisible God who is our Father, will provide us what we hope for and ask for. (Hebrews 11:1). When we ask according to His will, if what we are asking for is good for us, God will give it to us. That is the faith required.

Act in faith: “Pray as if everything depends on God, then work as if everything depends on you.” (Martin Luther) The Bible in James 2:26 says that faith not accompanied by actions is dead, (James 2:26). Faith isn’t just something you talk about. It’s something you do. Faith is only activated when we act. The Bible says in Mark 11:24 that one of the ways we act in faith is to believe we already received what we asked for.

2. Seek

We must pray in accord with God’s will. A prison inmate is praying with his eyes closed when a fellow prisoner notices him and says with ridicule, “Prayers won’t help you get out of here any faster.” Opening his eyes, the inmate who was praying answers, “I do not pray to get out of prison but to do the will of God while I’m here.”

James 4:3 says we must prayerfully seek God’s will because he doesn’t answer prayers which contradict his word. To pray that way we must know His way through our study of His Word.

In Matthew 7:9-11 we learn God will not answer our prayers if what we pray for could harm us. He is our heavenly father and he cares for us. He will never give us something that will compromise our eternal home.

Paul tells us in Philippians 4:19 that God promises to provide all our needs - not all our wants.

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” Psalm 119:105 though this was written 3,400 years ago it is still the answer to knowing the will of God. His word is our main tool in knowing His will.

God also gives us one another to study with and discuss things with. The church is the spiritual home for Christians. God places Elders over each church to oversee the spiritual conditions of both the church and individuals. Another way to ensure that we are on firm ground regarding knowing the will of God is to consult our spiritual leaders and study and pray with them. God did not require them to meet certain qualifications by accident. They are to be good students of God’s word; men of prayer; men with experience.

3. Knock

I have come to understand a great truth in life. It is very difficult to hate someone that you are continually praying for. Think about it. If you have an enemy that you are struggling with lift their name up to the throne of God. Now, try to hate that person. I find it impossible to continue to hold anyone in contempt for whom I am praying.

Most of the time that Jesus spent in prayer was allocated to pray for others far more than he prayed for Himself, (Luke 22:31)

“Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you, and I will instruct you in the good and the right way”.¹ Samuel 12:23. The Bible says failure to intercede for our brethren is a sin in the eyes of the Lord

The Bible also urges us to pray for our leaders so that God will give them the wisdom they need. *“First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way”*.¹ Tim 2:1-2

The importance of praying for these? When we intercede, we express our concern to God about the interests of others. Not just our own interests, (Philippians 2:4)

When we intercede, we delay God’s wrath and expedite his deliverance, (Genesis 18:23-33)

When we intercede we pray according to the desire of God’s heart, (Genesis 18:32)

Conclusion

I want to urge you to spend time with God, talk to Him sincerely and honestly and cast your cares on Him. Then find out what He wants to do and follow His lead. Don’t stop Asking; Seeking or Knocking on the door of heaven – God our Father will answer!