

# Matthew

Sermon on the Mount

August 18, 2024

## I. Introduction

- A. **Matthew 7:7-12**, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. [8] For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. [9] Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? [10] Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? [11] If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him! [12] In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”
- B. The essence of today’s teaching is as follows: God is our loving Father, and as such, He is parenting us – for our good, and the good of the family, and the good of the community. We are God’s children, and as such it is ours to learn what is good and how to live according to what is good – for our sake, the sake of the family, and the good of the community. As children, we can ask our Father for what we need, what we want, and what we think will make life better for all involved.
1. To the degree that we learn, accept, and live according to what our Father is teaching us, to that degree, our view of our needs, our wants, and what we think will make life better will fit into the parameters of what we are being taught. In other words, we will ask for good things, we will seek good things, and we will knock on those doors that lead to good things. As a result, our Father will respond accordingly, because His heart’s desire is our good, the good of the family, and the good of the community.
  2. However, to whatever degree and in whatever ways we choose to go our own way and do our own thing – thus living contrary to how we are being parented, to that degree and in those areas, we will want and pursue what is not good for us, and what will cause problems for the family, and what will work against the good of the community. Therefore, we should not be so foolish as to think our Father will give us what we ask for, or help us obtain what we seek, or open the doors we are knocking on – because His heart’s desire is our good, the good of the family, and the good of the community.

## C. Pray

## II. Pursing what is truly valuable and lasts forever

- A. [7] Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. [8] For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.
- B. In these two verses, Jesus sets forth a principle that has universal application. But if understood within the context of the Sermon on the Mount, along with a larger context of several other scriptures, we see that it applies to believers and comes with clear conditions.
  1. However, there is an unconditional part to this principle, and that part is God – who stands behind it and ensures it works as intended.
    - a. The conditional part of this principle has to do with us. We believers must meet God’s conditions if we are to experience what this principle promises to do.
    - b. Therefore, if we fail to fulfill the conditions, we should not expect that our asking, seeking, and knocking will be supported by God, which means they won’t produce the desired results.
  2. But before getting to the conditions, I want to point out that according to the Greek, all three actions – asking, seeking, knocking – are in the present tense, which indicates continuous, persistent effort.
    - a. In Greek there are two kinds of imperatives (*commands, directives*).
      - (1) There is the **aorist** imperative which states a single, one-time command. For example, “Shut the door.”
      - (2) The second kind of imperative is the **present** imperative, which states a command that is to be obeyed on a continuous or repeated basis. For example, “When you are the last one out of the building, make sure the door is shut.”
    - b. In **vs 7-8**, the three directives are in the present tense, which means that we are to **keep on** asking, **continue** seeking, and **persevere in** knocking – as opposed to a one-time, for the moment effort.
  3. In relation to asking God for something, this idea of continuing to put forth an effort to gain what we seek is not new to **vs 7-8**. Jesus told two stories about continuing to ask/pray for something that you **REALLY** want or **GENUINELY** need.
    - a. **Luke 11:5-10**, Then [Jesus] said to them, “Suppose one of you has a friend, and goes to him at midnight and says to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves; [6] for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; [7] and from inside [your friend] answers and says, ‘Do not bother me; the door has already been shut and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get

up and give you anything.’ [8] I tell you, even though [your friend] will not get up and give [you] anything – [though] he is [your] friend, yet because of [your] persistence he will get up and give [you] as much as [you] need. [9] So I say to you, [keep on asking], and it will be given to you; [keep on seeking], and you will find; [keep on knocking], and it will be opened to you. [10] For everyone who [keeps on asking], receives; and he who [keeps on seeking], finds; and to him who [keeps on knocking], it will be opened.”

- b. The second example comes from **Luke 18:1-8**, where Jesus tells the story of the judge who was so selfish he wouldn’t administer justice unless there was something it for him, and a widow who was in desperate need of legal protection from injustice. The point of the story is that **IF** the judge finally responded as he ought because the widow kept asking until he did, then we can count on God responding if we keep asking.
  - c. In addition to these two examples, it is my opinion that praying continuously for something or someone is **one way** of proving the sincerity of what we are asking God to do.
    - (1) I am bringing this up because it is possible to be inspired by the moment or by a particular situation, and press God to do something. Yet in a day or so, we forget about it – and move on to a new situation or need that we are praying about.
    - (2) My point is that it is in continuing to ask, seek, and knock that we verify the sincerity of our request or effort.
- C. However, repeated effort is not the only condition. There are more.
1. The context found in **vs 9-11** reveal another significant condition. Jesus describes this condition in terms of the parent/child relationship where we are the child and God is the parent (*Father*).
    - a. In a healthy home, when the child asks for something needful, the parent responds accordingly. Yet we know from experience that a child will ask for almost anything – be it needful or not, healthy or unhealthy, good or not good for the child.
    - b. Yet in spite of the child’s persistence in asking, it is the parent who decides if the request will be granted. And assuming the parent is a good parent, he decides how to respond based on what is in the best interest, or brings about what is good for the child.
    - c. In other words, the good parent will give good things to his child, because the good parent does not want to harm his child by giving the child something bad – even though the child wants it and is desperately pressing the parent to give it.

- (1) It is the same with God and us. We can ask. In fact, we can ask for anything – though the more godly you become the more God-honoring and spiritually healthy your requests will be.
  - (2) Yet regardless of what we ask or seek, God – who is our loving Father – is the one who decides if what we want is good for us, or will harm us – and then responds accordingly.
2. A second condition is found in **James 4:2b-3**, “You do not have because you do not ask. [3] You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.”
  - a. This scripture presents two conditions: (1) if we want or need something, we are to go to God and ask, (2) but, we must ask with the kind of motives that seek God’s good and the good of those effected by what it is we want. If our motive is selfish, or spiritually harmful, or if getting what we want will harm those around us in some way, God will not give it. (*Exception: Psalm 106:15*)
3. The third condition is found in **John 15:7-8**, “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. [8] My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.”
  - a. This condition requires us to live according to the word of God – or at least according to what you know from the word of God. Why? Because, when you live according to what you know, than your asking, seeking, and knocking will remain within the boundaries of what you know.
  - b. In other words, if you are sincere about living according to God’s word, you will ask and pursue those things that enable you to please God more fully, build His kingdom, and love those around us as you ought.
4. The fourth condition comes from **1 John 5:14-15**, “This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. [15] And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.”
  - a. The condition stated here requires asking, seeking, and knocking according to (*or within the boundaries*) of God’s will.
  - b. The word of God reveals much about God’s will, even for dealing with current events or upcoming situations. If you cannot discern God’s will from His word, ask God to reveal His will, or ask a more mature Christian what they believe God’s will is in your situation. Or, do what Jesus did in the Garden on the night He was taken

to be crucified. Tell God what you want, but include an affirmation that you will submit to His will, regardless.

5. The last scripture I want to consider comes from **Psalm 37:4**, “Delight yourself in the LORD; and He will give you the desires of your heart.”
    - a. As with the scriptures we’ve just looked at, **Psalm 37:4** offers us the wonderful gift of getting what our heart desires. And yet it too comes with a condition – the condition of delighting in God.
    - b. To delight in the Lord is to believe He is delightful, just as you believe your favorite desert is delicious. When you delight in God, you go to Him and interact with Him and rest in Him and make Him your first and foremost source of joy, pleasure, well-being, love, security, protection, comfort, strength, approval, acceptance, and provision. Why? Because who He is and what He does is more delightful to you than anything else this world offers.
    - c. In other words, you will ask for, and seek, and pursue what ensures your continued enjoyment of Him – because you delight in Him.
  6. The reason for bringing up these conditions is because God promises to answer our prayers, to help us to obtain what we seek, and to open the doors that we are knocking on **IF** we fulfill His required conditions, **because** that is His way of protecting us, and protecting those around us, and protecting the health of the church from our own foolish and selfish desires, inclinations, and pursuits.
- D. [9] Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? [10] Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? [11] If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven **give what is good** to those who ask Him!
1. God will give us what is good. But what is good? I admit, that is not always clear. But when we get honest with ourselves, most of us, in most cases, know what is good and what is bad. Our problem is not a lack of knowing, but a lack of living up to what we know.
  2. It is probable you don’t have everything you want. But that is an insignificant problem compared to wanting what you ought not to want, or seeking what you ought not to seek, or knocking on doors that you shouldn’t enter.
  3. Therefore, if our loving Father will cheerfully give us what is good, but will not give us or get involved in helping us obtain what is bad, then the wisest thing we can do is to want what He gives, because then we will get what we want.

- E. The three most important questions I can ask you today are, “What do you want?” “What are you seeking?” “Where are you trying to go?”
1. Since this teaching from Jesus is part of His Sermon on the Mount, I want to remind you that in the Beatitudes, He says that the most blessed, the happiest life we can have in this world comes from humility, a broken heart over our sin, meekness, a driving hunger and thirst for godliness, mercy toward others, a pure heart, being a peacemaker between fighting parties, and enduring persecution for the sake of promoting and protecting righteousness in our world.
  2. What do you want? If it is the abundant life that comes from Jesus and living according to what He says, then you will have to keep on asking, and continue seeking, and persevere in knocking in area after area until you have gained enough humility, brokenness over your sin, and the rest of the character qualities in the Beatitudes to experience the abundant, blessed, happy life that comes only through Jesus and godly living.
  3. I have asked God for many things over the years, and pursued a number of things, and knocked on a variety of doors. In some, God responded as I desired. In some, I got something other than what I desired, but it was either as good or better than what I desired. And in some, I got nothing and still have nothing.
  4. But there is one thing I confidently know. My heavenly Father has consistently given what I’ve asked for, and enabled me to gain what I sought, and opened the doors I’ve knocked on – when they are for my good, and the good of those nearest and dearest, and your good, and the good of those outside our church who ask for help.

### III. Conclusion

- A. Three stories: (1) Motivated by love, (2) Communication, (3) Understanding human behavior/practical application of God’s word.
- B. **Matthew 7:7-8**, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. [8] For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.”