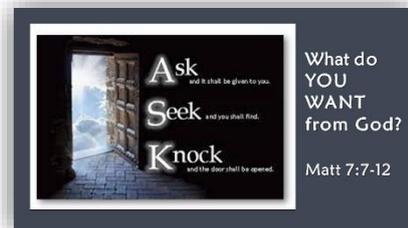


Sermon on the Mount: Ask, Seek, Knock (Matt 7:7-12)

JESUS on Prayer, God's Nature, and the Golden Rule



- 1. Jesus' view on prayer is absolutely positive.** No one had a more positive view of prayer than Jesus. *'For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds and to him who knocks it will be opened.'* Is this a blank cheque to all who dare to ask, seek, knock? What can be more positive than this? There is no hint of negativity about prayer in Jesus' view.
If you believe that God doesn't answer prayer, it is a waste of time to pray. But if you believe that God answers prayer, it is a waste of time not to pray.
- 2. Why then do many Christians struggle in developing a deep prayer life?** It is due to a faulty view of God. *The problem is the unbelieving heart of the believer. 'O, you of little faith,'* Jesus said many times. At the end of the day, what you really believe about God's goodness towards you shapes your prayer life.
- 3. Why was Jesus' view on prayer so absolutely positive?** Because Jesus knew His Father was ABSOLUTELY GOOD. On the other hand, this is Jesus' summation on human beings - 'If you then, being evil...' It is not a flattering view of human nature. We are fundamentally self-centred. Yet, being evil, we still know to give good gifts to our children, *'how much more...your heavenly Father...'* Bread & stone in the Middle East can easily be mistaken, so also eggs and scorpions (Luke 11:12). Fish and snake is the same analogy. God does NOT enjoy His children getting hurt. *'How much more!'* Jesus is emphatic that we can absolutely trust in God's goodness for us His children.
- 4. God's Overarching Principle in Answering Our Prayers:** *'Is it truly good for us? Or will it actually harm us?'* God filters our prayer so that the time, manner, and process of answering our prayer is something that will be good for us eternally. God will not misunderstand our prayer, wrongly answer our prayer, or untimely answer our prayer. God's overarching principle in answering our prayer is – it is for our good.
This is the challenge in praying. When the answer to your prayers seems delayed, do you still trust God is good? This is a major warfare for the praying saints! *'Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good. Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!'* (Ps 34:8) David sang this psalm when he fled for his life from Saul into the enemy territory of the Philistines, whose general Goliath he killed. There he pretended insanity in the enemy king's courts so Abimelech drove him away. Every saint has to break through this 'betrayal barrier' if he is going to walk intimately with the Lord.
- 5. Another barrier we must overcome on our part:** persevering faith.
 - a) Present Imperative, i.e. command: *'Ask, seek, knock'* – If you want a deeper relationship with God, you need to start asking. *'Man cannot keep anything permanently unless he receives from God.'*
 - b) Present Active Participle: *'Go on asking, go on seeking, go on knocking.'*
Do you have a dominating prayer in your life? What do you really want from God? God appeared to Solomon, *'Ask! What shall I give you?'* (2 Chr 1:7) Do you know what you want from God? Or will you ask for a peanut? This is not a quick shopping list prayer. What does your heart ache for?
- 6. Here is what the Father wanted His Son to ask of Him as a man:** *'Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession.'* (Ps 2:8). Jesus asked on the night He would be handed over to be crucified, *'Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me. For You have loved Me before the foundation of the world...that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.'* (John 17:24-26) This one prayer which had never been prayed before, lifted the lowly human race into the glory of the fellowship of the Triune God.
- 7. If you have a prayer birthed in your heart by the Holy Spirit, do not give up!** Go on praying, go on seeking, and go on knocking, because that prayer will not be denied. It will be answered by your heavenly Father. The scope of the answered prayer is defined by Jesus:
 - a) *'Good gifts'* – anything good (Matt 7:11)

b) *'The Holy Spirit' - God Himself. 'If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!' (Luke 11:13).*

8. **The Golden Rule:** 'Therefore' – this is the conclusion to all Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. It is the guiding rule and the limiting factor to our searching, praying, seeking, and knocking. Love is the golden rule.

This is William Barclay's Compilation states:

- + Rabbi Hillel – *'What is hateful to thee do not do to anyone else.'*
- + Confucious - *'Do not to others what is hateful to thyself.'* Stoics, *'Do not do to others what you do not wish to happen to yourself.'*
- + Buddhist philosophy - *'Don't do what you do not wish to be done to you.'*
- + Jesus Christ - *'Do to others what you want others to do to you.'*

Let love be the guiding principle of your prayer, seeking, knocking, and finding. If you have found love, and learned to love in all your praying, seeking, and knocking, you would have lived a life truly worthwhile before God. 'Well done.'