

# ASK, SEEK, KNOCK

## Matthew 7:7-11

### I. INTRODUCTION

### II. THE TEXT

**KJV**—7 Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. 8 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. 9 Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? 10 Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? 11 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

**NASB**—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. 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!

**NIV**—7 Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8 For 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? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 11 If 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!

**ESV**—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 the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. 9 Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? 11 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

**The Message**—Don't bargain with God. Be direct. Ask for what you need. This isn't a cat-and-mouse, hide-and-seek game we're in. If your child asks for bread, do you trick him with sawdust? If he asks for fish, do you scare him with a live snake on his plate? As bad as you are, you wouldn't think of such a thing. You're at least decent to your own children. So don't you think the God who conceived you in love will be even better?

### III. BACKGROUND

#### A. PAGAN WORSHIP

1. Principle of reciprocity—*quid pro quo*
  - People bargained with the gods
  - Like a divine-human contract
  - Tried to manipulate gods to do their bidding
2. Assumptions

- gods were not supernatural—truly transcendent but anthropomorphic
- gods needed humans—to meet their needs
- gods were self-centered—uncaring about humanity
- gods were capricious—unpredictable

### 3. Attitude

- People came to temples/worship with fear of gods
- People were uncertain about their ‘fortune’ or ‘fate’

### 4. To please gods

- They used professional priests—who knew the hidden mysteries of the gods
- Vain repetitions—‘babbling’—to get gods’ attention
- Precise liturgies—magical incantations—legalistic codes used to unlock those mysteries

## **B. CHRISTIAN WORSHIP**

### 1. Personal relationship with Creator God the Father

- Covenant of mutual love
- Based on knowledge that God loves His people
- Worship done to please God for Who He is—not what He will do

### 2. Assumptions

- God is truly transcendent—supernatural
- God is completely self-existent—and totally independent
- God does not need humans—or what they give/offer
- God is not self-centered—but giving and loving
- God initiates revelation—because He desires relationship
- God is transparent—what He says—is what we see—is what we get
- God is reliable—dependable and not capricious—He keeps His word

### 3. Attitude

- Worshipers come in awe—of His transcendence and holiness
- They come with faith—that He has given them
- They come with confidence—boldly to His throne of grace
- Based on His promises—His reliability

### 4. To please God the Father

- Bring *ourselves* as offerings to Him
- Transparency—honestly and directly communicating our needs
- Simplicity—not complicated—but heartfelt, earnest expressions
- Humility—realizing our total dependence on Him

## **IV. CONTEXT**

## A. PARALLEL PASSAGE

**Lk 11:9-13**—**9** *So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 10 For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened. 11 Now, suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? 12 Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he? 13 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?"*

1. Luke puts this passage closer to the Lord's Prayer—**vv 2-4**
  - Only six verses after—"Give us each day our daily bread"
  - Immediately after—parable of the Persistent Friend—**vv 5-8**
2. Luke substitutes "egg and scorpion"—for "bread and stone"
3. Luke inverts order—puts "fish and snake" first—before "egg and scorpion"
4. Luke substitutes "Holy Spirit"—v13—for Matthew's "good gifts"

## B. SERMON ON MOUNT

1. Lord's Prayer—tells us to "ask"—"Give us this day our daily bread"—**6:11**
2. The Father already knows our needs
  - a. Don't be like babbling pagans—He already knows what you need—**6:7-8**
  - b. The Gentiles run after all these things—but your heavenly Father know you need them—**6:32**
3. The Anxiety Theme—Do Not Be Anxious
  - a. It began in **6:25**—and continues through the next verse—**7:12**
  - b. **Three phases** of theme
    1. Do not be anxious for 'things' you need—**6:25-34**
      - The Father knows what you need—and can provide it
      - Seek first His kingdom—and He will provide all your needs
    2. Do not be anxious about *other* persons' business—**7:1-6**
      - a. This can result in becoming—judgmental—**7:1-5**
        - o Always trying to fix other people's relationship with God—legalism
        - o To the point of blindness concerning our own relationship with God

- b. This can result in becoming—compulsive and naïve—**7:6**
  - o Don't think you have to save the whole world—indiscriminately
  - o Use discernment about sharing holy things with others
- 3. In all needs/anxieties—be simple and straightforward with God—**7:7-11**

## V. EXPLANATION OF TEXT

### A. THE BASIC MESSAGE

1. God is our Father—who love and cares for us
2. He knows our needs—and wants to supply them
3. He wants us to
  - Depend on Him—not trying to be self-reliant
  - Be humble before Him—admitting our reliance
  - Be straightforward with Him—honest and transparent
4. In the process
  - We become closer to Him—know Him better—and learn to trust Him more
  - We come to know our needs—and distinguish them from simple desires
  - We come to know what please Him—and builds His kingdom
5. We also learn—how to be better earthly parents

### B. ASK—SEEK—KNOCK—**vv 7-8**

1. VERSE 7
  - a. Three imperatives and three promises
    1. We are **commanded** to ask—imperatives—not suggestions
    2. Obedience to each command has its own reward
  - b. **COMMAND = ASK = αἰτέω** = call for, beg, require, desire
    1. **PROMISE = δίδωμι** = it will be delivered, given, furnished, supplied
      - a. Future **passive** indicative
      - b. This means:

- o We do not “take” what we need—we do not seize it
  - o It is “delivered” or “given” to us—a gift from God
  - c. This reminds us—*every good* thing we receive is a **gift** from God!
2. ASKING—clearly relates to the Lord’s PRAYER
    - o So asking is basically praying—“ask the Father for your daily needs”
    - o But prayer is also a daily lifestyle—asking as we go along the way
  3. So these three actions are not independent—but interdependent
    - o “asking” should always attend “seeking” and “knocking”
  4. Commentary by **James**
    - a. Explains why we do *not* have what we need
    - b. Explains—Jesus did not mean we can get just anything we want
    - c. Underscores the importance of asking—but with the right motive
 

**Jas 4:2b-3**—*You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.*
    - d. Context of Sermon on Mount explains this clearly
      - o Our asking must be in line with seeking God’s kingdom and His righteousness
- c. COMMAND: SEEK = **ζητεω** = look for, to find; seek by meditating; require/demand
1. Deals with seeking direction from God
    - Not just in obtaining ‘things’ necessary for life
    - But also seeking guidance—direction—in the pathways/courses of
  2. PROMISE = **ευρισκω** = come/hit upon, find/discover, acquire/procure
    - a. Related to “eureka!”
    - b. Future **active** indicative
      - o This is not delivered to us—passively
      - o God shows the way—but we must actively seek to know it

- o We must work—endeavor—show initiative—and be open to discovery!
- o For example:
  1. The Scriptures have been ‘delivered’ to us—given to us
  2. But we must ‘search’ them to discover God’s truth
- c. Seeking relates to two previous passages
  - o Pagans seek all these things—6:32
  - o But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness—6:33
- d. So we will find what is real/true—when we are seeking Gods’ kingdom/righteousness
- d. COMMAND: KNOCK = κρουω = knock at the door

1. Deals with access and opportunity

a. Access—to God is always open

- o But we should approach reverentially—asking permission to be heard
- o Not presumptuously—not arrogantly

b. Opportunity

1. Not every pathway/course leads to an open door
2. If we seek the right path—following God’s leading—it will lead to the right door

2. PROMISE = ανοιγω = will be opened

a. Future **passive** indicative

- o We should not try to break down the doors
- o We should wait and let God open them

b. Again—we must not be presumptuous or arrogant

c. Open doors—are gifts from God—not products of our ingenuity or manipulation

2. VERSE 8

a. Restatement of conditions and promises

b. Three indicative actions—and three results (first two active, last one passive)

- c. The results are stated in the **indicative**—to show these are **timeless truths**
  - 1. Whoever asks—receives
    - a. Change in verb—from “it will be delivered”—to “he receives”
    - b. Essentially the same meaning
      - 1. Conveys idea of passive reception
      - 2. Importantly it does not say “he takes”
  - 2. He who seeks—finds
  - 3. He who knocks—to him it opened
- d. **Universal** application
  - 1. The first “whoever” (asks) relates to the other two actions
    - He (whoever) seeks
    - He (whoever) knocks
  - 2. This applies to anyone genuinely seeking God’s will
    - a. Understood in the context of the Fatherhood of God—He answers His children
    - b. But anyone can approach the Father—before being a Christian—and He will answer

### 3. NOTE—INTERACTION OF PRAYER AND ACTION

- We begin with prayer—‘ask’
- But we must also leave the prayer closet—go ‘seek’ and ‘knock’
- Prayers must have feet and hands—sight—and active engagement
- Seeking and knocking—must be attended with prayer along the way

## C. TWO ILLUSTRATIONS/METAPHORS—vv 9-10

### 1. TWO EXAMPLES OF EARTHLY FATHERS’ CARE

- a. Earthly fathers take care of their children
  - 1. “Who of you”—v 10—makes this relevant to Jesus’ hearers
  - 2. Like His usage in 6:27—“Who of you, by worrying can add a single hour to his life?”
- b. They know their children’s needs and want to give them proper nourishment

c. Jesus uses hyperboles to exaggerate His point

1. Bread—not stone [Luke = egg not scorpion]

- o Obvious reference to—“Give us this day our daily bread”
- o Also points to bread in feeding of the 5000 (**Mt 14**) and the 4000 (**Mt 15**)
- o Contrast of bread and stone—refers back to first temptation—**Mt 4:3**

2. Fish—not snake

- o Fish also points to feeding of the 5000 and the 4000
- o Snake—like fish—is dead—not dangerous but repugnant as food

## 2. IMPLICATION

- No loving, earthly father would do harm like this to his own child

## D. COMPARISON WITH YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER—v 11

1. Another hyperbole—v 11

- “If you then who are **evil** . . .”

2. Meaning of this hyperbole

- a. No matter how good we are—God is infinitely better
- b. By comparison with God—we are ‘evil’
- c. Even when we do our best—we are imperfect parents—and fall short
- d. We fall short—don’t always know what is best for them
- e. But God always knows—and can always deliver the very best—perfect thing for us

3. Commentary from James—reminds us of the Father’s goodness

**Jas 1:17**—*Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.*

4. Notice Jesus clearly dissociates Himself from sinful humanity

- Uses the second person—v 11—**you**, being evil

5. “Your Father in heaven”—v 11

- Obvious reference to “Our Father in heaven”—in Lord’s Prayer



6. Comparison—in **v 11**
  - “How much more will your Father in heaven”
  - Obvious parallel to the comparisons in **chapter 6**
    - 6:26**—are you not much more valuable than they
    - 6:30**—will He not much more clothe you
7. Finally—the Father models how earthly fathers should behave!