Keep Asking….. Keep Seeking…….Keep Knocking
Message 6 of 6: Lord, Teach Us To Pray Series
Matthew 7:7-11

Today as we bring our “LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY” sermon series to a close, I would like to preach a message I have simply entitled: KEEP ASKING…..KEEP SEEKING…..KEEP KNOCKING.

Please turn with me in your BIBLES to the Gospel of Matthew, chapter seven, and let’s read VERSES 7-11

PRAYER

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INTRODUCTION

One area of the christian life most of us would probably like to improve on is our PRAYER LIFE. In a few weeks I will be fifty five years old……and in all my years I don’t ever recall meeting a Christian who was completely satisfied with his or her prayer life.

My own personal growth in this matter of prayer has been painfully slow at best. As a matter-of-fact, I will have to honestly admit to you that I KNOW a whole lot more about PRAYER than I PRACTICE. Although I’ve made greater strides in my prayer life over the last 8-10 years…….I’m still not Where I want to be and ought to be.
One of the biggest reasons prayer is such a struggle for many of us is because PRAYER GOES AGAINST OUR HUMAN NATURE.

From the time we were born we have been learning the rules of **self-sufficiency** and **self-reliance**.

"If you can’t depend upon yourself, who can you depend on."

"Pull yourself up by your own bootstraps!"

"When the going gets tough, the tough get going."

PRAYER forces us to let go of our self-sufficiency and our reliance upon self.

PRAYER forces us to surrender our independency and enter into a relationship of DEPENDENCE ON GOD.

The scripture we are studying this morning comes toward the end of JESUS’ great *Sermon on The Mount*.

Earlier in *Matthew 6:1-8*, using the example of the hypocritical Pharisees, JESUS taught us some things we should **NOT** do when we pray, such as using prayer as a means to “show off” our spirituality and praying “vain repetitions” like those who worship false gods.
Then in Matthew 6:9-13 Jesus gave us what is known as The Model Prayer or as some call it, The Lord’s Prayer. And if you have been with us on Wednesday nights, you know we are doing an in-depth phrase-by-phrase study of this Model Prayer to gain a better understanding of just what Jesus is teaching us about PRAYER.

When we come to our scripture text here in MATTHEW 7:7-11 Jesus revisits this subject of PRAYER for a third time in His Sermon on The Mount, which in itself ought to tell you and me the important place JESUS desires for PRAYER to have in our lives.

In verses 7 and 8 we find what I like to call, every preacher’s dream a simple, easy-to-understand, three point sermon outline.

Ask
Seek
Knock

But in the original Greek, all three of these verbs are in the ACTIVE TENSE.

Keep Asking
Keep Seeking
Keep Knocking

So using that simple outline, let’s see what valuable truths JESUS is teaching you and me about PRAYER.
I. KEEP ASKING

“Ask and it will be given to you; “   (Matthew 7:7a)

1. The principle of “ASKING” isn’t hard to understand is it?   You and I have been “ASKING” for things since we came into this world.

   *When we were kids we asked for ice cream, we asked for candy, we asked for a new bicycle or a new BB gun, we asked if we could go to our friend’s house, we asked if our friends could spend the night.

   *All through school we asked our TEACHERS questions.

   *In our teenage years we ASKED that special girl or special guy out on a date. When you were a junior or senior you probably ASKED someone to the PROM.

   *And guys, do you remember the day you ASKED your wife to marry you?

   *Chance are over the years you have ASKED your employer for some time off or a vacation or perhaps even a raise.

   You see, we know what it means to ASK. We’ve been ASKING our whole lives.

2. But here’s the million dollar question: “If we have been good at ASKING our whole lives, why do so many of us struggle when it comes to ASKING GOD for something in PRAYER?

   JAMES 4:2 You do NOT have, because you do not ASK GOD.
3. If you’re like me, you’ve always had a problem ASKING for people’s help in times of need. None of us wants to sound like a beggar……..None of us likes to impose upon others to meet our needs. It all goes right back to that "self-reliance" and "self-sufficiency" matter I spoke of earlier.

Likewise, many of us have trouble ASKING GOD to supply a need we lack........or to help us in a time of trouble ............or to give us guidance when we need to make a decision.

4. But yet this is what JESUS is commanding us to do.......ASK! “Ask and it will be given to you.” And don’t just ASK one time...........KEEP ASKING until your Heavenly Father answers your prayer.

What are you “lacking” in your life? If there is Something you lack, there’s a good chance you Have not asked GOD........or......you have not Asked GOD persistently.

- Are you lacking RESOURCES to meet your financial Obligations?

- Are you facing a major decision and you LACK the WISDOM to know how to decide?

- Are you at “wit’s end” about what to do in a situation Involving your son or daughter?

- Are you in a dilemma over what you need to do in caring for an aging parent?

WHATEVER IT IS YOU LACK......whether its financial resources, wisdom, guidance, understanding, direction........the LORD commands you and me to ASK.
God’s will for you and me is that we come to that place in our lives where we learn to depend on Him and trust in Him for everything.

And the way we arrive at that point in our relationship with God is to **KEEP ASKING**

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**II. KEEP SEEKING**

“**ASK and it will be given to you; SEEK and you will find;**

  **(Matthew 7:7a,b)**

1. Do you know the best way to find what you’re looking for is to **KEEP SEEKING**……**KEEP SEARCHING.**

Illustration: Not long ago I lost my good BUCK pocket knife. The day I realized my knife was missing, I remembered I had used it the day before when I was changing the oil on my truck. Realizing I had probably left my knife sitting on the truck frame and that I had driven my truck almost 100 miles since I had changed the oil the day before, I figured I had lost my knife for good.

But I wouldn’t give up without a search. I opened the hood of my truck and carefully searched every nook and cranny of my engine where the knife possibly could have fallen……all to no avail.
Then I searched my jeans pocket. Then I searched my shop. Then I searched under my vanity in the bathroom. Then I searched under our bed. Then I took a flashlight and searched all over my truck engine again. After searching for 2-3 days for that knife I had all but given up.

Then one morning our daughter AMY called and asked if I was missing a pocket knife. I told her YES and proceeded to tell her the whole story. It was then AMY informed me that my grandson, Tanner had found a pocket knife at the end of their driveway. When she described it, I knew it was my BUCK KNIFE.

Remember I told you I had driven nearly 100 miles after changing the oil on my truck. That pocket knife had remained somewhere in my engine compartment for the eight miles from our house to Amy’s house, and evidently when I turned into their driveway it fell out. THE SEARCH WAS OVER!

2. Over the years, I have lost my truck keys…..the lawn mower key……the key to our 4-wheeler…..my billfold ……my Bible College ring…..and a wide-assortment of other material objects. And more times than not I found what I was looking for because I KEPT ON SEARCHING.

3. JESUS is teaching us that SEEKING is a very crucial element in learning to PRAY SUCCESSFULLY.

Often our PRAYERS have to do with seeking GOD’S WILL on a particular matter……or seeking GOD’S GUIDANCE on a certain decision we have to make……or seeking GOD’S WISDOM on how to deal with a certain situation involving our family……or ……something going on at work.

And more often than NOT we will not find what we are SEARCHING for the very first time we PRAY about it. That is why JESUS commands us to KEEP SEEKING!
4. But let me let you in on a little secret regarding this matter of SEEKING.

The secret is NOT to SEEK for SOMETHING, but to SEEK SOMEONE…..and that SOMEONE is GOD.

.........Rather than seeking an ANSWER, seek the One who has the ANSWER.

.........Rather than seeking GUIDANCE on a matter, seek the ONE who can give GUIDANCE.

.........Rather than seeking A GIFT, seek the GIVER.

Matthew 6:33 But seek first his kingdom, and his Righteousness and all these things shall be Added unto you.”

Hebrews 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to Please God, for everyone who comes to him Must believe that He exists and that he Rewards those who earnestly SEEK HIM.

Proverbs 8:17 I love those who love me, and those who Seek me find me.

5. You see, when we SEEK GOD we will find everything else we are looking for.

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Keep Asking…..Keep Seeking……
And thirdly…………
III. KEEP KNOCKING

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.” (Matthew 7: 7, 8)

1. Is there anything more frustrating than a locked door---and not having a key to get in?

   Regardless of whether it’s a locked car door……
   a locked house……or a business that has locked its doors for the day……the inability to get a door open is a great test of one’s patience.

2. This is the image of prayer JESUS is painting for us when He says, “Knock and the door will be opened to you.”

   PRAYER is the key that unlocks doors that otherwise would not be accessible to us.

3. When you and I keep KNOCKING on GOD’S DOOR through PRAYER God will ANSWER in His time and in His way.

   And when GOD OPENS THE DOOR……

       ……He can change a circumstance we can’t change.

       ……He can mend a relationship we can’t mend.

       ……He can provide a need we can’t provide for ourselves.

       ……He can open the door for a NEW job or a NEW career or a NEW ministry or a NEW place of service.
4. But the important thing is that we KEEP KNOCKING on God’s door until He answers.

CONCLUSION

Illustration: Our son-in-law, Reubin, is a licensed plumber by trade. Well several winters ago when the temperatures dipped to single digits several nights in a row, Reubin got a lot of calls to repair pipes that had busted when the frozen lines started to thaw.

About seven or eight of those calls came from one housing development in the town of Belhaven. When Reubin arrived at the housing development he said one rude woman stepped out on her front porch and started hollering at him.

- She wanted to know what took Reubin so long to get there.

- And she insisted that he fix her pipes before working on anybody else’s pipes.

- And she told him she expected him to clean up all the water inside of her house or she wasn’t going to pay him.

Reubin told the woman, “I was going to fix your pipes first, but because you are being so rude and demanding, I’m going to do everybody else’s pipes before I do yours.”
When it comes to ASKING GOD for something in PRAYER, there is a RIGHT WAY and a WRONG WAY to ASK.

(A) First of all, we are to **ASK** in the right **SPIRIT**.

**JAMES 4:3** When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with the wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

When we pray, the SPIRIT in which we pray is more important than the WORDS we say. **JAMES 4:6** says, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

When you pray, don’t pray in a proud, arrogant, demanding spirit as though GOD owes you something. But rather pray in a spirit of humility as a lowly pauper requesting something from a great King.

(B) Secondly, we are to **ASK SCRIPTURALLY**.

To **ASK SCRIPTURALLY** means we pray in JESUS’ NAME.

Listen to what JESUS teaches us in **JOHN 14:13,14**

13 And I will do whatever you ASK in MY NAME, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father.

14 You may ASK me for anything in MY NAME, and I will do it.

Now why is it important to PRAY IN “JESUS’ NAME?”

......Because it is only through JESUS that you and I have access to our heavenly Father.

......It is only through JESUS that you and I can enjoy the privilege of PRAYER.

......And by ASKING in Jesus’ Name, our prayers carry weight with our heavenly Father.
We are to ASK in the right SPIRIT
We are to ASK SCRIPTURALLY.

(C) And thirdly, we are to ASK SPECIFICALLY

MATTHEW 6:7 And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.

illustration: I came across this article printed several years ago in the Colorado Legal Secretaries Association newsletter that demonstrates how a simple message can be distorted by unnecessary words.

The article contained a version of one line from the Model Prayer, worded as if it had been written by a lawyer.

“We respectfully petition, request and entreat that due and adequate provision be made, this day and date first above and inscribed, for the satisfying of the petitioner’s nutritional requirements and for the organizing of such methods of allocation and distribution as may be deemed necessary to assure the reception by and for such quantity of cereal products (herein after called “bread”) as shall in the judgment of the aforesaid petitioners constitute a sufficient amount.”

In other words, “Give us today our daily bread.”

The Gettysburg Address has 297 words. The Declaration of Independence contains only 300 words. Compare that to a legal document put out by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration setting the price of cabbage that was 26,911 words long.

When you pray, don’t hum and haw around…. don’t stammer and stutter….don’t beat around the bush. Simply ASK SPECIFICALLY!!!
As we bring this series to a close, I want to challenge each and everyone of you to rise to a higher level in your prayer life.

If your marriage is worth fighting for.
If your children and grandchildren are worth fighting for.
If your Church is worth fighting for.
If the future of your Country is worth fighting for.
If the cause of Jesus Christ is worth fighting for..........

Then may we dedicate ourselves to FIGHTING ON OUR KNEES!

Lord, Teach Us to Pray!