Today as we resume our series from Jesus’ “Sermon On The Mount” let’s open our Bibles to Matthew chapter seven.

Matthew 7:7-11 (NKJV)

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, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?

10 Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent?

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 good things to those who ask Him!

PRAYER

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INTRODUCTION
Throughout this Sermon On The Mount, Jesus has been calling us to live a life that is uniquely different. It is a life that noticeably distinguishes us and sets us apart from the rest of the world. We have been referring to it as “The Salt Life.”

The question is: “How can we possibly live the kind of life Jesus is calling us to in this Sermon On The Mount? We cannot do it by our own human effort and strength. It requires WISDOM......POWER......and STRENGTH that we can only get from above. And so JESUS invites us to KEEP ASKING......KEEP SEEKING......and KEEP KNOCKING.

Quite often this sermon is preached as a “stand alone” sermon outside the context of The Sermon On The Mount. And as a result, the meaning of Jesus’ words have been twisted.

Many TV evangelist use this passage to tell their viewers that Jesus promises to give us anything and everything we ask for. “Just name it and claim it” they say!

*If you want a new car............JUST ASK FOR IT AND YOU WILL RECEIVE IT!

*If you want a million dollars....JUST ASK FOR IT AND GOD WILL GIVE IT TO YOU!

*If you want a new luxury house......JUST ASK FOR IT AND YOU WILL RECEIVE IT!

NO LIMITATIONS......NO RESTRICTIONS... NO CONDITIONS! “JUST NAME IT AND CLAIM IT!”
ILLUSTRATION

John Stott explains it this way......

“The best way to approach this problem is to remember that the promises of Jesus in the Sermon on The Mount are not unconditional. A moment’s thought will convince us of this.

It is absurd to suppose that the promise, “Ask and it shall be given you” is an absolute pledge with no strings attached; or that “Knock” and it shall be opened to you is like “An open Sesame” to every closed door without exception; and that by the waving of a prayer wand any wish will be granted and every dream will come true. This idea is ridiculous. It would turn prayer into magic, the person who prays into a magician, and GOD into our servant who appears instantly to do our bidding like Aladdin’s genie every time we rub our little “prayer lamp.”” (John Stott, The Sermon On The Mount, page 188,

Well now that we know what these verses DON’T MEAN, let’s dig a little deeper and find out what Jesus DID MEAN.

First of all......

I. Keep ASKING And It Will Be GIVEN To You (vs. 7a, 8a)

7a “Ask, and it will be given to you.”

8a “For everyone who asks receives.”

1. Before we can ever begin to get serious about prayer, we need to develop the proper view of GOD.

Many Christians view GOD as being far away or distant---- Someone who lives way up yonder in heaven, who is unmoved by our cares and concerns. Others tend to view GOD as a cold, detached being who stays angry with
humanity all the time.

2. You see, if our view of GOD is wrong it is doubtful that we will ever get serious about praying to Him.

The view of God that Jesus gives us in verses 9-11 is that of a loving, caring Father who longs to give you and me “good things.”

3. GOD absolutely loves for us to PRAY to HIM! He loves for us to TALK to HIM and ASK Him for the things we need, and ASK HIM for His wisdom and His guidance.

No need is too little or too great. No problem is to small or too large.

God wants us to ASK!

4. Asking is the very first level of prayer. Asking implies DEPENDENCE upon God.

If I have a dead battery on my car and I ask you for a “jump start” that means I am DEPENDENT upon your help. It means that I am powerless by myself.

5. That is the kind of relationship that GOD wants to have with you and me. He wants us to be dependent in Him upon Him for everything. He wants us to trust for everything.
ILLUSTRATION

If you have ever gone to a country like Africa or India or some of the Island nations you will understand what “ASKING” means.

In poor countries beggars will unashamedly stand by the road or along the street with their hands held out, ASKING for money. And they are so bold in ASKING they will not leave you alone until you respond to their request. We would be BOLD too if we were in their position.

6. Jesus is teaching us that in prayer we should come to our Heavenly Father with the same tenacious persistence as a lowly beggar, as though we are totally dependent upon GOD for our very existence, because in truth, we are!

7. Let’s consider another analogy. Think of the persistence of your children when it comes to asking for something.

“Mom, can I go to the ball game Friday night? Please let me go! All my friends are going to be there! Can I go, can I please?

Thirty minutes go by: “Mom, can I go to the ball game Friday night? Can I please......pretty please on top?

After they ask you over and over and over again, you’ll do one of two things: You’ll either grant their
request or you will say a final, firm “no!”

8. Our heavenly Father never grows weary of our asking. In fact He invites us to “ask and keep asking.” Did you ever wonder why?

It's because God is trying to train us to be persistent in our FAITH. This is why God rarely gives us what we ask for after just one time.

For our own good, GOD compels us to ask and ask again.

9. PRAYER is work. It requires effort! It requires time! It requires discipline! And God wants you and me to understand that the greatest blessings come at the end of long, hard persistent prayer!

10. What if I’m asking for something that is outside of God’s will? Will He still give it to me? Jesus answers that for us in verses 9-11.

9 Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?

10 Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent?

11 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your
in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!

11. Ruth Bell Graham, the late wife of Billy Graham, once said, “If God had answered every prayer of mine, I would have married the wrong man seven times.”

   Like a loving Father, God will never give us something that is going to harm us. But if what we are asking for is within His divine will, God will never withhold any “good gift” from us.

12. I don’t know what you are praying for right now, but whatever it is OUR HEAVENLY FATHER wants you to continue to ASK and ASK and ASK until you receive.

II. **Keep SEEKING And You WILL FIND** (7b, 8b)

7b Seek, and you will find.

8b And he who seeks finds.

1. Seeking is the second level of prayer. And right here is where many of us fall short in our prayer life.

2. Prayer is more than just simply verbalizing our requests to God. Prayer is a process; and each part of the process draws us closer and closer to God.

3. Many of us are under the impression that God just wants us to pray and sit still and do nothing; but those times are the exception. The general rule
for prayer is that WE ASK.....WE SEEK.....and WE KNOCK.

4. Let me illustrate:

(1) Let’s say you pray, “Dear Heavenly Father, please help me find a job.” Well bringing this matter before God is a great place to start. But after you “ASK” you must also “SEEK.” In other words you start moving in the direction of your prayer. You talk to friends and see if they know of anyone hiring. You look in the WANT-ADS of the newspaper to see if anybody is hiring. You go to the local Employment Office and see what’s available.

You see, prayer is NOT passive, it is active. We ASK then we SEEK.

(2) Or let’s say you pray, “Dear Lord, help me to know you better.” Once again, that is a great place to start! But that doesn’t mean you just sit around twiddling your thumbs until God decides to reveal more of Himself to you.

You start moving in the direction of your prayer. You SEEK God’s word to get to know Him better. You SEEK out Godly people who can share their personal experiences with you. You SEEK out some good Christian books about the character and nature of God.
Or let's say you are praying for a sick loved one. And you pray, “Dear Lord, please heal my loved one.” That's a wonderful place to start! But then you must move in the direction of your prayer.

You SEEK out family or friends who have had a similar illness and find out the name or names of some reputable doctors or specialist whom they might recommend. And then you SEEK out that doctor or specialist by making an appointment or getting a referral from your regular physician.

You see, GOD wants us to be actively involved in the prayer process. He wants us to make an investment of time and energy, as He makes an investment of His wisdom and guidance.

**Keep ASKING and it will be GIVEN to you!**

**Keep SEEKING and you will FIND!**

And thirdly....

### III. Keep KNOCKING And It Will Be OPENED To You (7c, 8c)

v.7c  KNOCK and it will be opened to you.

v.8c  And to him who KNOCKS it will be opened.

1. Knocking is the third and deepest level of prayer.

**ILLUSTRATION**

Many years ago someone in the Church where I was
preaching asked me to go by and see this couple who had been some marital problems. 

I took one of my buddies in the Church who knew the people and went to their house. I got out of his truck and the front door and started KNOCKING. No one answered. So I KNOCKED again, this time longer and louder. And still no one answered. 

Pretty soon my buddy started laying on his horn. I turned around and hollered, “What are you doing?” He hollered back, “They’re in there, I just saw one of them look out the window.”

2. When you knock on a door, you are at the mercy of the person on the other side of the door to open the door and let you in. You are dependent upon their “will” to open the door.

3. To “knock” on the door in prayer means we desire to come into the very presence of God Himself. We desire more than just what we are asking Him for, we desire to fellowship with Him personally.

4. This is the ultimate goal of prayer; to not only receive the GIFT we ask for, but to get to know
the GIVER.

CONCLUSION

It has been said, “If you want to see where you really are in your relationship with the LORD, look at your prayer life.”

One of the greatest tragedies of our day is that many people who profess to be Christians have little or no inclination at all to pray. To many, PRAYER is something you do when you’re in trouble or something you do when there’s nothing else you can do.

But what we fail to see is that PRAYER IS MORE THAN UTTERING A BUNCH OF SPIRITUAL SOUNDING WORDS......PRAYER IS THE PATHWAY TO AN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR HEAVENLY FATHER.

If there were one thing ALL of us could do to improve our lives it would be to make a concentrated effort to GROW IN OUR PRAYER LIFE! How do we do that? PRACTICE......PRACTICE......PRACTICE! Do an in-depth study of the PRAYERS OF THE BIBLE. Read some good books on prayer!

ASK and it will be GIVEN to you! SEEK and you will FIND! KNOCK and it will be opened to you. For everyone who ASKS receives; and he who SEEKS finds, and to him who knocks, it will be OPENED!