



DESERT VIEW BIBLE CHURCH

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT • THE PRACTICE OF PRAYER •

MATTHEW 7:7-11 • 11/6/2022

MAIN POINT

We pray consistently because we have a Father who knows what we need.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What is the most outlandish thing you have asked for as a birthday or Christmas gift? Did you get it?

What is the most outlandish thing you have asked God for? How did He answer?

When you pray, do you ever have difficulty determining between what you want and what you need?

Many times we ask for things because we want them or we want to see if we will get them. In this study, we will be reminded that beyond needs and requests, prayer is the primary way we function in relationship with God, and He wants us to continually approach Him with our requests. He delights to give us what we need.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

READ MATTHEW 7:7-8.

How are asking, seeking, and knocking similar? How are they different?

What did Jesus say the results of these actions would be? Share an experience when you have found this to be true.

Do you think there's a catch to this promise? If so, what?

Asking, seeking, and knocking are activities that should be repeated, indicating constant or persistent prayer. The command to keep asking is tied to the promise of “good things” to those who ask in verse 11. God has given us many amazing promises in His Word, but the promise of this passage seems too good to be true: If we persistently pursue God, He will not give up on us, and He’ll make us into kingdom people. When we’re in the mind-set of the kingdom, the things we ask for are the things God wants us to have—things that bring Him glory—like faith, wisdom, love, grace, strength, and so forth. Our prayers will focus less on the stuff we need and more on the relationship we need with Him.

When have you asked God for something, then later realized it was good you didn't get it?

What does the result of that experience teach you about how to pray? What does it teach you about the nature of God?

READ MATTHEW 7:9-11.

Based on these verses, why can we have confidence in God's answers to our prayers?

Do you give your kids everything they ask for? Why or why not? How does this ideal impact your view of God?

Verses 9-10 illustrate the teaching from verses 7-8 with two examples of a father providing for his son. When we go to God in prayer, He always treats us with the same concern a good father has for his children. If we have a need, He will take care of it. Just like a father would never give his son a poisonous snake, neither will God give us anything that misaligns with His purpose and His good, whether we ask for it or not. God is our Father, and He is a good Father. He delights to give us what we need. The power of prayer doesn't depend on the goodness of the prayer, but on the goodness of God.

What attributes of God as Father are most important to you and why?

Why is it sometimes hard to acknowledge our need for God in the role of Father?

READ MATTHEW 7:13-14.

What teaching methods did Jesus use in this passage?

How does Jesus' teaching about the gates apply to Christian discipleship?

George Guthrie explains that in these verses Jesus used a metaphor to point out the following spiritual truth: only the choice to follow Jesus' more narrow approach to life leads to life in the kingdom of God. In this passage, as well as in all of Jesus' teachings, our Lord's primary goal was to call people to Himself and to shape disciples of the kingdom of God. In the same way Jesus submitted to the will of His Father, Jesus demands His disciples' obedience and submission. The way of the world is broad and easier to follow, but as Jesus said, it leads to destruction. The narrow way of Jesus, on the other hand, is the only way to follow the King every moment of every day, and it is ultimately the only way to enter the kingdom.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Our view of God determines how we pray. Human fathers are not always the loving and wise providers, teachers, and examples their children need; but most of them want to be and try to be. God is the ideal Father—all-loving, all-knowing, all-wise, all-powerful, and always present with us. At the same time, He is in heaven, which tells us He is greater than we can comprehend; so we approach Him as our Father with due reverence.

What are good gifts that God gives?

Read Luke 11:13, from the parallel account of Jesus' teaching. What additional insight does this verse give us into the good gifts from God?

Just as children should expect good gifts from their earthly parents in response to requests, we can pray expectantly, knowing our Heavenly Father will give us His best. In the parallel text (Luke 11:13), Jesus promised the Father will “give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him.” God gives His children His own indwelling presence. With the

Spirit's help, we can fulfill the high standards Jesus set in verses 1–6. His presence and power assure us in our prayers.

PRAYER

Close in prayer, using the prayer in Matthew 6 as a model. Pray thanking God that He has made a way for you to call Him Father in Jesus Christ. Pray specifically for your spheres of influence (your home, job, friendships, etc.)—that God would be acknowledged as holy and glorified. Pray for the kingdom of God to expand throughout your community and the rest of the world. Pray for friends and neighbors who do not yet hallow the name of God in Jesus Christ. Pray for the needs in your own life and the lives around you. Confess your sin to God and pray for those around you to do the same. Pray for the upcoming week—that you would recognize and defeat temptation.

COMMENTARY

MATTHEW 7:7-14

7:7–8. The principle of persistent reliance on the Father as loving provider certainly applies to all these good things. But Jesus probably had the disciples' temporal needs in mind. This is the simplest, most obvious meaning, and it would further underscore Jesus' teaching against anxiety over daily needs (6:25–34). This is Jesus' third of four "final exhortations" (7:1–12), addressing possible misconceptions people might take away from the sermon.

Verses 7 and 8 have six symmetrically arranged verbs paired first in a triplet of commands (7:7) and then in a triplet of affirmations (7:8). There is no need to try to distinguish different kinds of activity between ask, seek, and knock. Jesus was

probably using the three verbs to refer to the same activity of petitioning the Father. His use of three different verbs added emphasis to his message. This three-pronged approach, together with the fact that all three verbs are in the present tense, conveys a clear picture of persistence in prayer.

The other three verbs in 7:7 (“will be given,” “will find,” and “will be opened”) are in the future tense, while in 7:8 “receives” and “finds” are in the present tense, and “will be opened” is in the future.

With these tenses in mind, we could translate 7:7-8 as, “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. For everyone who keeps on asking will continually receive, and he who keeps on seeking will continually find, and to him who keeps on knocking it will be opened.”

Some other passages on prayer (e.g., Matt. 21:22; Mark 11:24; John 14:13-14; 15:7), emphasize the manner in which the human activity is to be conducted. Here the emphasis is on the generosity and faithfulness of the Father. There is no condition placed on the promises (as “if you believe” in 21:22). James 4:2-3 gives some reasons why prayer sometimes does not “work.” Other passages that teach persistence in prayer are Luke 11:5-8; 18:1-8.

7:9-10. Verses 9 and 10 are rhetorical questions, implying that no parent would pull such tricks on their sincere children. A stone can resemble a loaf of “bread” (4:3), and some “snakes” can resemble “fish.”

7:11. Jesus brought His argument of verses 9-11 to a point. Because even the most evil parents provide the basic necessities for their children, how much more can we trust the Father in heaven, who is free from sin. Jesus’ description of humans as “you . . . who are evil” disproves the modern concept that people are basically good. Although Jesus acknowledged that humans may perform gracious acts like providing for their children, He insisted that they do so contrary to their sinful nature. God’s gracious acts, on the other hand, express our Heavenly Father’s perfect nature. (Note the assumption here of universal sinfulness; see Rom. 3:23.)

MATTHEW 7:13-14

7:13-14 The narrow gate symbolizes the exclusive nature of Christ’s kingdom. Entrance requires the disciple to do the will of the Father in heaven (v. 21). The gate

that is wide indicates that hell grants unrestricted entrance and that many will enter through its gates. The difficult (lit “narrow”) ...road may symbolize the life of hardship and persecution that the disciple must face. However, since Jewish literature often used the symbol of the road to represent a moral path (Jdg 2:22; Isa 30:21; Jer 6:16; 2Jn 6) and because the law was portrayed as a narrow road from which a person was not to deviate (Dt 5:32; 17:20; 28:14; Jos 1:7; 2Ki 22:2), the narrow road probably represents Jesus’ morally restrictive teaching. The wide road permits travelers to meander and pursue worldly desires, but the narrow path requires travelers to stick to God’s will (Mt 7:21).