

ASK, SEEK, KNOCK

Saturday, February 7
Reading: Matthew 6:19 – 7:29

Matthew 7:7 "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."

The last half of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount still describes how His followers are to be different from the hypocritical religious leaders. Jesus' followers are not to seek treasure and praise here on earth but store up treasure in heaven (6:19-24). Worry should not control our lives but rather trust in God and His goodness should be our way of life. If we seek God's kingdom and God's righteousness, God will take care of us (6:25-34). Believers are not to be judgmental but deal with our own sin before we can help others deal with the problems in their lives (7:1-6).

Jesus closes with warnings to enter the narrow gate that leads to life instead of the broad gate the world offers that leads to destruction (7:13-14). There will be many wolves in sheep's clothing that will try to lead us off the narrow road. Some will even appear to be true followers, but it is only an outward appearance with no true belief and surrender to Christ in their hearts (7:15-23). He ends with a parable about a wise and foolish builder, instructing us to build our lives on the solid foundation of Christ and His Word (7:24-29).

In the middle of this final section of teaching is another lesson on prayer (7:7-12). We encountered this teaching in the Luke 11 account of the Lord's Prayer as well (see Tuesday's devotions). Why is this teaching so connected to the Lord's Prayer?

The importance of persistence in prayer is stressed in both Matthew 7 and Luke 11. Literally, Matthew 7:7 could read "Keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking." As we mentioned earlier, persistence in prayer does not change God, but it changes us! It grows our faith and dependence on the Lord. And it aligns our heart to God's heart.

We cannot take these verses as a blanket promise that believers can get whatever they pray for. Jesus has already laid down some guidelines in the Lord's Prayer that we will spend the next few weeks examining in detail. Following the principles Jesus has given us will tune our hearts to the heart of God.

The parable of the father and son reminds us that God delights to give good things to His children. Matthew 7:12 records what has become known as "The Golden Rule." Almost every religion has a form of this rule. The Jewish rabbi Hillel wrote: "What is hateful to you do not to someone else." Confucius said: "What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others." All these and other examples are stated in the negative and make selfishness the standard. YOU don't treat others bad because YOU don't want to be treated bad. But Jesus states it in the positive. We "do to others", not out of selfish desire but out of love. It really doesn't even matter if they respond to our actions, we continue to do what is right – to treat others the way we would like to be treated - the way that Jesus treats us!

The only way we can do all these things is by learning and practicing the principles that we will learn from the Lord's Prayer. Buckle up as we begin this great adventure