

Ask, Seek, Knock

Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC

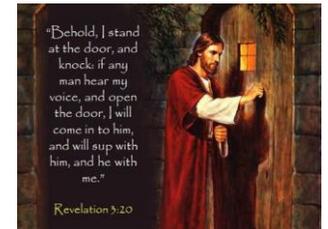
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August 22, 2021

Text: Matthew 7:7-11

Purpose: Jesus has given us the way in which the teachings from the Sermon on the Mount can become a reality in our daily life. In our own strength we will fail. But if we *ask, seek, and knock*, we can become molded to the likeness of Jesus Christ. When we ask, He answers. When we seek, we find. When we knock, He opens the door unto us and welcomes us in. Yielded and conformed to His likeness enables His will to become our will. When our will is His will, His will, will be done!

In the Book of Revelation, Jesus gives a word to the church at Laodicea a word of invitation. *“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.”* On the screen you can see a picture of Jesus standing outside the home gently knocking on the door of a home.



It depicts our Savior is willing to patiently wait to gain entrance into the home of one of his subjects. He does not bash down the door. He does not force his way into the home. He knocks and waits.

Throughout the centuries Jesus Christ has been knocking on the door of the hearts of mankind and many have answered and many have refused entrance. Many have received the blessings of dining with the Lord of all creation and enjoyed the fellowship with God. Others have hardened their hearts to the point they no longer hear God knocking, patiently waiting for them to respond.

I find it interesting that this is the same image that is utilized in Matthew for us to come to the Lord's house, asking, seeking, and knocking in order to receive a special blessing of God. What exactly is Jesus talking about in this passage when He asks us to "knock"?

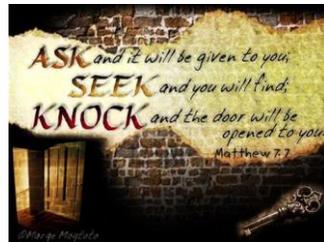
All three of these imperative's – Ask – Seek – Knock – intersect at the conclusion of Jesus' extended teaching known as the Sermon on the Mount.¹

To Ask – implies that the person we are petitioning can answer our prayer.

To Seek – implies personal effort is needed to move our prayer from the quiet solitude of our prayer closet to the places we seek to make it occur.

To Knock – adds the possibility that there may need to be an ongoing waiting for an answer from God.

If we look at these verses in the context of the greater teaching on the Sermon on the Mount, we come to understand it will actually take the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to even begin to live up to the demands of the Kingdom of God. To really



incorporate the teaching in Matthew 5-7 requires a complete reorientation of our life from selfish living to spirit living.

The Beatitudes calls us to be ... poor in Spirit, comfort those that mourn, live meekly, hunger and thirst after righteousness, be merciful, seek to have a pure heart, be a peacemaker, be willing to undergo persecution for righteousness sake.



But it doesn't stop there – we are to be salt and light in a decaying and dark world.

- We are to not be angry with others.
- We are to be reconciled to those we are in disagreement with.
- You are to have a covenant with your eyes and not lust after others.
- You are not to divorce your spouse.
- You are called to turn the other cheek.
- If you are compelled to go one mile, you should go two.
- You are to love your enemies.
- You are to bless those that curse you.
- You are to do your charitable deeds secretly.
- You are to pray and fast in secret.
- You are to forgive others.
- Our treasures should be heaven focused not earthly focused.
- We are called to not worry about finances, clothes, or our height.
- We are to seek the kingdom of God first.

¹ Outline from Alexander Maclaren's *Exposition of the Holy Scriptures*, Matthew 7:7-11, page 332-342.

Two weeks ago, we examined the topic of not judging others.

I don't know about you, but I have come to the point that I realize I simply cannot do all of this! There is not enough in me to keep the first law, much less how the Lord has taken it to a higher level of obedience.

Maybe the Lord knows our frame and sees we are sinners by nature and by choice. We are inclined towards sin and we have a tendency to yield and sin knowingly. The only way this can come about is if we seek the Lord. The only way this total transformation can occur in our life is to pray – Asking – Seeking – Knocking.



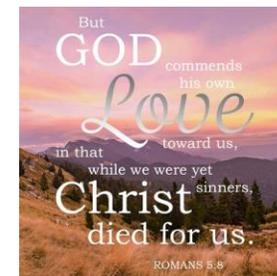
Many ministers – especially those on television seeking your donation – have looked at this as a formula from Jesus to get whatever they wanted. They instruct their followers – Ask the Lord for a larger home, and you will get it. Ask the Lord for a larger car, and you will have it. Ask the Lord for more pay in your paycheck, and it will be done. Ask the Lord to heal your family member and He will grant it. It is as if they see God as the great vending machine in the sky – insert the right prayer and out comes our selected answer. What folly and foolishness!



This passage of scripture is written to disciples of Jesus Christ. It gives us the way in which we are to frame our lives. Our first response to the knock of Christ at the door is not asking, but rather it is taking hold of the door and opening it. Many people are praying and asking God for things in their

life but they have never opened the door of their heart to the knocking of God. How will they ever have the benefits of dining with the Lord if they have never surrendered their sin filled life over to Him?

God's mercy and forgiveness is waiting – already prepared to give, once the door is opened. While we were yet sinners Christ died for us. God is ready and willing to open the door. *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved."* There is no begging, pleading, searching or knocking necessary to receive Christ. You only need to listen and respond and you will find forgiveness for your soul.



This prayer is one for believers because we do not have what it takes to live up to the Sermon on the Mount. We need to rest and depend upon God to do a work in us to help us to forgive our enemies, turn the other cheek, and not judge others. His Spirit in us enables us to be overcomers.

If we sincerely pray this prayer, we are not forcing our will upon God seeking Him to do for us what we wish, rather it is a prayer that molds us and bends us to His will. As we bend our will to His will, we find that God gives us what we need, not what we want.

Jesus illustrates this by saying, *"Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent?"* The obvious answer is "No!" No father would give rocks in place of bread and serpents in place

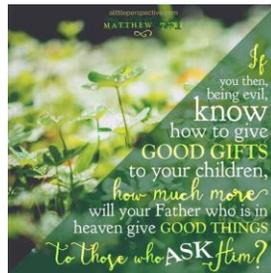


of fish. The father knows what the son needs and supplies that need.

But what if the son asked for a rock or a serpent? Would the father simply give into the request knowing that rocks and serpents are not good to eat? The obvious answer is “No.” The father would ignore the foolish request and only give those things that are needful.

I am so glad God has not given me all of the things I have asked for. Looking back, you would have to agree as well. It would only make us like spoiled children that are miserable to be around. God answers our prayers. Sometimes it is a yes, sometimes it is no, other times it is wait! If we trust God who wants us to have bread and fish, we will wait upon Him.

Jesus reminded them, *“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!”* God wishes to bless us. As we abide in Him, and He abides in us, we will be blessed greatly by His presence and peace in our life.



I am reminded that God wants to open the store house of heaven and pour out a blessing on His people. Most of us are content with just a little corner of that blessing. Imagine if God allowed you to walk into a large storehouse filled with gold, silver, and precious jewels and could have all you wanted. As a matter of fact, God insisted you have all you want. Quite a few of us have stopped at the entrance of this vast treasury room and only take a small coin lying on the floor at the entrance.

The only conclusion you can draw from this is that you do not care about the wealth. You do not care about the blessings of God.

Alexander Maclaren in his commentary on this passage of scripture said this:

Dear brethren, you professing Christian people that are listening to me,
if life is scant in your veins,
if your faith is, as it is with many of you, all but dead,
if your Christian character is very little better than the character of the people around you,
if your religion does not give you any happiness, nor do other people much good,
if your love is so cold that it has almost expired, and your hopes dim,
(then) there is no creature in heaven or earth or hell that is to blame for it but yourselves. *“Ye have not because you ask not; ye ask and have not because you ask amiss.”*

The promises of God are dependent upon these three conditions:

“Ask, and it will be given to you”

As I said earlier, asking implies the person you are asking has the capacity and desire to give that which you ask. The person we are to ask is God. We are to go to Him. All of us internally know prayer is essential and we all know we need to turn to Him as our source of supply.



The question naturally arises, “Do you pray?” Some are in the habit of praying daily the Lord’s Prayer.

- But do you really pray from your heart to God’s heart?
- Do you ever pray and ask God to make you less worldly?
- Do you ever pray that your love for this world diminish and your love for heaven increase?
- Do you ever pray that God make you more Christlike?

If you really desire those things, then we are to come to our Heavenly Father, as taught in the Model Prayer, and ask it! Is there a place in your home that is slightly worn from your knees bending in prayer? Or do you give prayer a small place just before you are sound asleep or as you are rushing out into the world to accomplish your will for your life?

The first step is to ask.

“Seek, and you will find.”

The second condition we need to meet in order to receive this promise of God is to seek! There are many things we want physically in this life that only come through hard work. You cannot wish to have a good crop if you don’t get into the field and work at it. You cannot wish to build a nice home unless you plan, save, and then build it. You cannot have anything without exerting the effort needed to accomplish those goals you set.

The same applies in the spiritual realm. There must be personal effort if a person is to grow spiritually. You must study your Bible regularly, you must pray daily, you must read other spiritual sources, and you need to make time in



your schedule for Sunday school or other types of Bible study. You cannot grow unless you seek the Lord.

We need to pray and seek expecting the Lord to hear our prayer. How many times have we prayed and forgotten what we said to the Lord just yesterday? It is like shooting an arrow or gun and not caring if it hits its target. No wonder our prayers go unanswered because of our lack of care.

How many people wake up and repeat the Lord’s Prayer asking the Lord to not lead them into temptation and later that day walk right into the traps set by Satan?

Why do people ask God to help them grow in the grace and knowledge of God and never lift a finger to promote their growth? All of our prayers that do not put asking and searching behind them are in vain? With prayer must go effort.

“Knock, and it will be opened to you.”

The last step is to *“knock and the door shall be opened to you.”*

There are some tasks we are called to do that do not come to fruition overnight. Sometimes we are called to continue to pray and pray and pray. We are called to seek, and seek, and seek. Some larger tasks even call us to knock, and knock, and knock.

We are not to weary in doing good. Eternal life is a gift freely given the moment you receive Christ as your Savior. But to build a life with a Christ Centered Character only comes about as you patiently, consistently, ask, seek, and knock – using the



gifts you have been given. It takes a lifetime of searching God's word, seeking the face of God, asking again and again, to mold and shape a Godly life.

There are *no shortcuts* in Spiritual growth and maturity.

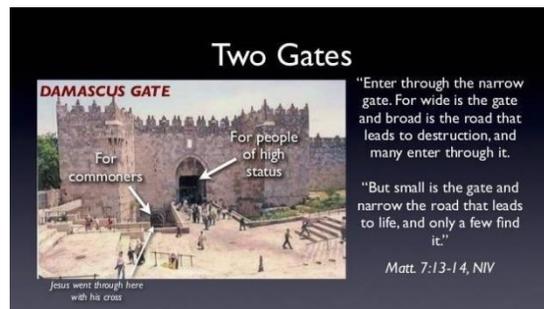
We must give attention to the things of God. Many in this room have poured all they are into succeeding materially in this world. Many in this room give countless hours attempting to finish the latest project. Many days, weeks, and years, have been given to your business pursuits. And you have been richly rewarded for your persistence. There is a correlation between the effort given and your success.

Spiritual growth requires the same kind of commitment. Some are on fire in one place in their life and all frost in another. If Christian men and women were to give the kingdom of God as much attention as they give their worldly pursuits and business ventures, then they would be strong growing Christians.

A Stern Warning

As I mentioned earlier, the image of Jesus Christ standing at the door knocking at the door of our heart is a powerful image. He wants to come into your life and dine with you. Yet there is also another image just as powerful.

In Luke 13, starting at verse 23, someone said to Jesus, "*Lord, are there few who will be saved?*" Jesus said, "*Strive to enter through the*



narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able."

Jesus goes on to say, "*When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying 'Lord, Lord, open for us,' and He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know you, where you are from.'*"

There are many people claiming to be followers of Jesus Christ, but their lives, actions, words, deeds do not reflect a life of someone that is asking, seeking, and knocking today. The scripture echoes, "*What would you give in exchange for your soul?*" "*What if you gained the whole world and lost your soul, would it be worth it?*"



It is my desire that all come unto a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. But that is only the first step in a life committed to God. We are to live a disciplined holy dedicated life.

Have you ever taken the first step towards God and received forgiveness for your sins? The scripture tells us over and over – today is the day of salvation! Do not put it off until tomorrow – for tomorrow never comes!



If you have taken that step of commitment to God, you need to examine your heart to see if you are only giving lip service to your faith commitment to God. I would never want to be the one standing on the outside with the door closed – rejected by God because He said He never knew me.

You can know Him and He can know you if you **ask** to be filled with His Spirit – **seek** the rich provisions and treasures laid up for those that love Him – and **knock** expecting God to meet with you and dine with you.

One day, those that have walked the narrow way, will be invited to sit at the banquet table of heaven and eternally enjoy the blessings of heaven.



Let us all examine our hearts and begin again – asking, seeking, and knocking!

LET US PRAY