

# Sermons on Matthew

## Asking, Seeking, Knocking

*Matthew 7:7-12*

*With Study Questions*

*Pastor Paul Viggiano  
Branch of Hope Church  
2370 W. Carson Street, #100  
Torrance, CA 90501  
(310) 212-6999*

*[pastorpaul@integrity.com](mailto:pastorpaul@integrity.com)*

*[www.branchofhope.org](http://www.branchofhope.org)*

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**Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. <sup>-8-</sup> For   everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. <sup>-9-</sup>   Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? <sup>-10-</sup> Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? <sup>-11-</sup> 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! <sup>-12-</sup> Therefore,   whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for   this is the Law and the Prophets. (Matthew 7:7-12)**

## **Preface**

The toughest man I ever met didn't look tough at all; he looked a little like Don Knotts—skinny, short and thick glasses. But Wilbur Carter was an NCAA wrestling champion from Oklahoma and he was tenacious. Leading his opponent in one tournament, Wilbur felt a snap in his neck which left him temporarily paralyzed on one side of his body. With stubborn backwoods determination he wasn't about to take the loss. With the use of only one half of his body he managed to avoid being turned on his back and got the win.

The Bible records a wrestling match between a man and God.

**Then Jacob was left alone; and   a Man wrestled with him until the   breaking of day. <sup>-25-</sup> Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He   touched the socket of his hip; and   the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him. <sup>-26-</sup> And   He said, "  Let Me go, for the day breaks."   But he said,   "I will not let You go unless You bless me!" <sup>-27-</sup> So He said to him, "  What is your name?" He said, "  Jacob."   <sup>-28-</sup> And He said,   "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but   Israel; for you have   struggled with God and   with men, and have prevailed."   <sup>-29-</sup> Then Jacob asked, saying, "  Tell me Your name, I pray."   And He said,   "Why is it that you ask about My name?" And He   blessed him there. <sup>-30-</sup> So Jacob called the name of the place   Peniel: "  For   I have seen God**

**face to face, and my life is preserved.” (Genesis 32:24-30)\_**

One danger in our understanding of the glorious grace of God is our tendency to be passive. We realize that God saves by His own grace and by His own power. This may lead us to think that we are, in every respect, to remain passive. That’s a mistake.

### **Asking, Seeking, Knocking**

In this morning’s passage Jesus tells us to *ask, seek, and knock*. These words are all present, active, imperatives and could be rendered “Keep on asking, keep on seeking, and keep on knocking.” There is a persistency in these words.

It is God who we are addressing in our asking, seeking and knocking and God calls us to pursue Him with all diligence.

**As the deer \_pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God. (Psalm 42:1)**

We are to persistently ask like the starving beggar seeking alms (Acts 3:2). We are to relentlessly seek recognizing that

**The young lions lack and suffer hunger; \_But those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good *thing*. (Psalm 34:10)**

We are to continually knock as an impassioned suitor:

**I sleep, but my heart is awake; *It is the voice of my beloved!* \_He knocks, *saying,* “\_Open for me, my sister, \_my love, My dove, my perfect one. . .” (Song of Solomon 5:2a)**

Notice the ascending levels of the actions. One can ask with no intentions of implementation. One can seek with the mere intention of being an observer. But when one knocks, he becomes an active participant. “Where are the bears?” is a safe enough question. “Look at the bears!” from a safe distance. ‘Knock on the bear’s door’!?

### **Three Questions**

Three questions I would ask regarding the current text: 1) What does it mean to ask, seek, and knock? 2) For what are we asking? 3) How sure can we be that we'll receive (since it doesn't always seem to be the case)?

### **What Are We Told To Do?**

What is Jesus actually telling us to do in this passage? What does it mean to ask, seek, and knock? Although it most assuredly alludes to prayer (since it is God to whom the petition is made), I don't think it is limited to prayer.

We are to continually avail ourselves of all that God has provided. We are to study His word (2 Timothy 2:15), seek the counsel of the wise and the authorities He has put in our lives (Proverbs 1:5, 8), forsake not the gathering of His people (Hebrews 10:25), participate regularly in the sacraments (1 Corinthians 11:23-26), obey His commandments (Matthew 22:37-40), and teach others to do the same (Deuteronomy 6:7).

And we are to do all these things with dogged determination. We should not settle for having done what appears to be our duty. We should not settle for simply not losing the race, we are to run the race to win.

**Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? \_\_Run in such a way that you may \_\_obtain *it*. (1 Corinthians 9:24)**

**\_Whatever your hand finds to do, do *it* with your \_\_might. . . (Ecclesiastes 9:10a)**

**-Finally then, -brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us *instruction* as to how you ought to -walk and -please God (just as you actually do -walk), that you -excel still more. (1 Thessalonians 4:1, NASB)**

We are to wrestle with God until we receive the blessing (Genesis 24:26).

### **For What Are We Asking?**

Now that we've discussed how persistent we are to be in the asking and the means by which the petitions are made, just what it is that we're asking for?

A friend conveyed a conversation he overheard while driving down the freeway with some friends. The wife, having spotted a 500 Class Mercedes Benz, said to her husband, "Look honey, it's the car we've been praying for." Certainly we should avoid being so ethereal that we neglect praying for the mundane (our daily bread being a contextual example), but it seems that the things we are to be praying for are the very attributes Jesus has been calling genuine Christians to have. To list them:

- A poor and mournful spirit (5:3, 4)
- Meekness (5:5)
- Hunger for righteousness (5:6)
- Mercy (5:7)
- Purity of heart (5:8)
- A peacemaking disposition (5:9)
- A willingness to endure trials (5:10-12)
- The pursuit of good works to the glory of God (5:13-16)
- Obedience and respect for the law of God (5:17-20)
- Love of your brother (5:21-26)
- Purity of thought (5:27-30)
- Faithfulness in marriage (5:31, 32)
- Honesty (5:33-37)
- A generous and non-retaliatory disposition (5:38-41)
- A love of all, including your enemies (5:43-48)
- A heart desiring to please God rather than men (6:1-4; 16-18)
- Sincerity in prayer and worship (6:5-7)
- A Forgiving heart (6:14, 15)
- An undivided loyalty to God (6:19-34)
- A non-judgmental heart (7:1-6)

In short, we are to relentlessly pursue God, that He might graciously grant those qualities which are so elusive to our natures. We are to dedicate our lives to this most noble and glorious endeavor, using all godly resources at our disposal, and we are to never, ever, ever, ever give up.

## How Sure Can We Be That We'll Receive?

How sure can we be that we'll receive (since it doesn't always seem to be the case)? Many of us seem to be pursuing God for attributes that continually elude us. So what's the problem?

First look at the promise.

**For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.  
(Matthew 7:8)**

Again, this is in the present, active and could be rendered, ". . . everyone who continues asking. . .," etc. The promise to the asker, seeker, and knocker is that he will receive; find, and it shall be opened to him. But, again, it doesn't always seem to be the case. Certainly we're not willing to accuse Jesus of making false promises. The answer to the difficulty can be found upon closer observation.

Jesus uses the obvious example of a parent's love. No normal parent gives his hungry child a stone when asked for bread or a snake when asked for fish.

If I may make a parenthetical observation here: This is yet another testimony of the depravity of man when Jesus states, "**If you then, being evil. . .**" It is also of interest to note that this evil doesn't disappear when one becomes a Christian for the evil people of which Jesus speaks are those who are children of their "**. . .Father who is in heaven. . .**" (7:11)

What Jesus labors to demonstrate is that which should be obvious to all. God will grant *these* gifts to those who *persistently* seek Him. If we're not getting what we ask for perhaps we're not *persistently* asking for *these* types of things.

We've already discussed how persistent we ought to be so I won't go over that again. Simply put, we may not be diligent enough to warrant the gift. More simply put, we just don't care enough to make the effort to acquire those godly qualities of which Jesus speaks.

But we also must keep in mind that the promise is that our "**. . .Father who is in heaven (gives) good things to those who ask Him!**" (7:11) The emphasis is on "good things." James teaches,

**Yet you do not have because you do not ask. <sup>-3-</sup> \_\_You ask and do not receive, \_because you ask amiss, that you may spend *it* on your pleasures (James 4:2b, 3).**

God is not to be thought of as a waiter who takes our order without question. He is more like a mother who listens to what we desire then gives us the best meal possible.

**Can a woman forget her nursing child, \_And not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, \_Yet I will not forget you. (Isaiah 49:15)**

Too often we ask for stones and snakes, when we should desire bread and fish.

## **The Golden Rule**

One last verse to consider is what has come to be known as the Golden Rule.

**Therefore, \_whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for \_\_this is the Law and the Prophets. (Matthew 7:12)**

First let us realize there are boundaries for the admonition. If I desire my neighbor play loud music all night long, that does not necessarily mean that he should be willing to bear with my loud music all night long.

That Jesus mentions the law and the prophets reminds us of the Greatest Commandment (Matthew 22:37-40). With God's law in mind (since God's law is the greatest expression of love), we are to approach others the way we desire to be approached. Whether it is judgment or correction of behavior (which is the immediate context) or any other practice within the boundaries of God's law, we are to consider, to the best of our ability, how others desire to be treated.

When it comes to ourselves we are experts. We may have all sorts of nuances in the way we like to be treated. "Don't call me too late or too early or with that tone in your voice. Break things to me slowly like a crock-pot or quickly like a ripping off a bandage. Get to the point, be a little more sensitive," etc.

Spouses take note. We are to exercise the same due diligence in understand the subtleties of our husbands and wives as we do in understanding our own little quirks.

The great promise God gives us is that if we diligently ask, seek and knock for the proper things He will abundantly bless. As a loving Father He grants those things that make His children truly rich.

**For the Lord God is \_\_a sun and \_\_shield; The Lord will give grace and glory; \_No good *thing* will He withhold From those who walk uprightly. (Psalm 84:11)**

## Questions for Study

1. In what tense does Jesus tell us to ask, seek and knock (page 3)?
2. What does it mean to ask, seek and knock (pages 4)?
3. What should we be asking for (pages 5, 6)?
4. What does Jesus promise will happen if we ask, seek and knock (page 6)?
5. Why is it we don't always seem to get what we're asking for (pages 6, 7)?
6. What is the Golden Rule, what are its boundaries and how is it to be applied (pages 7, 8)?