

GETTING STARTED

We are better together!/Opening question: Welcome to LIFEgroup, as always someone please share a God story from the past few days. Here is a hard question to start off with, did you find yourself judging anyone this past week and did God remind you of our study this past week on being judgmental?

Our Subject Today: We are going to study *Matthew 7:7-12* on how we pray by asking, seeking and knocking.

VIDEO NOTES/QUESTIONS

Share any thoughts from the Video:

INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY

OBSERVATION: Matthew highlights the importance of kingdom relationships.

INTERPRETATION: Please see the commentary on pages 5-6.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS: Please see the following 6 application questions. (You do not have to cover all 6, choose the best ones for your group)

Read *Matthew 7:7*

1) Why do you think Jesus went from judging to prayer? From this verse, what are the steps of a persistent prayer life?

POSSIBLE ANSWERS: Prayer would be a godly response when we are tempted to judge others. Even if a person observes another in definite sin, Christians can pray for others. Prayer also includes confession of sin-this is a way of removing the beam from our own eyes. Steps: ask, seek, knock. The verb tense indicates that these actions are ongoing and tenacious.

DIG DEEPER: How does the parable Jesus tells in Luke 18: 1-8 encourage us to continue in prayer? How does prayer help us move from judging others to obeying the Golden Rule in verse 12?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS (cont.)**Read *Matthew 7:8***

2) Why do we often give up on praying for someone or something? Have you given up on praying for someone or something and God later reminded you to keep praying, (anyone have a story)? What promises of God does Jesus share in this verse?

POSSIBLE ANSWERS: If God doesn't answer quickly, we might doubt he cares or plans to answer. Remember how God answers prayers: Yes, No, Wait, Not yet, Keep asking.

Luke 18:1-5 "Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said: In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' For some time he refused. But finally, he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care what people think, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!'"

DIG DEEPER: Read *1 John 3:22* and *1 John 5:14*: What are some qualifications for answered prayer?

Read *Matthew 7:9*

3) Have you ever asked God for something that Jesus would consider a stone, in other words, you asked for something you did not need? Anyone have a story about your stone?

POSSIBLE ANSWERS: In retrospect, many things we have asked God for would not have been good for us. How can experiences such as these help us trust God with his answers to prayer?

DIG DEEPER: What do we learn about prayer in *Romans 8: 26-32*? What is God's priority when he answers prayer?

Read *Matthew 7:10*

4) Why do people blame God when bad things happen? What does this verse continue to show about the character of our Heavenly Father? How does this describe God's love for you?

POSSIBLE ANSWERS: Consider this: *James 1:17-18* "Everything good comes from God. Every perfect gift is from him. These good gifts come down from the Father who made all the lights in the sky. But God never changes like the shadows from those lights. He is always the same. God decided to give us life through the true message he sent to us. He wanted us to be the most important of all that he created."

DIG DEEPER: Many think that if God were able, he would not allow bad things to happen to good people. This is a legitimate question. Check out: gotquestions.org/bad-things-good-people.html

APPLICATION QUESTIONS (cont.)**Read *Matthew 7:11***

5) Why do you think Jesus started this verse "If you then, being evil..." What is he pointing out about the difference between us and God?

POSSIBLE ANSWERS: Jesus was saying that he never sinned. He is good, not evil. However, he is saying that we are sinful.

DIG DEEPER: What are some other times in the book of *Matthew* that Jesus claimed to have the same attributes and abilities as God (11:27; 12:8; 18:20; 26: 31-32; 28:18-20)? When else did Jesus claim to be God (Mark 2:7-12; John 8:58; John 10:30, 38)?

What are some ways God shows his goodness to us (Psa 25:8; Psa 34:8; Rom 2:4; Titus 3: 4)?

Read *Matthew 7:12*

6) What name do we often give this verse when we refer to it? Many people view this as a negative verse, how can it be a positive promise? Make a list of ways we can show God's love, give mercy, or do something good for someone this week?

POSSIBLE ANSWERS: The Golden Rule. This command encourages us to do good to others as well as refrain from doing harm to others. We are to look at our actions through the eyes of others. Perhaps each group member could share something they could do *or* stop doing that would be good for someone else.

DIG DEEPER: Where else do we see Jesus give another summary of the Law and the Prophets? Compare and contrast *Matt 7: 12* and *Matt 22:36-40*. How do these two passages explain each other?

MY TAKE-AWAY**POSSIBLE TAKE-AWAY:**

- I need to pray consistently
- I need to trust God for meeting my needs and answering my prayer
- I need to show God's love to people this week

BE A DOER (“...be a doer of the word, not merely a hearer...” - James 1:20)

- I will live the *Golden Rule* this week
- I will memorize *Matthew 7:7* this week

MY NEXT STEPS

1. This week, I will pray and ask God to increase my desire to pray and read my Bible.
2. This week, I will lead my family in prayer and read *Ephesians 6:10-18*, which shows us “The Armor of God”.
3. This week, I will establish a time in the morning to pray Scripture and listen to God in my quiet time.

HOW MY GROUP CAN PRAY FOR ME THIS WEEK

[> Record Group Prayer Requests Here:](#)

COMMENTARY

Matthew 7:7-12. 7:7-8 While some people interpret these verses as a promise that God will give disciples whatever they pray for, linguistic connections between these verses and other portions of the Sermon on the Mount suggest that Jesus promised that those who ask, search, and knock will be invited to enter his kingdom. The command to ask is tied to the promise of “good things” to those who ask in v. 11. In the Lukan parallel, these good things are interpreted as the Holy Spirit who transforms the disciple and makes him fit for the kingdom. Seek uses the same Greek verb as 6:33, “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.” Since the word door is not in the Greek text of v. 7, and because ancient people knocked on gates as well as doors to request entrance (*Ac 12:13*), knock likely refers to knocking on the gate of the kingdom (mentioned in *Mt 7:13-14*).

7:11 Jesus’s 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.

7:12 The word therefore suggests that the “Golden Rule” of this verse draws an application from the preceding section. Since the preceding verse describes God’s gracious and loving provision for others, the conjunction probably implies that following the Golden Rule shows the disciple’s resemblance to the heavenly Father (see notes at 5:44-45; 5:48) (Robert H. Stein, “*Differences in the Gospels*,” in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax [Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017]).

Matthew 7:7-12. 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*.

7:9-11. *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.”

Throughout the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus set up stringent standards for his disciples, but he also went to great lengths to change people’s picture of God the Father. In today’s environment of parental abuse, transient relationships, and growing isolationism, this portion of Scripture provides comfort for the deepest needs of many adults who are, inwardly, abandoned children.

In 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. (Note the assumption here of universal sinfulness; see *Rom. 3:23*.)

7:12. The “Golden Rule” needs to be seen in a fresh light. For those who know the Bible, this verse has the tendency to go the way of *John 3:16*, often quoted but seldom applied. Jesus gave his audience a simple and profound principle to guide them in relating to others. We are to treat them the way we would want them to treat us in the same circumstance.

COMMENTARY

Jesus indicated that this “Golden Rule” sums up much of the Old Testament teaching on interpersonal relationships. *Leviticus 19:18*, together with *Deuteronomy 6:5*, quoted by Jesus in *Matthew 22:35–40*, is essentially an equivalent statement (see also *Rom. 13:8–10*; *Gal. 5:14*) (Stuart K. Weber, *Matthew*, vol. 1, Holman New Testament Commentary [Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000]).

Matthew 7:7–12, 7:7–11 In anticipating but going beyond the principle of v. 12, Jesus tells how God treats people at least as well as and often even better than they treat each other. Verses 7–11 may also link back with the rest of the sermon in that they show people how to get the help they need to obey all that Jesus has previously commanded. As Heavenly Father, God will respond with “good gifts,” just as otherwise sinful human fathers usually do. *Isaiah 49:15* uses the image of a mother to convey the same truth about God’s care and is aware of exceptions in the human realm which do not apply to God. Strikingly, Jesus dissociates himself from sinful humanity by using the second-person form of address (“*though you are evil,*” v. 11).

The rhetorical questions of vv. 9–10 imply a negative answer and are based on the similarities in appearance between small loaves of bread and stones and between certain eel-like fish and snakes. No loving parent would try to trick his or her children into thinking their requests had been granted by such deceptive substitutions. “How much more” logic prevails again. Even if human parents did occasionally prove untrustworthy (and far too often they do), God would never so mistreat his children. He always gives good things. “Give” is the key word throughout vv. 7–11, appearing five times as well as linking back with v. 6. The “good gifts” God gives include everything that pertains to seeking first his kingdom and its righteousness (6:33). They do not necessarily correspond to everything for which we ask. The commands of vv. 7–8 are in the present tense, suggesting persistent prayer over a period of time. “It” in v. 7 is somewhat misleading. The word does not refer to any particular thing requested but forms part of a divine passive construction that means *ask and God will give you [what he deems best]*.

Jesus also presupposes that his listeners will recall his teaching in the Lord’s prayer in which one insists that God’s will be done (6:7–8). Those who today claim that in certain contexts it is unscriptural to pray “if it is the Lord’s will” are both heretical and dangerous. Often our prayers are not answered as originally desired because we do not share God’s perspective in knowing what is ultimately a good gift for us. We are especially tempted to think of the values of this world (e.g., health and wealth) rather than spiritual values. Not surprisingly, the parallel passage in Luke uses synecdoche to replace “good gifts” with “the Holy Spirit” (Luke 11:13)—the preeminent example of a good and perfect gift coming down from above.

7:12 In view of God’s generosity to us, treating others in the manner we would like ourselves to be treated is the least we can do. “Verse 12 embraces an impressive amount of scriptural teaching, including, as Jesus says, the “Law and the Prophets” (the Old Testament). This epigram has become known as the Golden Rule because of its central role in Christian ethics. Jesus assumes no pathological deviations in which one would desire to harm oneself, and he presupposes the perspective of disciples who seek what is God’s desire rather than self-aggrandizement.

With its reference to “the Law and the Prophets,” 7:12 ties back in with 5:17 and provides a frame to bracket the body of the sermon (Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, vol. 22, The New American Commentary [Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992]).

If we inquire, why there is so little love to be found amongst Christians, why the very characteristic, by which every one should know that we are disciples of the holy Jesus, is almost banished out of the Christian world, we shall find it, in a great measure, owing to a neglect or superficial performance of that excellent part of prayer, *Intercession*, or imploring the divine grace and mercy in behalf of others.

Some forget this duty of praying for others, because they seldom remember to pray for themselves: and even those who are constant in praying to their Father who is in heaven, are often so selfish in their addresses to the throne of grace, that they do not enlarge their petitions for the welfare of their fellow Christians as they ought; and thereby fall short of attaining that Christian charity, that unfeigned love to their brethren, which their sacred profession obliges them to aspire after, and without which, though they should bestow all their goods to feed the poor, and even give their bodies to be burned, yet it would profit them nothing (George Whitefield, *Selected Sermons of George Whitefield* [Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1999]).

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