Series: From Israel to Everyone: Disciples who Demonstrate God's Presence (a study of Matthew) **Sermon Text:** Matthew 7:7-12

"Ask, Seek, Knock: Living as Children of a Good Father"

Matthew 7 comes near the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7). At this point, I have to thank Bill, John, Gary and Brandon for showing us how Jesus has been describing life in His kingdom: humility, mercy, purity of heart, secret prayer, trust instead of anxiety, righteous judgment without hypocrisy.

Now Jesus turns to this: "*How do kingdom citizens live in daily dependence on God?*"

The answer:

- We ask.
- We seek.
- We knock.

And we do so as children of a Father.

So, this will be our **Big Idea: Because our Father is good, we are invited to persistent prayer and transformed into people who reflect His goodness toward others.**

"*How many of you can look back through your lives and see where your prayers, or someone else s prayers, have affected your life?*"

I have always felt that my life and the way it has come along has been a result of prayer, both of my own and those of others. It's kind of funny to look back and see where I have done some really stupid things in life that could have ended badly and I can see where God had guided things to where I ended up with less damage than I

should have. I contribute those times to the prayers of my mom and grandmother, who might just be some of the most prayerful people in my life.
Another sign that prayer works, is that I'm actually standing here before you giving this message.

A funny story. When I was around 14 or 15, my mom was the secretary for the church where we attended and on some days during the summer my sister and I would go to the church building and help her with various little things, running mimeograph machine (an old fashioned copier), changing the hymn numbers on the sign boards in the sanctuary, simple little things like that. Our pastor at the time, would always, I believe he was half joking - half not, ask me if I would be interested in becoming a pastor. 14-15 year old me had much different plans for my life. If I remember correctly, it was something like being a pilot or race car driver. Anything but speaking in front of people, let alone give a sermon. That's what I get for praying to Jesus to use me in ministry. So, I guess the joke is on me, Pastor Dayton.

In the first section, we find an Invitation to Persistent Prayer. Let's read ***verses 7-8*** where Jesus said: ***Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.***

Let's look at the actions Jesus describes "Ask… seek… knock…" These verbs in the original language carry the sense of ongoing action:
* Keep asking
* Keep seeking
* Keep knocking

This is not a formula. It is a relationship. Notice first that Prayer is Commanded

Jesus does not say, "If you feel spiritual…or worthy" He commands us to ask. This also isn't the cold command of a drill sergeant, or harsh boss, issuing orders. It's the loving direction of our older brother reminding us that our Father wants to bless us.

Sometimes we wonder: *If God is truly in control of everything, why pray?*" But Scripture never uses God's sovereignty as an excuse for our silence. The journey is just as important as the destination. He invites us into the story so that our prayers become the very vehicle through which He moves. Prayer is how He aligns our hearts and plans with His, not some hoop we must jump through to change God's mind. "*Is God merely a Help Desk? Is He a vending machine?*" NO! He's a Father building a relationship so we can be involved in what He is doing.

That brings us to our next point, that Prayer is Relational. Notice the promise in ***verse 8: For everyone who asks receives…"*** This may sound like prosperity theology, but Jesus is not promising to fulfill every request or desire of our hearts. The context clarifies what kind of giving that God intends. It is a good Father giving good gifts to His children.

This goes along with where Bill was teaching us Matthew 6:33: "*Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness…*" The more our seeking is aligned with God's kingdom, the more His will (or heart) shapes our prayers.

Now, let's look at how to apply these principles across generations.

- Children and students can pray knowing God hears you.
- Parents can model persistent prayer in your home.
- Older saints can be assured that your decades of prayer are not wasted. Keep knocking.

Again, this persistence does not twist God's arm; it is training our hearts. "*Can you see how his promise belongs to every generation in this room?*"

Children and students: You don't need an adult vocabulary, big words or a formal prayer list to talk to God. When you're anxious about a friend group at school, or worried about failing a test, you can whisper a simple, honest prayer wherever you are. God will hear you and help you because He's always right there with you!

Parents: Your kids are watching how you handle pressure. When the monthly budget doesn't stretch, when a medical diagnosis comes back, or when conflict hits your marriage, let your kids see you go to our Father as the panic hits you. Gather them around the dinner table or pull over in the car and let them hear you say, "We don't know how this will work out, but we know our Father is good, so we're asking Him for help."

Older saints: If you have been praying for a wandering child for thirty years, or for a spouse's salvation for half a century, it can be tempting to drop your arms and stop knocking. But your decades of persistent prayer are not forgotten static in God's ears. In fact, Psalm 56:8 says King David believed that God keeps track of all our sorrows, collects all our tears in a bottle, and records each one in a book.

When we keep coming back to God day after day, we aren't wearing down His patience or forcing His hand. We are allowing Him to reshape our stubborn hearts until we learn to trust Him completely.

In the next section, we see The Character of the Father. Let's read ***Matthew 7:9-11*** where Jesus said: ***Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are 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!

Jesus shifts from a command to an illustration from everyday life: "Which one of you…?" He argues from lesser to greater by making a jarring and uncomfortable statement. He looks at well-meaning parents and says, "If you then, who are evil…"

Jesus was just being honest about sin by pulling back the curtain on human nature. He knows that even on our absolute best days, our love is messy. It's mixed with impatience, exhaustion, and self-interest. But look at the baseline He sets: if a hungry kid walks into the kitchen asking for a piece of toast, no decent parent hands them a brick or tricks them with something dangerous. Even with all our flaws, a parent's gut reaction is to feed our kids and keep them safe. Jesus takes our basic instinct of human kindness, imperfect as it is, and uses it as a faint shadow of how infinitely better God treats us.

This brings us to His "How Much More" argument. "How much more will your Father…" This phrase is gospel comfort. If flawed earthly parents give good gifts, "How Much More" does the perfectly holy Father?

This echoes other New Testament assurances, like Romans 8:32 which assures us that God intends to be good and gracious toward us based on the fact that He already gave us His Son.

The burning question is, What Are the "*Good Things*" in ***verse 11***? Luke's parallel passage (Luke 11:13) says "*the Holy Spirit*." So, the ultimate good gift is the Holy Spirit, or God Himself. Sometimes we ask for relief. God gives endurance. Sometimes we ask for clarity. God gives faith. Sometimes we ask for change in circumstances. God transforms our heart. The promise is not that we get everything

we want. The promise is that we get God's presence and what is truly good for all concerned.

Verse 12 begins with the word "***So***" (or therefore) which connects prayer with practice. Jesus said: ***So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them***… We often call this the Golden Rule, which is more than ethical advice. It is the fruit of the kingdom. We often hear this and think "*I ll give them something I might like*", but Jesus is calling us to a relationship where we know people so well that we offer them something they would want or need.

Jesus says ***this sums up the whole Old Testament—the Law and the Prophets***. As He said back in Matthew 5:17, He came to fulfill it, not erase it. Loving our neighbor springs directly from trusting God's track record. When we are fully confident in His daily care, our prayers naturally shift away from our own worries and toward the needs of those around us.

So then, trusting Christ frees me to let someone else go first:

- At a church lunch or gathering, I don't have to make sure my preferences are met before accommodating somebody else's.
- At work, I don't have to take credit for everything I contributed.
- In conversation, I don't have to make sure my story gets told before I listen to someone else's.

Trusting Christ also helps me celebrate someone else's wins and success:

- If God is my Father, another person's blessing is not evidence of my Father's neglect.
- I can honestly rejoice when someone else succeeds.
- A pastor can rejoice when another church grows.
- A musician can rejoice when someone else gets the solo.

- A parent can rejoice when another family's children flourish.
- A student can celebrate another classmate's success.

Trusting Christ also enables me to give without keeping score:
- If I know that God is not stingy with me, I don't have to be stingy with others.
- I can serve someone who may never thank me or repay me.
- I can welcome someone who cannot advance my social standing.
- I can pray for someone who doesn't know I'm praying.

In conclusion, ask yourself: "*How might this text improve my prayer conversations with God?*"

- "*Where have I not been asking persistently?*"
- "*In what ways have I doubted the Father s goodness?*"
- "*How am I not viewing or treating others the way I wish to be viewed or treated?*"

Of course, this passage ultimately points us to Christ. Jesus is the true Son who perfectly trusted the Father.

Later in Matthew 26, here's what Jesus prayed in Gethsemane: "My Father, if it be possible…"

- He asked.
- He sought.
- He knocked.

And the Father gave Him… not escape… but the cross.

But, why? Christ's prayer didn't just benefit Him, it benefited us, didn't it? It wasn't easy for Him. It cost Him His human life. But Jesus showed us how we should always come to God in prayer for all our needs and for the needs of others. No matter

what happens, and no matter how bad things get, we should ask boldly, we should seek confidently, and we should knock persistently. Ultimately, we should trust that whatever God chooses to do is for our good and for His glory!

At this time, I'll invite our musicians to come back up as we respond to God's Word in song and communion. When we rely on our good Father through persistent prayer and walk in proactive, self-giving love toward others, we find ourselves stepping onto a distinct path. Next week we'll see how Jesus warns that this path is not the default highway of the world. It is narrow, difficult, and traveled by few.

And remember, God hasn't left us to work through any of this on our own. He has placed His Spirit within us and surrounded us with helpers all around! Please reach out so that we can seek His grace together.

Let's pray: Great and precious Heavenly Father, we confess that we often doubt Your goodness. Teach us to ask, seek, and knock as children who trust their Father. Shape us by Your Spirit into people who reflect Your generosity to others. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday to Monday Connection:

- **Question**: See questions above and below.
- **Next Step**: See questions above and below.
- **Note**: If you are not a Christ follower and would like to investigate further what all this might mean for you, please come talk with any of our leaders, or the person who brought you.

Takeaways to discuss with your people (in addition to the underlined questions above!):

1. How does trusting God as a "Good Father" change the way you pray when answers seem delayed, difficult, or different than expected?
2. How is Jesus' "Golden Rule" fundamentally different from the passive rule of worldly ethics ("You do you" or "Just take care of yourself")

3. Which posture of prayer feels most challenging in your current season: Asking (asking for help), Seeking (pursuing God's presence), or Knocking (persisting through closed doors)?
4. Set a daily phone alarm to pause and persistently bring one specific, heavy kingdom request before the Father every day this week.
5. Identify one person in your workplace, neighborhood, or family who has ignored or irritated you, and perform one unprompted, tangible act of blessing for them this week.

Quotes related to this passage:

Considerations for discussion leaders:
1. Keep circling back to the big idea and main points of the passage to stay on track.
2. Keep the group small for deeper sharing. Single underlined sentences are for discussion, while key points are double underlined.
3. Keep the discussion around 30 mins. Once you hit the "sweet spot", spend your time there.
4. Keep these simple questions in your back pocket: What is God teaching you? What are you going to do about it? How will it help you love & serve others?

Other Articles/Songs/Videos: Please ask us for help obtaining other resources.

Bibliography (Note: Our use of these materials does not imply full agreement with them)

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