

did
JESUS
really say?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: WEEK SEVEN

Please Read Matthew 7:7-11

7 "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. 9 "Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 11 If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

What immediately jumps out to you from this passage?

Thinking about the historical context, what do you think would have stood out to people in the first century?

Looking at these verses through a modern lens, what should contemporary followers of Christ glean from these verses?

1. Read verses 7-8 again please: 7 "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened." Here Jesus gives some mysterious and powerful thoughts about how we should pray. These verses follow directly after Jesus tells us six times what not to do: Do not worry, do not store up treasure in heaven and so forth. So, Jesus moves from teaching what we should not do to forcefully teaching us what to do. Do you see any difference between asking, seeking and knocking?

- What do you make of verse 8? Here Jesus seems to promise us that our prayers will be answered. What do you think about that?

- It might be good to note that these three instructions on prayer come to us in the present tense and they are intended to be continual. So, we are told, in essence, to pray right now in the present, and stay connected with God, asking, seeking and knocking. Is it difficult for you as you move through your day to stay connected to God? How might you improve in this area?

2. Please read verse 9-10 again: 9 "Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 11 If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!" What do you make of these verses?

- Here we see God depicted again as our father in heaven. As you picture God as a father, do you tend to see God as loving, angry or detached? How does Jesus want us to see our Father in heaven?
- One of the implications of these verses is that if we don't ask or seek or knock, God would not give us the good gift that we see in verse 11. James 4:2, which says: **you do not have, because you don't ask God**, seems to agree. How does it affect you to know there are blessings and "good gifts" God has for you but if you're not asking, seeking, knocking, you will not receive them?

3. Jesus says something very similar in Luke 11:9 -13. The context of the passage in Luke is Jesus teaching the disciples to pray boldly. Read that passage and discuss here the differences between what Jesus says in Matthew and then His later teaching in Luke.

- Why do you think Jesus said the same thing with a slight variation when he was teaching on prayer in Luke 11?

4. Let's focus on the direct impact of this teaching of Jesus. First, we should examine how intensely we are approaching our prayer life. One of the Church fathers, John Chrysostom, said in the third century "To knock is to approach God with intensity and passion." How often do you approach God with intensity and passion?

- Secondly, this passage calls us to examine how connected we remain with God. Jesus, in John 15, calls us to abide or remain with Him. This passage shows us how to abide, we abide through continual prayer. Read John 15:5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." Being brutally honest, does this verse describe how you approach prayer? Is God calling you to reexamine how you pray?
- Lastly, this passage asks us to examine how we see God. Jesus presents God as our loving heavenly Father ready and willing to respond, be found, and open the door to us, even giving us the Holy Spirit. Is this how you see God? How might seeing God in this way change your prayer life?