



# Mid-Week

**Bible Study and Prayer  
Wednesdays 6:45pm – 8pm**



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## Three Steps to Persistent Prayer (Keep on Asking, Keep on Seeking, Keep on Knocking)

### Matthew 7:7-12 (NKJV)

- <sup>7</sup> "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.

### PRAYER – ASKING, SEEKING, KNOCKING

*We ask for what we wish; we seek for what we miss;  
We knock for that from which we feel ourselves shut out.*

#### 1. The English understanding

- a.) These words describing prayer are all verbs (ask, seek, knock) and they imply direct action. Thus we must understand prayer as being active rather than passive
- b.) These words also have a natural progression of action from least aggressive to most aggressive. The issue Jesus is raising is one of intensity. If we pray half hearted once or twice a week we shouldn't expect much from God

#### 2. The deeper Greek meaning

- a.) The statement that Jesus is making here is in the Greek imperative, which means that this is a command. When Jesus says this He fully expects every believer to be active in prayer. Prayer is not an option.
- b.) The way Jesus says these words are also important because they are in the present tense. These are words of continuous action. In English this would read keep asking, keep seeking and keep knocking

This famous text is not *carte blanche* for our material desires. Rather, it tells us how to pray for the character of the kingdom in our lives. It instructs us how to pray the Lord's Prayer. It teaches us to pray that our morals and ethics will be like Christ's. In a word, Jesus teaches us how to pray for our spiritual lives. [K. HUGHES] Jesus' language is unusually compelling because the three verbs "ask... seek... knock" command an ascending intensity. "Ask" implies asking for a conscious need. The word also suggests humility in asking, for it is commonly used of one asking a superior. The next step, "seek," involves asking but adds action. The idea is not merely to express one's need, but to get up and look around for help. It involves effort. "Knock" includes asking plus acting plus persevering—like someone who keeps pounding on a closed door! The stacking of these words is extremely forceful, but the fact that they are present imperatives gives them even more punch. In the Greek language there are two kinds of imperatives. The aorist imperative gives one definite command, such as "shut the door" or "pick up the newspaper." The present imperative, however, commands continuous

action—"keep on shutting the door" or "keep on picking up the newspaper." So our text really reads: "Keep on asking and it will be given to you; keep on seeking and you will find; keep on knocking and the door will be opened to you." [K. HUGHES]

### The three steps to persistent prayer

#### 1. Step one: asking

- a.) Asking is to make a request of God
- b.) Two realities of asking
  - 1.) We ask something of God when we have a need
  - 2.) We ask something of God because He can provide for all of our needs

#### 2. Step two: seeking

- a.) Seeking is asking plus action (Example: Car shopping)
- b.) We seek when we need something of value to us
- c.) There are times when we need to take an active role in answers to prayer
- d.) Pray as if everything depends on God, then work as if everything depends on you. Martin Luther

#### SEEKING GOD GOES THROUGH STAGES<sup>a</sup>:

- DUTY – When you know in your heart what you should do.
- DESIRE – When there is a yearning to seek Him.
- DECISION – When you stop any delay, only act.
- DETERMINATION – You will not let things hinder you.
- DISCIPLINE – When you overcome any diversion that would turn you in the wrong direction.
- DISCOVERY – When you find out how real God can be. (Proverbs 8:17; Proverbs 8:35)
- DELIGHT – The joy of His presence. (Psalm 16:11)

#### 3. Step three: knocking

- a.) Knocking is asking plus action plus attitude. This implies our petition in asking, our purpose in action and our persistence in knocking
- b.) We knock when we are shut out from what we need and desire entrance. We knock on the things that only God can do
- c.) Two key realities
  - 1.) When knocking we try every door until we find the right one
  - 2.) Once we find the right door we continue knocking until we gain entrance. This is a revealing factor in how much we depend on God

Luke records the same words, word-for-word, in his Gospel ([11:9](#), [10](#)), but he precedes them with Jesus' mini-parable in [verses 5-8](#): *Then he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.' Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs."*

Someone once said, "Any discussion of the doctrine of prayer that does not issue in the practice of prayer is not only *not* helpful, but harmful." That is true. We would all do well to engage in the following actions:

- 1. Search out some spiritual qualities that you lack but would like to have. List them on your prayer list.
- 2. Pray passionately for them—keep asking, seeking, knocking.
- 3. Have confidence that God your Father will give them to you.

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<sup>a</sup> R. T. Kendall, Sermon on the Mount, 354.

## **10 Requirements for Answered Prayer**

**1. You must pray in Jesus' Name.**

- John 15:16 and 1 Timothy 2:5 – The only Way to God

**2. You must pray according to the Will of God.**

- You are submitting your will to God's will. We don't dictate to God what He is supposed to do. We should pray, "Not my will, but Yours be done," like Christ.

**3. You must pray with Dependence upon the Holy Spirit.**

- Romans 8:26 – The Holy Spirit brings your heart and God's heart together to make something happen.

**4. You must pray in Faith.**

- Hebrews 11:6; Mark 11:24; James 5:15.

**5. You must be righteous in your Lifestyle.**

- **Right relations with God** (Isaiah 59:1-2).
- On confessing sin – *"We must never confess sin beyond the circle of that sin's influence. Private sin requires private confession; public sin requires public confession. It is wrong for Christians to hang dirty laundry in public, for such confessing might do more harm than the original sin."* (Warren Wiersbe)
- **Right relations with people** (1 John 4:20-21). If you are at odds with another Christian, if you are at odds with God, you are not ready to pray. Go and make things right with your brother/sister and then pray. (Matthew 5:23-24)

**6. You must pray Earnestly.** James 5:16

Kneeling; Praying Aloud; Fasting from something

**7. You must Persist in prayer.**

Luke 11:5-8; Matthew 7:7-11

Ask (and keep on asking); Seek (and keep on seeking); Knock (and keep on knocking)

God's delays are not His denials.

**8. You must pray with Boldness.** Hebrews 4:16

A Pastor told D.L. Moody to pray for \$5,000; but Moody prayed for \$50,000 – GOD GAVE HIM \$50,000!

**9. You must incorporate Thanksgiving.**

Philippians 4:6-7.

**10. You must Abide in God's Word.**

John 15:7; Proverbs 28:9.

### WHAT ABOUT UNANSWERED PRAYER?

**Every prayer from every believer is heard and answered by God**

**If the request is wrong, God says, "No."**

**If the timing is wrong, God says, "Slow."**

**If you are wrong, God says, "Grow."**

**But if the request is right, the timing is right and you are right, God says, "Go!" – Bill Hybels**

### **EXTRA TEACHING MATERIAL**

INTRODUCTION STORY: Dr. C. Roy Angel used to be a noted pastor in Miami, Florida, when I was a boy. One of the things that Dr. Angel would do in his preaching, was to tell stories. He was a great illustrator of messages with stories and he told a story one time of a shepherd boy who was out tending his sheep. And he happened to look down, and the shepherd boy saw the most beautiful flower he believed he had ever seen. He got down on his hands and knees and looked at that flower. And it was so beautiful that he dug it out of the earth, root and all and cupped it in his hands and brought it up closer to his face to look at it.

When he did that, there was a mountain nearby, and it seemed that the entire mountain would open up, as if there were doors in the mountain on great oil hinges. And the doors swung open. And the sunlight went into the side of that mountain into that great vault in the mountain. And the boy looked in there, and he saw all kinds of treasures. Gold and silver, and diamonds and rubies and sapphires. He had never seen anything like that. He went in there and set the flower down. And he began to gather that treasure. Rubies, and diamonds, and emeralds, and gold. His arms were full of treasure.

He's just a shepherd boy. And now he is wealthy. And he takes the treasure and begins to make his way out of the mountain and he hears a voice that says, "Don't forget the best." But he has the gold, he has the silver, he has the rubies, the emeralds the sapphires. He looks around is there something he didn't see, is there anything better than this? No, he's got the best. And he starts out again, and the voice says, "Don't forget the best." He looks around one more time. What could be better than this? And he walks out again into the sunlight, and when he does, the great doors in that mountainside close, and disappear. And he looks in his hands, and he has nothing but dirt. And the voice says, "The best was the flower that was the key to the vault, and you left it locked inside the vault."

That's only a story. Of course it's not true. Just a parable, just a story, just a fable. But friend, the best, the key to the vault of all of God's treasure is prayer. Don't forget the best. Now you're gathering treasure every place. But the key to the vault is prayer. Jesus said, ask and it shall be given you. Seek and you will find, knock and it shall be opened unto you.

As James says, "You do not have, because you do not ask God" ([James 4:2](#)). Over 200 years ago John Newton wrote the following hymn:

*Come, my soul, thy case prepare;  
Jesus loves to answer prayer;  
He Himself has bid thee pray,  
Therefore will not say thee nay.  
Thou art coming to a King;  
Large petitions with thee bring;  
For His grace and power are such,  
None can ever ask too much.*

#### **According to a poll on prayer for Newsweek<sup>b</sup>, the following percentage said:**

They ask for health or success for a child or family member when they pray -- 82

They ask for strength to overcome a personal weakness -- 75

They never ask for financial or career success -- 36

God answers prayers -- 87

God doesn't answer prayers -- 51

They believe God does not play favorites in answering prayers -- 82

God answers prayers for healing someone with an incurable disease -- 79

Prayers for help in finding a job are answered -- 73

They believe that when God doesn't answer their prayers, it means it wasn't God's will to answer -- 54

They don't turn away from God when prayers go unanswered -- 82

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<sup>b</sup> 3/31/1997

## **WHY DOES GOD NOT ANSWER SPIRITUAL REQUESTS IMMEDIATELY?**

R. T. KENDALL NOTES, "God does not give us everything that is spiritual all at once in order that success in answered prayer comes when we are ready for it. As Dr. Lloyd-Jones used to say to me, 'The worst thing that can happen to a man is to succeed before he is ready.' This can happen if your prayer is answered too soon! You might begin to take yourself too seriously and become self-righteous."

*I asked God for strength that I might achieve  
I was made weak that I might learn humbly to obey  
I asked for health that I might do greater things  
I was given infirmity that I might do better things  
I asked for riches that I might be happy  
I was given poverty that I might be wise  
I asked for power that I might have the praise of men  
I was given weakness that I might feel the need of God  
I asked for all things that I might enjoy life  
I was given life that I might enjoy all things  
I got nothing that I asked for – but everything I had hoped for  
Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered  
I am among all men most richly blessed.*

There is nothing that will grow you as a Christian more than prayer. You see when you abide in the Lord Jesus Christ, and he abides in you, then you are growing as you pray.

Have you ever wondered why God doesn't answer your prayer immediately? Because he wants you to grow some more. Here is a boy that asks a girl for a date. She looks at him and she says well he doesn't use good manners, he's not courteous, he doesn't dress neatly, he's got dirt under his fingernails and there are other things about him, his shoes are not shined. And she says well I just don't think I want a date, thank you, I'm busy. Well he wonders why didn't she why didn't she go out with me? I wonder what it could be?

He asks friend. Why do you think that Susie would not date me? He says you want me to be honest with you? Well, yes. You've got bad breath. Me? You've got bad breath; you ask me I'm going to tell you. Well, he said, I didn't know I didn't have bad breath. And so he goes in and, you know, he drinks a glass of iced scope and he brushes his teeth and then he asks again. And she still says no.

He goes to his friend again why do you think she wouldn't go out with me? He said well, look at the way that you are dressed. Look how your shirt is dirty. Is that shirt dirty? Why of course, go look in the mirror. And on and on this goes. And one day he comes. He looks sweet, he smells sweet, he is sweet, and he says to her, please go out with me. She says I believe I will. And they have a wonderful date.

Now, that's a small illustration. But you know sometimes we come to God and we say God, please do this. But there is something God wants us to do first. Prayer is the way of developing our lives.

At the Constitutional Convention there was so much bickering and fighting going on between the colonies that solutions to some problems seemed impossible. Benjamin Franklin proposed that, in an effort to affirm common ground and purpose, the delegates begin each day with prayer. Alexander Hamilton argued against the idea, saying it would give people the wrong impression-it might make the convention delegates appear desperate and unable to solve their own problems. The proposal came to a vote. At that moment our founding fathers made a crucial decision. They decided not to pray. They decided to do it themselves, without God's help.