



GO AND...

ASKING GOD

A Bible Study on Matthew 7:7-12

Matthew 7:7-12 (NRSV-CE)

7 'Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. 9 Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? 10 Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake? 11 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him! 12 'In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.

If you are in a group have one person read the text out loud or if you are doing the study individually read it out loud for yourself. Listen for words or phrases that stand out for you.

What do you wonder about from a phrase or whole reading?

God's people in Jesus' time loved prayer. Rabbis said quite lovely things about prayer, like, "God is as near to God's creatures as the ear to the mouth." Or, "Human beings can hardly hear two people talking at once, but God, if all the world calls, at one time, hears their cry."¹ Jesus had been raised to love prayer. He shares that love with his disciples in the Sermon on the Mount (the source of our text) and throughout his ministry. So we ask, "What can we glean from this text about prayer and in particular about asking in prayer?"

Do you love prayer? What does prayer bring to your life?

How does prayer affect your relationship with God?

What would you pray for if you were seeking God's rule and God's righteousness? (Hint: When I hear the word "righteous," I think, "right - relationship.")

What do you ask God for?

How does God respond to your ask?

Who is the God you ask?

- Santa Claus – give us what we want – IF we are on the nice list and only lumps of coal IF we're on the naughty list
- Butler – We demand of God to do our bidding. God is there for every longing, whim
- Grudging – We ask, but it is like squeezing and coercing something out of God
- CEO – Just bring God the big stuff, don't bother with the little things, figure those out by yourself
- Kind – more ready to give than we are to ask
- Wise – responding out of wisdom and love – which means not always giving us what we want
- _____ - ***what other gods might you be asking something from?***

Jesus compares God to a parent who knows how to give good gifts to their children.

What is your heart-response to this teaching of Jesus?

The call to ask, seek, knock, in the Greek language is in the present imperative. Which means it is a continual action. So, verse 7 is better translated, "Keep on asking... Keep on seeking... Keep on knocking..." Jesus then, is teaching us to be persistent in asking.

What does being persistent in prayer add to our understanding of God and Ask God?

Have you been persistent in prayer? Has that changed your prayers in any way?

A focus on Verse 12:

We are all familiar with what has become known as the, "Golden Rule." It may be the most universally famous thing Jesus ever said. Among rabbis of the day such a saying was common – but most often expressed in the negative: "Don't do to others what you don't want them to do to you." In this form, the focus is on NOT doing something (Do no harm.) In Jesus' version, he calls us to actively DO something for the sake of the other, to help, to love.

Does this teaching change our prayers? Does it impact what we ask for? How?

Conclusion:

God loves our prayers! God is a parent who doesn't mind the child who constantly pesters God for answers to their questions and asks. God promises to respond in love and care. And we are expected to respond to others with the same love and care.

What is one thing you will change in your prayers, include in your prayers, or focus more on in your prayers, based on this scripture passage?

Go back to the first question in this study (“What do you wonder about from a phrase or whole reading?”).

Has your wondering changed? In what way?

As you consider the theme, Go and... Ask,

How will what you learned and reflected upon from this passage, show up as you join others in asking honest, difficult questions of one another?

Closing Prayer:

Good and Gracious God, we are so grateful that as we wonder and ask hard questions, you invite us to come to you. For you are the good parent who responds with love and care. Keep our hearts open to your leading. Let us always ask with persistent curiosity, ready to receive what you wisely give. In Christ we pray. Amen.