

# Sermon on the Mount, Part 9: Ask, Seek, Knock – God’s Framework for Prayer

For parts 1 through 8 of this series, see “Sermon on the Mount, Part 1: The Beatitudes”; “Sermon on the Mount, Part 2: Salt and Light”; “Sermon on the Mount Part 3: Dealing with Anger”; “Sermon on the Mount, Part 4: Love Your Enemies”; “Sermon on the Mount, Part 5: Quit Being a Showoff!”; “Sermon on the Mount, Part 6: Store Your Treasures in Heaven”; “Sermon on the Mount, Part 7: Stop Worrying”; and “Sermon on the Mount, Part 8: Examine Yourself” on the Bible Studies page at [www.ChooseJesusToday.com](http://www.ChooseJesusToday.com).

Jesus continued his sermon with a message about prayer. Some think this focus on prayer is out of place in the sermon as Jesus just finished a discussion on materialism and unnecessary worry and anxiety. However, the focus on prayer is perfectly appropriate because we, as the children of God, must remain in a continual state of prayer, asking the Lord to provide our needs, seeking his face for wisdom and peace, and holding steadfast in our faith that He will open doors for us. Jesus said:

<sup>7</sup> Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. <sup>8</sup> For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

<sup>9</sup> Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? <sup>10</sup> Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? <sup>11</sup> 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! Matthew 7:7-11 (NIV).

This passage assures us that if we pray within the framework Christ established, he WILL answer our prayers. Some people may lament that their prayers have not been answered, and there are reasons why that may be so. Perhaps someone did not ask with right motive, did not have a clean heart, or did not forgive their enemies. Or maybe that person “asked” but did not follow up with “seeking” and “knocking”, for all three actions are interconnected and must be performed together to be fruitful.

## **Ask**

What does it mean to “ask” Jesus for something? The answer is simple. It means to pray. But “how” should we pray? We should pray in the will of God. When Jesus taught “The Lord’s Prayer,” he instructed us to pray that his will be done on earth as it is done in Heaven. If the thing we are praying for is within the Lord’s will, he will grant that request. We have no right to ask God for anything that will dishonor his name, delay his kingdom, or disturb his will on earth. We also have no right to treat God as an ATM machine and ask for wealth and material gain. Here are some of the things we should be asking for:

- Mercy for our enemies (Matthew 5:44);
- That God’s will be done on earth (Matthew 6:10);
- That God will provide what we *need*, not what we *want* (Matthew 6:11);
- That we do not enter temptation (Matthew 6:13, Matthew 26:41);
- That God will send forth laborers to spread the Gospel (Luke 10:2);
- That the Word of God will flow freely through God’s ministers (II Thessalonians 3:1);
- For government authorities (1 Timothy 2:1-3);
- For wisdom (James 1:5); and
- That God will heal the sick (James 5:13-16).

This list is not exhaustive, but it provides examples of the types of selfless prayers we should lay before the Lord. The more time we spend in communion with God, the more we will know what to ask for in accordance with God’s will.

## **Seek**

Just asking is not enough. We cannot offer up a prayer to God then sit back, fold our hands, and wait for something to miraculously fall into our lap. We also have to seek God. The Bible is filled with instructions to seek the Lord:

- But if from there you seek the Lord your God, you will find him if you seek him with all your heart and with all your soul. (Deuteronomy 4:29);
- My heart says of you, “Seek his face!” Your face, Lord, I will seek. (Psalm 27:8);

- The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing. (Psalm 34:10);
- Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always. (Psalm 105:4);
- Blessed are those who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart; they do no wrong. (Psalm 119:2-3);
- I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me. (Proverbs 8:17);
- You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. (Jeremiah 29:13); and
- Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. (Matthew 6:33).

It is God's desire that we seek him continually, with all of our heart. Seeking God and his kingdom means putting his will and his plan before our desires. It also means living in holiness and sanctifying our life. If we seek God, we will find him. That is a promise.

### ***Knock***

Here, Jesus is telling us that we have to act to bring about the thing we asked for. Again, it is not always enough just to ask. We also have to "knock", which, in this context, means to "act." If we want wisdom, don't just ask for it. Search the scriptures, diligently study God's Word, and surround yourself with wise and Godly people. If you are praying for healing, make sure you are doing all that you can do on your end, such as eating healthy foods, drinking plenty of water, and getting sufficient exercise. If you are praying that a loved one will choose Jesus, make sure you are setting a Godly example for that person and showing them the love of Jesus through your life. And so on. Exercise faith in doing these things and praise God all the while. Keep knocking until the door is opened and the prayer is answered.

### ***Conclusion***

Ask, seek, knock. These actions build upon each other. First, we give voice to our petition. Then, we seek God by focusing our heart and mind on him. Last, we act by faith in a way that pleases God. The apostle John said, "Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth." (1 John 3:18).

God promised an answer when we pray in his will. Sometimes, however, the answer is "no" or "not yet." God loves us, and his love is perfect. God knows far

better than we do what is best for us, and his knowledge is perfect. God has a better way for us, and his way is perfect. God is just and fair, and his justice is perfect. We may not understand why the answer is “no” or why we are being told to wait, but we can have peace in knowing that God is perfect, and his grace is sufficient for us. Choose to ask in prayer. Choose to seek the face of the Lord. Choose to knock at his door and act by faith. And most of all, choose Jesus today!

*God bless!*