



Ask, Seek, Knock

March 11, 2007

Icebreaker

What is the biggest thing you have ever asked God to do?

Asking or requesting things from God is fundamental to prayer. Looking at prayers in the Bible reveals all sorts of requests that people have made to God and all sorts of responses from God to prayers. *Why doesn't God always answer every prayer just like we want Him to?*

- He is God and we are not.
- What we think is best is not always best.
- God is not a robot who has to do everything we think He should do.

Text

Matthew 7:7-11

What three things does Jesus encourage us to do in making a request to God?

- Ask Him
- Seek Him
- Knock on His door

What does Jesus say are the results of our asking, seeking, and knocking?

- Asks—receives
- Seeks—finds
- Knocks—door is opened.

Ask

Each of these three things get progressively more intense in involving God in our daily concerns. Asking makes sense. We do that all the time when we ask him to heal our loved ones or to protect us in times of danger.

Seek

Seeking turns up the intensity. *How is seeking God more intense than just using words?*

- It involves an attitude. It is harder to seek God with a bad attitude.
- It involves action. Merely asking may not show God how serious we are in our concerns. Really seeking Him out to hear how He will answer our request shows Him our sincerity.

Seeking God out involves listening. *What are some ways we can intently seek God out and put this into practice?*

- When you are seeking an answer you have to be ready to listen. If all we want to hear is the answer we want and no alternatives, we are not really seeking out God for who He is and want He wants.

- **Studying God’s word**—One of the best ways to listen and to understand His will is by reading His Word.
- **Fasting**—Fasting shows God that we are seriously seeking Him. We are seeking Him so diligently that we are willing to put our desires on the back-burner and are readying ourselves for what He has to say about our request.
- **Persistence**—Seeking requires persistence. You don’t seek someone for a few minutes and give up. When something is important, you remain persistent.

Knock

The third thing Jesus encourages is a little more strange. *What do you think Jesus means by “Knock and the door will be opened?”*

- Obviously there is not a big door somewhere we can walk up to and knock.
- This is a direct approach to God in boldness to present our request before Him and let Him know we need an answer.

It is one thing to call a friend and ask for something. It is quite another to seek them out and ask them again. Only as a last resort do we go to their home and knock on the door until someone finally answers. Jesus is talking about praying with urgency and purpose.

How does this level of intensity weed the unimportant and selfish prayers from our prayer life?

- It seems a little more foolish to be this intense in requesting selfish things from God.
- Seeking God this way helps us be more concerned about spiritual matters than we ever have before.

Why does God need more from us than just being asked?

- God wants to know that we are serious about our requests.
- Seeking God out this boldly-with our heart, time, and attitude requires a faith that may be lacking when all we do is ask.

God’s Answer

Jesus says when we ask we receive. *Does that mean God always answers “yes” to all of our prayers?*

How can we still receive even when the answer is “no”?

- God often provides in ways that we cannot expect or imagine.
- God’s “no” is just as much of a blessing as His yes.

How is God’s no as much of a blessing as His yes?

- Because God knows the best answer for us.
- God can see the whole picture and He knows just what we need.
- When He says no to one thing He is saying yes to something better.

We never earn God’s answer in our favor by trying to manipulate him through fasting or increased Bible study. We do those things because we desire to be in

tune with Him and because we desire His will to be done even when it doesn't match our will. That is what spiritual transformation is all about—becoming more like Him and not Him becoming more like us. Because of that we make our requests in light of the fact that He may not answer the way we like but that we will accept whatever He sees fit.

When in your life have you received a “no” or “not yet” from God only to find out later why that was the perfect answer?

How do stories like that build our faith when God doesn't answer the way we thought He would?

We make requests of God to find out His will. There is a real temptation to say things like—If you will just let me do this, I will _____ (fill in the blank). And we try to make a deal with God. Prayer is not about making deals. Prayer is about seeking the will of God.

Application

What obstacles have you faced in your prayer life that have kept you from seeking God the way you should?

How will those obstacles be overcome in your life?

- Hand them over to God in prayer.

How could you better incorporate fasting and Bible study as ways to listen to God?

When are times you find it hardest to pray your requests to God and how can you overcome that?

Let us get out of the habit of routine, mechanical prayer and really seek God from our hearts through our prayers.

Put it Into Practice

Hebrews 4:16 says, “Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” Take your three biggest concerns before God with boldness and confidence (asking, seeking, and knocking) and listen intently for his response through quiet times of Bible study and prayer.