

Sermon on the Mount – Ask and It Will Be Given to You

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MAIN VERSES

[Matthew 7:7](#)

Shabbat Shalom, everybody. Ask and it will be given to you.

You guys remember Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory? Good. We have such a span of generations in the fellowship, it's hard to know who to reference, but everybody knows Willy Wonka. The one with Gene Wilder? The good one? Okay. There's a character—the little girl. Veruca Salt, the spoiled one, right? The rich kid who spots the golden egg-laying geese. She walked into the room with the golden egg-laying geese, and then she decides that she must have one of these eggs. Not just someday, but now. And then she sings the unforgettable tantrum: "Don't care how, I want it now." And then she gets dumped down the egg chute. It's funny because it's just absurd, right? But also, I almost feel like it's kind of familiar. Because there's a little bit of that Veruca girl in all of us, if we're honest—especially when it comes to wanting things now, and especially when we approach God in prayer.

The Misunderstood Promise

Yeshua says in [Matthew 7](#), and somehow along the way, we read that verse through the lens of Miss Veruca Salt. And we imagine that it means... If I want something badly enough, if I ask loudly enough, if I pray the right way, then God has to give it to me right now. But the older you get, the more you realize something doesn't quite work as streamlined as we think it should, because life happens. We ask, but sometimes we don't receive. We're not allowed to say that. We're not allowed to go beyond the veil of prayer and prayer life. Sometimes prayers don't get answered, at least the way that I want them to. I knock, and the door seems to be shut pretty tight. I seek, and then sometimes we just feel lost.

So either God is ignoring us, or maybe we've misunderstood this verse just a little bit. We may have misunderstood a lot of verses that we've discovered during the Sermon on the Mount. And

so today we're continuing this journey through the sermon, and we've arrived at one of the most familiar but probably most misunderstood teachings of Yeshua: "Ask and it will be given to you. Seek and you will find it. Knock and the door will be opened." This is a verse that we're very familiar with. It's been embroidered on pillows, stuck on refrigerator magnets, plastered on Instagram posts. But rarely do we sit with the weight of what Yeshua is truly offering here.

And as much as we want it to be something different, something I'd call a vending machine promise. Prayer is not a blank check from God, as much as I want it to be. Because there's just something easy about picturing God as a genie in a bottle. Make a wish. And yeah, it gets pretty disappointing sometimes when it doesn't work out like it does in Aladdin, right? What if we've misread this because we fail to realize what it means to live with God now, in this moment?

The Kingdom Available Now

There's a book called *The Divine Conspiracy* by Dallas Willard, an amazing author. And if you haven't read it, it's one of the best. I wouldn't call it a commentary. I'd call it an application of the Sermon on the Mountain. It's one of the best I've read out there. But he insists that the kingdom Jesus describes—the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of the heavens, the kingdom of God—is not something that's far off. It's not far away in this foreign, distant place. It's not something that's waiting to begin when you die. It's available to us now, but we must learn how to live in it. We have to understand how the kingdom works, how it flows. And part of learning that is learning how to ask, how to seek, and how to knock.

Last week we sat through a tough teaching from Yeshua about not giving dogs what is sacred, and of course, don't give pearls to the pigs. We wrestled with how easy it is to confuse sharing wisdom with forcing control. We talked about how timing, discernment, and compassion—these are things that matter. When you're a person who's really excited about what God is doing in the world, in your life, and about the Word, sometimes we have to learn about timing, discernment, and compassion before we go and fire hose it to everybody we know, right? Not everyone is ready to receive what's valuable. Not because they're bad, but because they need something else first.

From Readiness to Growth

And this week, Yeshua, in that same rhythm, he says, "Ask and it will be given. Seek, find, knock and the door will be opened." At first it sounds like a shift in topic from last week till today. But what if it's not? What if this section of the Sermon on the Mount is still about the

same thing it was about this whole chapter? Timing. What if this is about readiness? What if last week's message was about not forcing things onto people before they're ready, but this week it's about how God doesn't force things onto us before we're ready?

Because let's be honest... Assume we've all used this verse as kind of a shortcut to get what we really want from God. But what if ask and seek and knock isn't about demanding anything from God? What if prayer is less about getting and more about becoming? What if Yeshua is inviting us to participate in a kingdom that is already opened up to us, but also one that requires us to grow into it? So let's slow down and look closer at what's going on in these verses. Because the next few verses Yeshua gives us are less about getting something and more about how to live in a relationship with a God who is always giving, just not always the way that we expect.

Learning Who God Really Is

How many of you on your faith journey—the ones with wisdom in your walk with God—have realized God is a little bit different than He was when you first came to believe in the very beginning? A little bit. After you've been on the journey, right? Right? Yeah, Frodo probably looked at Gandalf a little bit differently after the Ring became involved, right? After you've been on the journey, you learn a little bit more about not only God, but how God works. And you realize that God is a lot bigger than the box we love to construct around God. God's love is a lot bigger than the containers we like to seal it up in to keep it guarded. His mercy is meant to drown. And sometimes we can't stand that. Sometimes we get frustrated because the God that we worship really isn't the God that we tried to create in our own image. It's much larger, much bigger. And sometimes that God—as a good, good father—wants us to grow instead of just being a Veruca Salt and getting everything we want.

Dang it, that frustrates me sometimes, even now. Been a believer all my life. But looking at the resume and the journey, man, it'll make your faith bold.

The Language Barrier

So the first place that we're going to start is acknowledging that we have an unfair advantage right off the bat when we go to study the Bible. And that unfair advantage is the fact that it was not written in English. It's a language barrier. There's Greek and Hebrew, maybe some Aramaic scattered throughout. And because of this, we sometimes miss things.

Like in Greek, the verbs ask, seek, and knock—they're something called a present active imperative. And if you want to know more about that, you can ask our local Greek expert, David

Wilber over there. He has an award for it. But they mean keep asking. They mean keep seeking. They mean keep knocking. If you have an NLT version of the Bible, that's how it's translated: "Keep asking, keep knocking, keep seeking." So Yeshua is forming disciples who will live persistently within the reality of the kingdom, not because God is reluctant, but because we are often just unaware.

Living in Relationship with God

The passage is not about wearing God down until He gives us what we want. Because let's be real, we've all been there. We've all tried that. We treat a prayer like bugging God over and over and over again until He caves. It's like a cosmic customer service. With my line of work, I deal with Google and their customer service a lot. I'll put a request in, and I won't hear from them for a couple weeks. And when you go to inquire about the request that has been unanswered, there's always a notification when you go back into the backend of the customer service ticket system. It says: "Please do not put in multiple tickets for the problem, as it will only further..." and I've never read the rest of it because I'm already putting in another one and another one that references the other one and the other one, and I will get emails asking me to stop. "No, no, no, I need this taken care of."

But this is something deeper. This is about remaining in relationship with a God who is always near, a God who is always good and always responsive. And the more we live in that relationship, the more our asking begins to change.

How Our Prayers Change

So you've been a believer for a long time. You've probably noticed that your prayer life has changed a little bit. And it may not change in one way or another, but it probably looks different based on your experiences with God. Your prayer life often has a lot less question marks in it nowadays. Prayer life may not have as many requests in it.

My evening prayer life consists of just thank you. That's the first words: thank you, God. And it's almost to the point where it's a subconscious thing. Things just roll out. Thank you for that, my kids, family, the journey that I've been on, because I know you're always working towards good. Thank you.

Because the more that we live in that relationship, the more asking does begin to change. We begin to stop asking for power and we start asking for wisdom. We stop seeking control and we start seeking God's will. We tend to stop knocking on the doors of opportunity and start

knocking on the door of communion instead. And slowly, our hearts begin to shift from manipulation to trust, from certainty to surrender. Because I think that's a transition that God takes us all through. That's the Sermon on the Mount, a sermon of how to enter the kingdom of heaven. And surrendering and yielding and letting go of controlling others, that's the recipe.

Yeah, but Matt, that's great. Sounds good. What happens if someone else doesn't do what I want them to do, though? I mean, let's be real. That sounds like a kind of a God problem more, though, than you're a problem. Yeah, but Matt, I need to pray so that they change. And if that's not where I just need to do something. You're not God. You're not here to control anybody. That's not the power that was given to you by God.

Our concern as believers is to emulate the love of God like God. Like rain that falls on both the wicked and the righteous equally. That's your job description.

Asking, Seeking, and Knocking

But Yeshua continues after this section of scriptures. And he says, "How much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him?" See, these are the verses that are still going in line with what Yeshua just said about asking and giving. And notice that this is not a theology lesson. This is a lesson in trust.

But another part, let's go back. Put the verse back on the screen. What I love about this is so Yeshua. When he speaks, he speaks so eloquently. He loves to mess with you. That's what he does. He loves to use irony, hyperbole, maybe some sarcasm. That's how he gets his point across. I love it.

So we're reading this, and he's speaking this to his disciples. And what's he say? Would you give your son a rock if they asked for bread? Of course not, right? My son comes, yeah, I'm going to give you the best bread I can get my hands on, right? I'm not going to give you a rock to chew on. But look what he says: "Will you give him a fish or will you give him a snake? If you, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more your Father in heaven?"

He doesn't even distinguish. He's like, you're evil, but even you know what to do. You know the right thing to do. You give him some bread. He knows us. But he knows that even though we're not good all the time, we still won't give our kids a rock to eat. How much more will your father give good gifts?

God's Generous Heart

Yeshua paints a picture of a God who is not like the gods of the nations. Aloof, stingy, angry. He's a father. Not in the broken, earthly sense some of us unfortunately carry, but in the truest, most generous, and most compassionate way.

Do you believe God is good? All the time. Not just intellectually, but do you believe God is good deep in your bones, in the middle of your anxiety, in the middle of your grief? Do you trust that God will not give you a stone when you've asked for bread?

Because when it comes down to it, most of our struggles in prayer aren't about asking, they're about fear. Fear that God doesn't care, or fear that God will disappoint us, or maybe fear that God is holding out, not giving us something. And so much of what Yeshua is addressing here is our perception of who God is. That's been the Sermon on the Mount. How do you perceive God? Because I'm giving you the reflection. I'm emulating everything the Father is.

If we believe God is stingy, we won't ask, let's be honest. If we believe God is indifferent, we're not going to seek him out. And if we believe God is cruel and angry, well, who would ever knock on that door? But if we believe he is the kind of God Yeshua reveals, then everything kind of changes at that point.

Prayer and Justice in the Kingdom

Yeshua isn't just talking about prayer in a personal or spiritual sense either. He's speaking into a social context where people longed for justice in the first century. In Luke's version of this teaching, he actually connects it directly with a widow who continually petitions a judge for justice until he gives it to her. She wears him down.

And this isn't to say that God is an unjust judge or anything like that. It's quite the opposite. But what Yeshua is telling us is something about the life in the kingdom and what it looks like. It looks like persistence. It looks like faith. It looks like daring to believe that God is responsive. And not just for our own needs, but for the needs of the world around us.

Because when you knock on heaven's door long enough, you start realizing that what you're asking for isn't just for you after all. It's for the hurting and the lonely and the oppressed as well. Because in our pursuit of inaugurating the kingdom of heaven on earth, it can't just be about us. It doesn't work that way.

The Life and Prayer of Desmond Tutu

There was a man who passed away recently. About 24 years ago, he was a great man, many of whom probably never even heard of him, or if they have, it's been heard in passing. He was an archbishop of the Anglican Church in South Africa. His name was Desmond Tutu.

And he was a small man in stature, soft-spoken by many standards, a man that just liked to laugh and giggle. But his presence could fill a room with more weight than any politician or general.

Tutu lived in South Africa during a time of apartheid. That word may sound distant, but it describes something that's heartbreakingly familiar to many parts of the world throughout history, even in the world today. Apartheid was a system—a legal system—that said your value is dependent on the color of your skin or ethnicity. It wasn't just prejudice, it was law.

So black Africans were told where they could live during this time, where they could work, where they could walk, what buses they could ride on, which schools their children could attend, everything. All aspects of life were controlled. Their rights were limited or customized just for them. If they protested, the system came down hard on them, jailing them, silencing them, or just shooting them.

Tutu's Faithful Response

Desmond Tutu saw all of this. He watched entire communities erased. He watched his own people shuffled around like objects, relocated so that white suburbs could expand. Most famous, I think, was District 6. They had to just bulldoze the whole community to make room for other things. He watched as dignity was stripped away from his own people, sometimes without a single bullet, just paperwork and silence.

He saw the power of a system that justified itself using God's name. A government that said, "We are doing this for order. We're doing this for morality, for the good of our nation." But here's where it gets surprising. Tutu didn't fight with rage. He didn't pick up a sword and organize militias.

As an archbishop, he grabbed his collar, his Bible, and his calling. And he started praying dangerous prayers. The most dangerous prayer of all: "God, these are the people that everyone around me wants to destroy, and I'm going to ask you to change them instead. Change us, God. God, I want you to break the back of injustice without breaking the people involved."

He kept showing up to protests, to courtrooms, and to the funerals. And every time he did, he prayed with the kind of persistence that Yeshua talks about in [Matthew 7](#). He asked God. And

he kept asking. And he sought peace in a society built on division and hatred. And he knocked on doors that seemed to be bolted shut for good.

Truth and Reconciliation

And eventually, things began to shift. Apartheid didn't fall overnight, but it did fall. And when it did, there was an organized attempt to evaluate what took place, to speak transparently about what took place and why, and to name the people that did it all. And the name of this panel was called the Truth and Reconciliation Commission because it wasn't about revenge. It was about accountability without annihilation. It was about holding a mirror up to the nation's soul and saying, "Let's tell the truth because without it, there's no healing."

In other words, they sat down with people who were responsible for going out and shooting kids in the head because they're black. The interviews of the people who did this said, "Yeah, it was just a day's work. It's just what we did. It had to be done for what we were doing." And the point wasn't to make them pay for all the bad things they did, send them to the gallows. No, the point was to tell the truth. No more hiding so that we can change and we can heal as a nation.

And what's so incredible is people confessed. People wept over their roles that they played in this. People forgave the people that played the roles in this. Not all of them, because nothing was perfect. Nothing ever is perfect. But it was perfect enough for a different kind of future to begin in South Africa.

And I bring this up because sometimes we read the Sermon on the Mount and we think it's only about our inner spiritual lives, right?

So the chapter starts out about not judging, right? Not judging others. And then when we get to the part about ask and it will be given, it's all about me. My personal requests. The mission isn't about you. It's about us.

Asking, Seeking, Knocking

This kind of asking, seeking, and knocking, it has power in the real world and in real conflicts. And if we're paying attention, we might hear a similar cry coming from other places in the world, in our own country, all over even today. People are still pleading for dignity, for safety, for home, for recognition. People knocking on the gates of governments, sometimes religious ones, begging not to be seen as threats or as animals, but as human beings made in the image of God. Desmond Tutu believed that you could stand against injustice without dehumanizing your

enemy. That justice soaked in mercy was not weakness. That was holiness. And he wanted to show that you didn't have to become like Pharaoh to be free from Pharaoh.

And so maybe today we ask ourselves, what doors am I knocking on? Whose doors am I knocking on? And how do we keep praying, not just for what we want, but for what is good, even if it takes years to unfold? Because when Tutu prayed, things didn't change right away. In fact, it took many years. And to be honest, after he started praying, guess what? It got worse. He watched friends die. He buried children that were shot for throwing rocks. And I'm sure he asked God, why haven't you answered yet? Because I think that's something that every mature Christian has said at one point. But in time, God did answer, just not in the way anyone expected. Jonah, right? And maybe that's the point.

Persistent Prayer

Persistent prayer isn't about pressuring God into action. It's about trusting that God is already acting in ways we often can't see until we look back. And when that day comes, we realize the door didn't stay shut. It just took longer to open than we thought it should. So we keep knocking, and we keep asking, and we keep seeking. Because justice isn't a dream. It's a door. And it opens through the kind of faith that looks foolish to the powerful, but faithful to the king.

And so I want to ask you today, what are you asking for? What are you seeking? What does your prayer life look like? Where are you knocking? Are you calling to God like a consumer looking for a product? Or are you coming like a child who knows their father is good? Maybe you've stopped asking because you didn't get what you wanted. Maybe you're afraid to knock because of what's behind the door. Maybe you're tired of seeking because the road has been long and hard.

When Prayer Feels Unanswered

I know that feeling. There was a season in my life where I was praying constantly for a situation to change. It was heavy. It was personal. And I'll tell you this, I was desperate. I was desperate. I prayed every day for God to fix it. I asked, I sought, I knocked, and nothing changed, at least not in the way that I wanted. The situation did not resolve the way I had hoped. In fact, at the time, I felt like I had been given a stone, and I wrestled with that. It's hard. I questioned if God even listened to my prayers. I wondered if my prayers had just bounced off the ceiling and just wasted my time.

Years later, even now, I see it clearly. God did answer, just not in the way that I had expected. Because what I was praying for was relief. God gave me growth instead. I was asking for escape, and God gave me endurance. I was begging for a pain to stop, and God used the pain to shape me into someone stronger, someone more compassionate, and someone who can stand with others in their pain. If God had given me exactly what I wanted, I wouldn't have become who I later needed to be.

And I share that not to make light of unanswered prayers, but to say, sometimes the door that stays shut is grace. Sometimes the gift is hidden inside of what feels like disappointment at the time.

The Kingdom of God Is Near

And what Yeshua is telling us through all of this sermon, the Sermon on the Mount, is to don't stop. Keep going. Because God has never left your side. He's always been near. The kingdom of God is right here. And you're halfway over the threshold even now. Keep going and don't be distracted by how the world tells you that you should worship or depend on God. There's a reason why the world has rejected his kingdom. Don't look to them for advice on how to respond to anything.

You are not bothering God when you pray a persistent, repetitive prayer night after night. God is not annoyed with you. He is near. Sermon on the Mount, again, by Dallas Willard, that author, he coined it the divine conspiracy, the whole sermon. Because in a world that runs on power, control, and fear, Jesus quietly invites us into a revolution of trust, humility, and love.

The Transformative Power of Prayer

When we ask in faith, we are resisting the lie that we have to manipulate outcomes. When we seek God's will, we're rejecting the temptation to build our own kingdoms. And when we knock, we're entering into a relationship that is not transactional in nature. It's transformative.

So I want to encourage you today, if you've been knocking recently, keep going. Keep going. The door is not locked. It's not bolted shut. It's not welded. The Father is not far away. The kingdom is not delayed. It's here now. It's near. It's among you. So come boldly. That's what Yeshua says. Ask like a child who knows their father is good. Seek like a disciple. Knock like someone who already knows. They're already welcome. Already welcome at the door.

And when you do, I don't think you'll just get an answer. I think you'll get God. Because this is the kind of world that we live in where the presence of God is near and the doors to the kingdom are wide open. And so if that's you today, I encourage you, don't stop praying. Don't stop asking. Don't stop seeking. Don't stop knocking. But do it in a way where you already know God is listening and you already know God has been by your side and you already know God is working. Prayer is a part of the relationship. It's not simply a transaction.

Closing in Worship

So please stand as we conclude in worship today. And if you need prayer today for anything that may be going on in your life, or in the world, guys, we're going to have a prayer team on either side of the stage. And I encourage you, come up and have someone pray with you today.

Alvina Malkinu, our father, our king father, we thank you for this opportunity to come before you once again for the hard words of the master, Yeshua. That you would give us a faith, a strength, and a trust that Yeshua had and taught. That when we know, that when we ask, we're not bothering, we're not bugging, and that it's not even about us trying to get something. It's just about us being in a relationship with you and acknowledging that you're already at work. So we thank you for the opportunity of always being near to us, never being far, always opening doors, always giving us bread. We thank you, Father, for being a good, good father. In Yeshua's name we pray. Amen.

Hear, O Israel. The Lord is our God. The Lord is one. Blessed is the name of his glorious kingdom for all eternity. May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord lift up his countenance toward you and give you his peace. In the name of our Tsar Shalom, our Prince of Peace, Yeshua HaMashiach, we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. And may you go forth and be transformed by the grace and the love and the compassion of the living God. Amen? Amen.

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