

INTRODUCTION

As you read the passage below, you may be tempted to think that Jesus is giving you carte blanche – everything you ask for you will receive! Most who have been Christ-followers for a long time know that this is not the case. God is not a genie who grants our wishes (prayer requests). Sometimes you continue to have financial troubles...the person you are praying for isn't healed...your child continues to ignore all things related to God...you lose your job with nothing looming on the horizon. Regardless of our circumstances, God is still our good, good Father. Do you trust your Him to give you "good and perfect" gifts (James 1:17)?

SCRIPTURE

⁷Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ⁸For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. ⁹Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? ¹¹If 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! ¹²So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

Matthew 7:7-12

GROUP QUESTIONS

1. If your prayers were recorded for others to read (like a Psalm), what would people learn about your view of God?
2. Read Matthew 7:7-12. Keeping in mind that the Sermon on the Mount continued to build on each statement Jesus made, discuss what you believe Jesus meant in verses 7-8.
3. "Ask...seek...and knock" implies a process that intensifies. According to the Disciple's Study Bible, "Asking suggests dependence; seeking suggests yearning; knocking suggests persistence." Does this characterize your prayer life?
4. Aaron spoke on Sunday about how our prayers should be done humbly, expectantly, and persistently. Look up the following verses and write down other attitudes God is looking for in your prayers:

John 14:13-14 _____

John 15:7-8 _____

1 John 5:14-15 _____

James 4:2-3 _____

Study Questions for Community Groups

5. D.A. Carson writes that, “What is fundamentally at stake is man’s picture of God. God must not be thought of as a reluctant stranger who can be cajoled or bullied into bestowing his gifts (Matthew 6:7-8), as a malicious tyrant who takes vicious glee in the tricks he plays (Matthew 7:9-10), or even as an indulgent grandfather who provides everything requested of him. He is the heavenly Father, the God of the kingdom, Who graciously and willingly bestows the good gifts of the kingdom in answer to prayer.” (Sermon on the Mount: An Evangelical Exposition of Matthew 5-7: 1982, Baker Pub Group) Of these four views of God, which one most matches your view of Him? Does your view need to change?

APPLICATION

In his devotional on prayer (<http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/plan-for-prayer>), John Piper said the following:

If you want to take a four-week vacation, you don’t just get up one summer morning and say, “Hey, let’s go today!” You won’t have anything ready. You won’t know where to go. Nothing has been planned. But that is how many of us treat prayer. We get up day after day and realize that significant times of prayer should be a part of our life, but nothing’s ever ready. We don’t know where to go. Nothing has been planned. No time. No place. No procedure. And we all know that the opposite of planning is not a wonderful flow of deep, spontaneous experiences in prayer. The opposite of planning is the rut. If you don’t plan a vacation, you will probably stay home and watch TV. The natural, unplanned flow of spiritual life sinks to the lowest ebb of vitality. There is a race to be run and a fight to be fought. If you want renewal in your life of prayer, you must plan to see it. Therefore, my simple exhortation is this: Let us take time this very day to rethink our priorities and how prayer fits in. Make some new resolve. Try some new venture with God. Set a time. Set a place. Choose a portion of Scripture to guide you.

This week, put Piper’s encouragements into action. Plan time for prayer, and see what your good, good Father has in store for you.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. Because God’s character is good, He desires to give us good things. What are the some of the things He promises when we call on Him?

Psalm 50:14-15 _____

Matthew 7:11 _____

John 16:23-24 _____

Philippians 4:6-7 _____

1 Peter 5:7 _____

Hebrews 4:16 _____

2. In Matthew 7:12 Jesus said that the Law and the Prophets were summed up by what we call the “Golden Rule”. How does the “Golden Rule” relate to the Law and the Prophets? (See Matthew 22:36-40.)