

Seeking the Lord

#2 - Ask, Seek, Knock

Seeking is not optional. Jesus teaches us to seek *until we find*.

Scriptures: Matthew 7:7 – 8 | Luke 11:5 – 13 & 18:1 – 8 | Isaiah 58:2 & 65:1 | Hebrews 11:1 – 6

Receive, Find, Open

Would you agree that at some point in your life you need to receive something? Perhaps it's a job, a word of affirmation, health, a new relationship, forgiveness, and the list goes on. In Matthew chapters 5 – 7, Jesus gives an array of phenomenal teaching to his followers. Among the context of this we find teachings on morals, receiving the blessings of God, loving our enemies, the inner nature of sin (it begins in the heart), prayer and more. This is the context for which we find this teaching about asking, seeking, and knocking. (Read Matthew passage now)

There are many important questions that arise from this. One is, "Are asking, seeking and knocking the same thing?" Another is, "How long will it take?" Still another, "Do I just ask once and wait?"

We will delve into these questions a bit through the rest of this study. As I spent time meditating upon this teaching and what mysteries need to be learned, I had an epiphany. We ask because we need something. We seek because something is lost. We knock because there's a barrier to where we want to go.

Barriers to Receiving

If it's God's will to supply what we need, then why does it seem that so many people aren't receiving? Have you ever prayed for something that didn't happen? Have you felt frustration, disappointment or confusion because of this? There are a variety of reasons that we do and don't receive. Let's take a look at what Jesus teaches us through parables as recorded in the gospel of Luke. (Read Luke sections)

In this first parable we see that the man needs something. He seeks, he asks, and he knocks. To answer the first question, "Do I simply ask once and stop?" Do you see how there was initial resistance to the need? Jesus commends the man for his "boldness / persistence" and says that the reason he received wasn't because the friend felt like giving something in that moment but because of the boldness and persistent asking.

So what shall we learn from this parable? What are some of the barriers to receiving?

The first barrier is shame. What if the friend said to himself... "I don't want to have to ask my neighbor to supply something I need." ? Have you allowed pride, unworthiness, or shame keep you from coming to the place of asking?

Fear of failure is the second barrier. Can you imagine? It's midnight. How many of you like to be woken up at midnight when you're sleeping? These are the old times too. It's not like you just flick on a light switch, hop into the fridge, and hand over a loaf of bread. This man getting up would disturb his whole family. He'd have to light a lamp; he'd have to search in the dark of night for some bread. Perhaps he didn't have much bread himself. Thus the man in need could have let his fear of failure stop him from persisting. He could have said, "My friend will be angry with me for asking at this late hour. What if he doesn't want to give it to me?" Do you notice too that initially there was resistance? How many times do we run away at the first sign of resistance? If he had, he wouldn't have received what he needed. Jesus commends his boldness.

In the parable of the widow, we see many parallels to the former story. There was resistance. In this parable however, we're talking about a poor widow not a friend. We're talking about an unjust judge. Do you wonder why Jesus says at the end, "Will the Son of Man really find faith on the earth?" Consider the faith of this woman. She knew she had no power over this judge nor her adversary who was wronging her. But she **believed** that if she asked, sought, and knocked... the door would be opened. She received not because of the judge's noble character but because of her faith expressing itself through boldness. *Barrier three is a lack of faith that you will receive the breakthrough.*

There's another very important key to all of this. In both stories, Jesus expands on who the Heavenly Father is. He is called the Good Father and the Judge of All the Earth. Implicit in these descriptions is the question, "How do *you* see God?" If these parables are true of men... *how much more will the Heavenly Father / Judge of Creation give you what you need!*

The widow didn't allow the fact that this was an unjust judge to dissuade her. What if she had? She could have said, "This is pointless. Nothing will change. I know this guy. He's a total jerk! No one is treated fairly by him. I had better just accept the injustice."

The fourth barrier is an incorrect perception of who God is. Do you see him as distant, uninterested, unjust, or unloving? You need a revelation of who the Father is! Oh, hallelujah! It's glorious and will transform your spiritual life. If you believe lies about God, it will prevent you from coming before him with confidence.

Layers of Breakthrough

Let's take a look at a mystery in Scripture: 30, 60, 100 fold return & the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God

I heard a preacher once say, "Between the promise and the palace is the process." Receiving the will and promises of God is an ongoing journey. The apostle Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 3:18 that we go from "glory to glory." How much of God do you want? Are you happy with 30 fold? Are you okay with just settling for the minimum? (Read Hebrews passage.)

Let's consider the nature of faith. It's a substance. Without it we cannot please God. But how does faith apply to seeking and layers of breakthrough?

Think about the life of Abraham (read it in Genesis if you haven't already). He receives a promise that he will be great and his descendants will be as the stars in the sky. He leaves his familiar territory... *his comfort zone*. He wanders. He doesn't see the fulfillment right away that he will receive a son. After much time, he finally receives the son that was promised. Now he must give the son up. What if Abraham had settled on... "Lord, you have given me a son. That's all I wanted. I don't need the promise anymore. I'm not willing to give him up." *Abram would never have become Abraham!* He went from "father" to "father of many nations" because he wasn't satisfied with just a little of God's plan. There are layers of breakthrough in the path God has set before us. How much we receive is really up to us. What are you settling for? God has made **all things** available... for those who ask... who seek... who knock. *God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him.*

How does this apply to intimacy?

In Psalm 37:4 we learn that if we, "Delight [ourselves] in the Lord, He will give us the desires of our heart." In the parables we read, we see that Jesus compares our Heavenly Father to earthly fathers. Even a fallen (sinful, evil) person still wants to bless his own children with the necessities of life and good gifts. The question then becomes, "What am I truly asking for?" This series is about seeking the Lord.

There is a place in Scripture where God tells young king Solomon to ask for whatever he wants. (2 Samuel ch. 3) Solomon asks for God's great wisdom in order to lead his people. This request greatly pleased God. You see when we seek God himself, his ways and not just material things or outer blessings, we begin to enter the heart of God. This is what David was praised for. He was known **as a man after God's own heart**. (1 Samuel) God tests Abraham in a similar fashion. He tells him he must give up his only son Isaac. God often tests us to see if we are truly after Him. He looks deep into our hearts to see what is there. He then sees whether we will still serve him if it costs us something, *even everything*. The essence of discipleship is to "Come follow me." This implies a breaking away from all else that hinders God from being number one in our lives. Because God is a good father, it is his pleasure to give us the most unimaginable gift in the universe.... Himself, *the Holy Spirit*. As the psalmist writes, when God is our first delight, there is nothing else that our heart will lack. It is a two fold process. God both gives us everything else we need when we seek him first (Matt. 6:33) and we also see that our palettes begin to change. Our very desires begin to shift to the things that matter most: holiness, love, laughter, a life poured out, a life of worship, a heart that seeks him first. Our eyes are opened to the spiritual truth that all this world is passing away and we begin to yearn for the eternal more and more. Do you know that in Heaven, there will be no more laboring *for God* but rather an intimate communion *with Him* and the saints? Intimacy is the goal.

Will you begin now? It is the Father's delight to give his Holy Spirit to those who ask him.

Questions and putting it into practice

1. Of the various barriers to receiving, which one(s) hold you back? What is going to change for you moving forward?

2. Read through the Isaiah passages. There are two more keys to receiving / seeking mentioned. One is the barrier of persistent sinfulness (unrepentant sin). The other has to do with sovereignty. Write a few sentences about these passages and what they teach us about God's ways.

3. How do you see God? Take a moment to review the ways the Father is described. What lies have you / are you believing about God that make it difficult to come before him? In your own words, paraphrase who he truly is based on the scriptures in this study. Declare this truth before you pray for the next seven days.