

34. Keep asking, seeking, and knocking

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It seems that the common denominator of the current movies is comic. Just about every big hit movie bases its story on comic books – portraying superheros, like Superman, Spiderman, Wolverine, Antman, Hulk, Thor, X-Men, etc. I am sure that I am missing many other superheros' names. Why are they special? Because they all have super strength and capabilities that would make regular humans like us nothing.

But in the Bible, we don't have superheros who save the day for God. Then, someone would say, "Ah, you forgot Jesus." I didn't. He did not use His divine power to overcome His enemies, rather He allowed them to execute Him. The Lord uses ordinary men and women like you and me to get the job done. He is the One who equips us with the power and determination through His Word and the Holy Spirit.

It has been said: "The Bible is a floodlight, it provides me the big picture; it's a spotlight, it focuses me on the center stage; it's a security light, it protects me from hidden dangers; it's a streetlight, it illuminates my path; it's a night light, it drives out my fears; the Bible is a headlight, it keeps me between the white lines of God's will; it's a searchlight, it rescues the lost; and it's a shop light, it finds my problems and makes the repairs."

The Bible doesn't teach us how to cast spells to solve problems instantly, rather the Holy Spirit, the Author of this Book teaches to ask, seek, and knock continuously. Our Lord shows us to simply rely on Him in our weaknesses.

2 Corinthians 12:10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Before we get to v7, we must not neglect v6, because it is important.

A. SELECTIVE FISHING

Matthew 7:6 Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.

The most powerful of all words is a fitly spoken word, a right word that meets the precise need of the occasion. Mark Twain, a wordsmith himself, once wrote: "The difference between the right word and almost the right word is the difference between lightning and lightning bug."

Much could be said about the words Jesus spoke. They could be called radical, controversial, idealistic, and even enigmatic. But they could never be called dull or drab. If any of the pastors teaches the Gospel of Jesus Christ in boring manners, it is not the fault of what Jesus said, but pastors. Some of you are thinking, "You are boring, preacher." OK, a case in point.

Here in v6, Jesus even went one step further. He is telling us to be careful with what we do with the truth. We are not supposed to share our truth with someone who is not willing to listen to or despising the truth. The Lord who urges us to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth warns us against casting our pearls before swine. And He who warned us against judging others is the very One calling people names.

Proverbs 23:9 Do not speak in the hearing of a fool, For he will despise the wisdom of your words.

Of course, Jesus is not discouraging us from sharing the Gospel with others, nor is He telling us to judge other people's salvation status. He already told us let our lights shine before this unbelieving world.

What Jesus is telling us is that those who don't want to hear the truth of God have such dead spirits in their hearts that it is a waste of time for us to speak to them about the Good News of Jesus Christ. If people have had plenty of opportunities to hear the truth, but do not respond to it; if they stubbornly and continuously turn their backs on Christ; then they are taking themselves in the role of "dogs" and "pigs." We should not go on and on with them, because we cheapen God's Gospel by letting them trample it underfoot. This gives us an important application: **Discernment must accompany our declaration of the Gospel.**

When I was young in the Lord Jesus, I thought that it was my duty to tell about Jesus to everyone regardless of the guidance of the Holy Spirit and tactfulness. I used to bombard them with the Bible verses that I had memorized. I was just plain dumb and insensitive to the Spirit of God.

B. SIMPLY ASK DADDY

Matthew 7:7-8 "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

You all have heard sermons about "Ask, seek, and knock" by pastors and many Bible teachers before. So had I. It already has its own application. There is no doubt about its principles and applications. However, if we are not careful, we don't realize what the context is.

Before we go into detail study about this, let's look at the overall picture:

- In v1-5, Jesus gave us a warning that we will be judged according to the measure of judgment we hand out to others.
- In v6, He is telling us not to give truth to those who don't want to hear.
- From v7-12, He is teaching us how to ask God persistently, seek His will, knock on the door of Heaven to discern each situation we face.

James 1:5-6 "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him."

- In v13 and 14, the Scriptures shows about the choice between the popular road that leads to destruction and the unpopular road that leads to eternal life in heaven.
- From v15 to 23, Jesus teaches us about the fruit of individuals who will receive their final judgement from the Ultimate Judge.

Notice the escalation of urgency in the commands found in v7: "Ask..., seek..., knock." Please keep it in mind that the Greek verbs are present imperative. You are thinking, "Say what?" Let me explain it: The Present Imperative is often a call to a long-term commitment and calls for the attitude or action to be one's lifestyle. These actions are not to be "suggestions", but they are God's commands to make each action our habitual practice.

Nowhere in Scripture, are we told not to come again and again to God in prayer. In fact, God encourages our coming to Him persistently, continuously, and boldly.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 pray without ceasing,

Hebrews 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

• Prayer is like asking in that we simply make our requests known to the Lord. And everyone who asks receives one of the three answers – Yes, No, or Wait. Receiving is the reward of asking.

1 John 5:14-15 Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 15 And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

If our prayer request is not in the will of God, He will say, “No.” The wisest thing is stop asking for it. If we insist, He will allow us to have what we’ve been asking for and the result of it will be something we wish that we’ve never asked for, because it will be a pure disaster to us. Rather ask Him for His will for that situation.

• Prayer is like seeking in that we search after God, His Word, and His will, not our will; and he who seeks finds. Finding is the reward of seeking.

• Prayer is like knocking until the door is opened, and we seek entrance into the great heavenly throne room of our Great King. Entering through the opened door into His room is the reward of knocking, and the best reward of all. This is where we get to have the intimate communion with our God through His Word and prayers.

Let’s pray – FIRST! Weary of the things happening in your life and your family? Not sure about what’s happening in the United States and the world that are going into tailspins? Our God would love to talk with you about it.

Let’s pray – MOST! Did God call us to preach without ceasing? Or teach without ceasing? Or have committee meetings without ceasing? Or sing without ceasing? No, but He did call us to “pray without ceasing” as we read before.

One more thing, did Jesus declare... My house shall be called a house of study? Fellowship? Music? A house of activities? No, but He did say, “My house will be called a house of prayer” in Mark 11. Whether you are at your home, at work, or church, wherever you are, constantly commune with the Lord in prayer.

So, Pray! Pray FIRST and pray MOST! Ask, seek, and knock in prayer.

Which brings us to another principle: **Persistence must characterize our prayers.** So when it comes to prayer, don’t be timid. Be persistent. And count on God to come through.

C. THE WORD PICTURE FOR US TO SEE

Matthew 7:9-11 Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!

Jesus’ desire is to explain how very trustworthy our heavenly Father is. Again the Lord reasons from the lesser to the greater methodically. If an earthly father, being essentially evil and selfish in nature, freely gives his children what they ask for, how much more will our heavenly Father, being good, loving, and unselfish in His very nature, freely give His children when they ask Him?

As you pray to our Heavenly Father, it is important to keep two things in mind:

- 1) **God will answer our prayers according to His will.**
- 2) **He will answer them in His time. But don't be discouraged; persistence pays.**

Many faith movement teachers abuse this portion of scripture and Matthew 21:22 to point out that God is obligated to give whatever we want. They are deadly wrong and misguiding their followers. They are making our mighty God as nothing more than an errand boy for us.

Their Prosperity Gospel is a heresy. To follow that, you have to ignore what Jesus, Paul, James, Peter, and John said in the NT. I believe that it leaves only Luke and Mark. But Luke was tight with the apostle Paul and Mark was right behind the foot-step of Peter, that means those faith movement teachers have no one in the Bible to make their false theology legitimate.

D. OTHERS AND US

Matthew 7:12 Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

In v12, Jesus shifts from our vertical relationship to our horizontal ones.

Much has been said by various people of the fact that the Golden Rule is found in a similar form elsewhere, but always negative:

Confucius, a Chinese philosopher – “Do not to others what you would not wish done to yourself.”

Greek philosophers – “Do not do to anyone what you yourself would hate.”

Jewish Rabbi Hillel – “What is hateful to you, do not to anyone else. This is the whole law; all the rest is only commentary.”

Jesus seems to have been the first One to state it in a positive way. All others said, “Don't,” but He said, “Do.” This is no insignificant point, because the positive way of stating the rule focuses not on passivity, but on activity. Just treat people in the way that you would want to be treated. Is that so difficult and controversial? If all the humans practice this simple principle, there wouldn't be a crime, racial prejudice, or hatred toward other people. All of our problems start from selfish pride within. Jesus is commanding us to do otherwise.

If you are having relationship problems with your family members or friends, you might be right in the fact and having the truth on your side, but your approach may not. It is not what you say or do, it is how you say or do. Just because you have the truth, it doesn't mean that you can be a bully in a relationship.

This leads us to another important principle: **Modeling must accompany our message.**

E. APPLICATIONS

- 1) **Discernment must accompany our declaration of the Gospel of Jesus.**

In the past 30 years with the Lord Jesus, I've learned a very important principle regarding witnessing to unbelievers. It is not my biblical knowledge or argument that saves them. It is the Holy Spirit who opens their spiritual eyes and hearts.

Nevertheless, God honors individual's final choice to follow Him or not. But the consequences of bad choices are on that person.

2) Persistence must characterize our prayers.

3) Modeling must accompany our message.

Talk is cheap and anyone can do it. But it takes godly men and women to do what needs to be done for His glory in love.