



ASKING BETTER QUESTIONS -
THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT
SESSION 22 -ASK, SEEK,
KNOCK (Mt 7:7-13)

Ask, Seek, Knock (Mt 7:8-12)

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.”

“Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If 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!”

So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.



Initial Questions

- 100% guarantee?
- Ask for what?
- Seek for what?
- What is the door to knock on?
- I'm evil am I?
- How does golden rule relate to the Law and the prophets?

Context

- We've just been talking about :
 - *avoiding religiosity – hypocritical and showy fasting, prayer and giving.*
 - *True treasure – attitudes towards money and possessions.*
 - *Worldly mindsets that lead to worry instead of peace.*
- Now, in the navigation of life:
 1. *Don't be judgmental (7:1-5)*
 2. *Don't be indiscriminating (7:6)*
 3. *Persist in our pursuit of God (7:7-11 Ask, seek, knock)*
- Now heading towards the golden rule (7:12)

Ask, seek, knock

- Teaching on prayer – Round 3
- Do not pray like the hypocrites do (for show, meaningless repetition etc) – Mt 5.
- Model prayer – Mt 6.
- And now, an invitation to pray boldly! – Mt 7.



Ask, Seek, Knock

He knows that we are timid and shy, that we feel unworthy and unfit to present our needs to God . . . We think that God is so great and we are so tiny that we do not dare to pray . . . That is why Christ wants to lure us away from such timid thoughts, to remove our doubts, and to have us go ahead confidently and boldly. [Stott]

What do you think about that?



Asking, seeking, knocking

- How are they different?
- How might you relate these verbs to prayer?

Asking....

- Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If 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!
- Parable.
- How does the argument work?
- What does Jesus want us to understand here?





Stop and think

- *What things do we get from God even without praying?*
- ?
- ?
- ?
- *Matthew 5:44–46 (HCSB): and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. For He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.*
- *Does that give you a different perspective about prayer?*

Ask, Seek, Knock

The danger of lacking a trusting persistence.
(Carson)

...thinking of asking, seeking, knocking as
trusting persistence.

What do you think about that?



Unanswered prayer

- I asked, sought and knocked, and nothing happened.....
- How do we process this?



God is not a genie

- And prayer is not magic....
- God is good – we already receive many things unprayed for.
- God is also wise. Do you give a child the sharp knife if they ask for it?
- What happens to the child who gets everything they want?
- Also, don't forget the very important aspect of prayer that is about the training and conditioning of our hearts.

The burden of always-answered prayer

- In addition, this concept of prayer would place an impossible strain on every sensitive Christian if we knew that we were **certain** to get **everything** we asked.
- ‘If it were the case’, writes Alec Motyer, that whatever we ask, God was pledged to give, then I for one would never pray again, because I would not have sufficient confidence in my own wisdom to ask God for anything; and I think if you consider it you will agree.
- It would impose an intolerable burden on frail human wisdom if by his prayer-promises God was pledged to give whatever we ask, when we ask it, and in exactly the terms we ask. How could we bear the burden?
- What do you think of this perspective?

The Golden Rule

So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets. (Mt 7:12)

Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' (Mt 22:37-39)

Golden Rule Type Teachings

- **Buddhism:** “Whatever is disagreeable to yourself, do not do unto others” (The Buddha, *Udana-Varga* 5.18 – 6th century BC).
- **Confucianism:** “Do not do to others what you do not want them to do to you” (Confucius, *Analects* 15.23 – 5th century BC).
- **Judaism:** “What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow-man. This is the entire Law, all the rest is commentary” (*Talmud, Shabbat* 31d – 16th century BC).
- **Judaism:** “Never do to anyone else anything that you would not want someone to do to you”. (*Tobias* 4, 15 – 3rd century BC).
- **Gandhi:** “To see the universal and all-pervading Spirit of Truth face to face, one must be able to love the meanest of all creation as oneself” (translated from: *Il mio credo, il mio pensiero*, Newton Compton, Rome 1992, page 70 – 20th century).

Golden Rule Type Teachings

- **Hinduism:** “This is the sum of duty. Do not unto others that which would cause you pain if done to you” (*Mahabharata* 5, 1517 – 15th century BC).
- **Islam:** “None of you will believe until you love for your brother what you love for yourself” (Hadith 13, *The Forty Hadith of Imam Nawawi* – 7th century).
- **Plato:** “I can do to others what I’d like them to do to me” (5th century BC).
Yoruba wise saying
- **(West Africa):** “If somebody stings a bird with a sharp stick, should be first try it on himself and realise how badly it hurts”.
- **Seneca:** “Treat your inferiors as you would be treated by your betters” (*Letter 47* 11 – 1st century).
- **Zoroastrianism:** “Do not do to others what is harmful for yourself” (*Shayast-na-Shayast* 13, 29 – between 18 and 15 century BC).

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The Golden Rule

- All our actions in a framework of loving other people.
- Sums up the Law and the prophets but without reference to any particular moral rule.
- If we learn to love God with our whole heart, mind and strength, we will not have any problem loving our neighbour.
- What do you think?



Putting it into practice

- Doing unto others changing the game/ how people responded etc..
- Any stories to share?

In your own words

Asking, seeking, knocking...

Do unto others...

How would you say it in your own words?



Reflection

- Does ask/seek/knock seem like a welcome invitation or a burdensome chore?
- Any new perspectives on ask/seek/knock resonant with you?
- How much is the “golden rule” a core and intentional part of how I live and interact with others?