

Petition

'Give us today our daily bread'

Emma King
Matthew 7:7-11

Our Gospel reading today contains some of the most well-known words Jesus ever spoke about prayer:

Matthew 7: | 7 "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."

They are simple words. They are straight to the point, with no messing around.

- Short.
- Memorable.
- The kind of words that stay with us.

And yet, if we're honest, they can also be slightly puzzling words. Because most of us, at some point in our lives, have prayed for something that didn't seem to happen.

- We've prayed for healing.
- We've prayed for peace in difficult situations.
- We've prayed for people we love.

And sometimes the answers we hoped for didn't appear in the way we expected.

So, when Jesus says, "Ask, and it will be given to you," we might quietly wonder... 'really?'

But the key to understanding these words lies in the way Jesus explains them. He doesn't give us a theory about prayer. Instead, he gives us a picture.

And it's a wonderfully ordinary picture.

Matthew 7:9-10 | ⁹ "Which of you, if your son or daughter asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake?"

Now that would be a rather unusual parenting strategy. Imagine a child coming into the kitchen saying, "Mum, I'm hungry, can I have some bread?" And the response being, "Here you go—have a nice rock." I know what my girls would say. It wouldn't go down well. The same with the fish and the snake. It's a slightly humorous image really. Jesus is deliberately exaggerating to make the point clear. No loving parent would do that.

And then Jesus says something really important:

Matthew 7:11 | ¹¹ 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!"

That phrase "**how much more**" is really the heart of this passage. Jesus is saying: if ordinary human parents, who are far from perfect, still try to give good things to their children, then how much more will God, who is perfectly loving, perfectly wise, and perfectly good, give good gifts to his children?

In other words, prayer is built on the **character of God**.

The reason we can ask, seek, and knock is because of who God is. Prayer is not about persuading a reluctant God. It's about coming to a loving Father.

The first word Jesus uses is **ask**. Ask. There's something beautifully simple, although not very British, about that word. Children are very good at asking for things. They don't usually spend hours carefully preparing their request. They don't write a formal letter with bullet points and a carefully structured argument. Although I have had many a PowerPoint presentation from my girls when they have requested something... Dogs, Kittens, why I should let them stay at a friend's house.... All of which they put up a good argument, I may add and got their way... 1 Dog and 2 cats later...

Anyone who has spent time with small children knows that persistence is very much part of the package.

When they are not asking for Dogs and Cats it might go something like this...

"Can I have a biscuit?"

"No."

"Please?"

"No."

"But just one?"

"No."

"Just half of one?"

And somehow the conversation continues for another ten minutes! Do we give in? Probably!!

Children are wonderfully confident in asking. And Jesus seems to suggest that our prayer life might look a little bit like that.

Not childish—but **childlike**.

Honest. Direct. Trusting.

So maybe that's what we should do, we come before God and simply say what is on our hearts.

- "Lord, help me."
- "Lord, guide me."
- "Lord, I don't know what to do."

Prayer doesn't need complicated language. It just needs honesty.

Jesus then adds two more words.

1. Seek.
2. Knock.

These words suggest something slightly different. Asking is about speaking; seeking and knocking involve movement and persistence.

In fact, I looked it up, and in Greek, the sense is something like this:

Keep asking.

Keep seeking.

Keep knocking.

Prayer is not always a one-off moment. Prayer is something we return to again and again. We bring the same concern to God over weeks, months, sometimes years. In our Bible study on a Monday, we often pray for the same people every week. And that doesn't mean we lack faith. In fact, Jesus suggests that persistence in prayer is a sign of trust. We keep coming back because we believe God is listening.



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