

Matthew 7: 7-11 // Keep Calm & Pray On

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Date: 19 April 2026

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[0:00] Stuck with me, I guess. And I realize that there's four aspects of prayer. As I read through the passage here. Now, in Greek, the ask here is known as an imperative.

Which it means, it's not like a, you know, if you wanna ask. It's an imperative. Do this. It's like a command.

The Lord is telling us to pray. Pray. Ask. Ask. God already knows what's in our head. He already knows what's in our heart.

He knows our situations. So we may think, well, what's the necessity? Why? If you already know what's going on, why should we ask you? It's not to inform him. He doesn't need to know the details.

He knows them. It's not to impress him. Lord, I'm gonna speak incredibly articulate about this prayer that is just burdening me heart. No, you don't need to do that. It can be really simple.

[1:26] Right? Really simple. The Lord wants to be a part of our lives. He wants to be a part of your life, my life. He wants to be a part of our day-to-day.

He's like a bestie that wants to hang out and just know how you are doing. And yet, when I say that as casually as I am, I'm not escaping the reality that Big G God is the creator of all things.

Our master, our commander, our captain, our king. Yet somehow he calls us friends. And I think prayer is one of those beautiful moments where we can experience this with him.

Jesus had a personal prayer life. He often withdrew to pray. Now, I'll share a little bit of my path with this.

And this is not a you should do this too. It's just simply that I've become so dependent upon it that a day will not go by that I don't spend an hour to three hours in prayer.

[2:25] That is not saying that every morning I wake up at four in the morning and I pray. Sometimes I do. Sometimes it's in the evening. I don't have a regular schedule other than I do about that every day.

It's become that important. And it's not always about the tragedies. It's not always about the difficulties like my little grandson's going through right now.

It's not always about that. Sometimes it's just looking up at the stars and taking some time to thank the Lord for what he has done. When we were working on the visa process to come down here, I know there are a few of us that are intimately involved with that nightmare.

There was moments where I just could not see five feet in front of me on an emotional level. It was frustrating. There was denial or there was changes or something like this.

Every little nuance. It was like playing whack-a-mole trying to, you know, meet the needs and then, you know, fill every little pocket of possibility. And it was challenging. And I found myself leaning on the Lord's prayer at times.

[3:28] Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. And submitting that to him day by day, I'm just saying, Father, whatever you want. I didn't always mean it.

If you catch me. I didn't always mean it because it was like, well, your little world, your will be done so long as it works out for me. That's not actually saying your will be done.

Prayer is something that will break us. It is something that will bring us into a closer relationship with God and be able to see his fingerprints all over our lives and the lives of others.

Prayer is something we can have to keep us on track and in focus and have our eyes fixed on him so that when the storms come, just like Amanda so beautifully put it this morning, when those moments come, our eyes are fixed on him.

And not distracted by the world around us. And something that I had to struggle with that I think is a reality is that we'll only be as strong spiritually as our prayer life exists.

[4 : 35] If you want to be strong spiritually, if you want to not be tossed to and fro by the waves that come in life, you'll have an active prayer life.

That does not mean you need to spend an hour to three hours doing it. I'm a hard-headed person. I need a little more soaking than some. Some will pick it up faster. If you have ten minutes and it's on a bus or a drive to work and you're praying, good work.

Good job. Lift it up to him. There's no rule to that. It is whenever you can, wherever you can, however you can. And if it is prostrate on the floor here, good.

But if it's also just standing in the backyard watering the grass, good. The idea is relationship. The Lord wants to be a part of our lives, our day-to-day. He really does.

It goes on in verse 8 to say here, For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and the one who knocks, it will be open. Like I said, we have access to God.

[5 : 42] Have you wrapped your mind around that yet? We have access to our Father in heaven. Jesus has made it so that it's easy.

It is a breath away. It is a prayer away. Being able to come to him is just simply as much as our heart.

Just sitting and being open to him and saying, Lord, I need to see you. Father, I want to hear you. Or reading his word. Lord, show me your wisdom in this. Lord, I need help getting through this. I need provision for that. Somebody needs healing for this. Or Father, thank you so much you delivered us from all of this. Whatever it is, we have access to the Lord.

Don't let the world squish that out. I'm going to go one step further and say, don't let religion choke that out. Because we can make prayer such a ritual that we lose the relationship.

[6 : 45] It'd be like if you were getting to know someone and it never went as beyond as a handshake. Hey, how are you? Good, good. Oh, good. And you walk away. That's okay. That's friendly. That's an acquaintanceship.

But it isn't the relationship we can have with the Lord. He wants more. And I think if we really take a moment, we want more with him too.

We want more with him. To understand him. To know him. Romans chapter 5 verse 1 says, Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 2 verse 18, For through him we both have access in one spirit to the Father. It's all about Jesus. He's given us that access. We have access to him.

And I wonder sometimes. I would love to have been there. But you know what? The reality is one day we will be there with him. But I wonder what it would have been like to sit around the fire with Jesus.

[7 : 48] Just to see him smile. You know? To hear him laugh. To hear him speak. To look at you in the eye.

And you know that you are loved more than any love that this earth could produce. I think about the woman at the well. And the patience that he showed her.

I think of Mary Magdalene. The love that would have pierced through all that she was. I think of all of these people we can read in scripture that encountered Jesus face to face.

I don't know about you, but I can't wait. I've said to my sons many times before. I cannot wait to breathe his air. What a blessing it would be to breathe the same air as the Lord.

And the funny thing is, you and I can have that closeness with him right now. If the Bible is true, if we look at it where two or more are gathered in his name, there he is also.

[8 : 55] He's here now. Why are you holding him off at arm's length? Why are we pushing him away? Why are we ignoring him?

He's here. I don't know about you, but that humbles me. It makes me tremble a little. To think that that God in heaven, our Father, the Lord who is interceding for us, that I pray to, he's here.

God is approachable. And we can boldly go to the throne and participate in prayer. I think one of the greatest problems we have is not unanswered prayer.

It's unoffered prayer. It really is. It's not our greatest problem is not unanswered prayer. It's unoffered prayer. Because we do not ask.

We do not say, Lord, I'm going to treat you like my best friend. And I'm going to tell you all that's going on in my heart. And I'm going to ask you things about you. No, we don't ask.

[10:02] Pride will keep us from prayer. And I confess there are moments where my pride gets in the way. And a great example, funny that Amanda brought this up, is driving. I struggle with asking correction.

It's our directions at times. In fact, with, you know, Apple Maps, Siri has saved my relationship in so many ways with other people. Because I struggle with asking directions.

And the worst is when you say, I know how to get there. And then you realize about 10 minutes in there, I don't know how to get there. You know, and I'm too prideful to ask for help. Now, I've learned. Okay, I am learning.

And one of the worst things Maria has ever said to me in our marriage, where are you going? Okay, we're driving. Where are you going? And part of me is like, I don't know.

One of my favorite examples of this through, and the word, though, is actually from King Jehoshaphat. This is one of my favorites. And I actually shared this with the worship team recently.

[11:01] There was a situation. He was the fourth king of Judah. He was surrounded by three armies. It looked like an unwinnable situation. And he was stressed.

He didn't know what to do. He asked the prophets. He was talking with his people. And there was a situation where these enemies were coming upon him. They were not there yet, but they were on the way. And what the Lord did is instructed him through the prophets, send out a team of worshipers.

I mean, that doesn't seem militarily like a great idea. Send out a bunch of singers, right? That's going to help. Here's his prayer, or the end of his prayer, I should say.

And I would recommend this. If you have never read this story, 2 Chronicles 20, dive in because it's a beaut. Verse 12 says this. Oh, our God, will you not execute judgment on them?

For we are powerless against this great horde that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you. The humility of a leader to be able to say, I have no idea what I'm doing, but Lord, we know you've got this in your hands.

[12:12] What a beautiful example of not allowing pride to creep in to a desperate situation. He sent out the worshipers. They went out there. And they sang, give thanks to the Lord for his love endures forever.

They said that. Not the song that we sing, but that's where the song comes from, okay? And they went out there. And you know what happened? All of a sudden, the armies started arguing. This is your fault. Why are we taking so long? Food is terrible. Whatever it was, the Lord pitted the armies against one another. They all started fighting. They all defeated one another before Jehoshaphat's armies even arrived.

The worshipers were the only ones there. And by the time Jehoshaphat's armies got there, it took them three days to collect all the loot. That is God's power.

That is God having things in his hand and his control and the humility of someone to say, I have no idea what to do, but my eyes are fixed on you. I'm sure there's more than one of us in this room right now that can think of a situation in our life where that's what we need to say.

[13:20] I have no idea what to do, but Lord, my eyes are fixed on you. And see the deliverance that he will bring, just as he brought Jehoshaphat. Humility.

So participation is important. The devil can't keep God from answering our prayers, but I think he can kind of try and help it so that we don't lift them up through distraction or pride or difficulty.

So that's participation. The next one is passion. The seek, the word here in the original language in the Greek is a seeking until you have fulfilled the search.

So it's not just a, I can't find it. It's actually something you dedicate to and you seek for. Ask, seek. And this is an interesting one too. Because when I first think of passion, I don't want anybody to be mistaken that I'm thinking you have to more expressively pray.

[14:20] You know, if I was just to start to pray in the leg of this, right? It would be fine. If that was how you prayed, that's great. I just hope you go to the grocery store or McDonald's and you'd give your order the same way.

I would like a Big Mac, right? Just do it. Be the same person all the time. That's what I would encourage, okay? So I'm not saying that's bad. I'm saying be the same person everywhere. Don't have a church voice, okay?

And I think that's my way in prayer as well. We don't need to offer a very robust flowery prayer. We can say, Lord, I'm hurt. Or Father, I'm glad.

Lord, I'm happy. Or Lord, I'm sad. Just keep it simple and pray. Passion is the key here though for this part.

Because we only look when we seek for things of value. I'm sure there's things you've lost and be like, whatever. You know, that's okay. Okay, right?

[15 : 18] My number 20 ball cap. If I lose it, I'm not going to stress. Okay, I'm sure we are okay. But there are some things that when we lose it, or sometimes we have to find, we will tear the house apart.

Right? And if you're thinking, oh no, that's not me. What if you lost your phone for a day? Right? You'd have people, can you call me? Can you, you know, can you text me?

Can I hear the ping? You know, find my friends or whatever it is. You'd be doing all that. Yeah, that's normal. But what if we sought from the Lord the answer for things that are in our hearts right now with that same passion?

And we came to him daily. Lord, I pray for healing for this. Father, I pray for provision for that. Or Lord, I just can't help myself. I want to give you praise in every way because you are so amazing and I just can't contain it.

Maybe that's what we need to be doing. But have passion. It doesn't mean volume. It doesn't mean intensity. I think it comes with persistence, which is what we're going to get to in a minute. We have to come with expectation that we'll find something.

[16 : 28] Just with the right perspective that it may not be what we set out looking for. Because God has a better plan. Verse 7 to 8. There are promises of finding what you're looking for.

We often pray, though, and we accept that something won't happen. Or maybe we're in a group and we pray for something and part of us is thinking, well, we'll see how it goes.

Now, have a different heart. Because we can get to a place of giving up. We can get to a place of losing our expectation. We may come to church and we may think, well, we're just going to, we'll show up.

We'll put in our time, right? And we don't expect the Lord to share anything with us. But what if we did? What if we came to prayer like that? What if we approached him in prayer and we expected something?

Not because he owes it to us, but because he is that great and he wants relationship with us. He wants to love on us. He wants to have a day-to-day relationship with us.

[17 : 43] What if we expected that and thought, I can't wait you're going to take us today. What, you know, what are you doing this week? This is exciting, Lord. This is great. What if we came with that level of expectation? There's a story, actually, that I think is appropriate for this, too.

Peter was in prison, okay? Chain on each arm, guarded by two guards. And you know what the church was doing not far off? They were praying for him.

They were praying that the Lord would send an angel and release Peter. And you know what happened? An angel came and released Peter. And the church was still praying.

So Peter shows up at the house. And here's what happens. Acts 12, verses 13 to 16. And when he knocked at the door of the gateway, a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer.

And recognizing Peter's voice, in her joy, she did not open the gate, but ran in and reported that Peter was standing at the gate. And they said to her, you are out of your mind. But she kept insisting that it was so.

[18 : 44] And they kept saying, it's an angel, or it's his angel. But Peter continued knocking. And when they opened, they saw him and were amazed. So just keep this in mind.

This is the church that had been praying for Peter's release. Peter gets released, comes to the door, and nobody believed poor Rhoda. Right?

Isn't that what happens with our prayer life sometimes, though? We get surprised when the Lord answers. Or we're not willing to wait. Or when something like that happens, we're like, can't be God. No.

No, it can't be that. I'm still praying. I'm still waiting. And then knock on the door. And it's exactly what you've been praying for, is knocking at the door. And you're like, no, no, no. You're crazy. I mean, she was actually said, told, you are out of your mind by the people who are praying for this. Okay, I'll stop railing about that. We need to have more passion with our prayers.

[19 : 39] More expectation. More understanding. Because the Lord is a good, good Father. He is a good, good Father. Philippians 4.19. And my God will supply every need of yours according to his

riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

That leads to step three. Or item three. It's persistence. And for some reason that I do not understand, I think persistence is pleasing to God.

It deepens our devotion. It's like a plow going over a path. Over and over. Deeper and deeper. Planting deeper.

Sometimes the answer to our prayers are delayed. And we may not understand why. Sometimes our prayers are answered instantly. And that's happened before.

Where prayer or the deliverance of something happens very quickly. Other times, the answer to the prayer is no. And that's where we have to just trust.

[20 : 41] Because that no might be life-saving. I was sharing this in the discipleship group earlier. Just how I went to a summer.

After I met the Lord, I went to a summer camp. A Christian camp for about a week. Because I thought, I need to learn how to walk and talk like a Christian. I didn't understand. And this is what I thought would help. And I went there.

And it was pretty cool. It was good, actually. In a lot of ways. So I'm in this dorm room with a bunch of guys. And we're all sharing prayer requests. And I'm thinking, okay. You know, there's this girl that I like back at home.

I think she's the one. You know. Just pray that she says yes. She'll start dating me and stuff like this. The guy who was leading the cabin didn't say a word. Because I think he's thinking, you idiot. You know.

He knows. He just was so much more mature. And, of course, I come home and get heartbroken. And all that stuff happens. And I'm thinking, oh, God, why? Right? Years later, I look back.

[21 : 37] And, man, that woman was a nutcase. Like, I just, I, I, you saved, dodged a bullet. Like, thank you, Lord. But in the moment, I was so sure what I wanted to be happy. But in the reality is, as God had something so much more precious and awesome waiting for me, I just needed to shut up and listen for a while.

So sometimes the no is not, it's not out of cruelty. Well, it's never out of cruelty. Sometimes the no is because there's a greater yes down the road. And it takes trust and it takes time.

And we have to wait. I'm still grateful that I dodged that bullet. It's been said that there's two ways that God can help us. Diminish the burden or increase the strength.

So I don't know what it is that we're wrestling with, you and me, here this morning. If he needs to diminish the burden or increase the strength. But here's the great thing.

You can talk to God right now about that. Father, ease the burden. Or Lord, give us strength.

Because the answer is either something we'll see or it's in your heart to understand the issue more deeply.

[22 : 46] Or simply, the Lord is saying no. Because like I said, there's a greater yes down the road. We participate. We're persistent. And we have passion. Yet sometimes our prayers just seem to not lift.

They aren't always answered right away. Like I said. Does this mean we've done something wrong? Does it ever mean that we have a lack of faith? No. I think this is where the fourth thing comes in.

And that's having the right perspective. Verses 9 to 11. Or which of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent?

If you then who are 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? An earthly father should know how to give good gifts to his kids.

I'd extend that very easily to say a good mother, a good grandfather, a good grandmother. We should know how to give good gifts. Simply. And that's not like, you know, the most expensive or largest.

[23 : 51] It's simply the one that's meaningful. Sometimes I can be a rock. Right? A precious rock. I say that because when I was in Israel, I became a bit of a rock hound.

I was collecting things everywhere I went. To the point where everybody on my team, they didn't want to stand behind me in the security lineup. They thought I'd be held for quite a while. Well, I had pot shards and all kinds of things.

And I brought back, I'll bring it in one day if anybody cares to look. But I actually gave a stone that I picked up from the Valley of Elah where David killed Goliath. And I gave it to my oldest son.

And it's amazing because it's littered with stones that would be good for slings. I could see it. I can actually stand there and see the field and understand how this could happen. So when I say give a rock, that actually was a meaningful gift.

I'm not saying, here, suck on that. It's not like that, okay? No, it's not like that at all. But an earthly father knows how to give good gifts. How much more does our heavenly father give good gifts to us?

[24:58] Sometimes it's what we ask for and sometimes it's not. Because he has a better perspective. Do you believe that he is a good father today? That he knows what's best for you?

Do we believe that he would never give us anything that would not benefit us? But sometimes that no is the most loving thing he could possibly do for you and me.

Let's place trust in the good father. To ask, to seek, and to knock. To ask, have that relationship. To seek like we're looking for a treasure. To knock with persistence. And to keep on praying. Even when we feel like giving up.

Keep on praying. Come again to him. Come to him and seek him like that precious treasure. He'll answer. Just trust that he has the right answer in store.

[25:57] Participate. Have passion. Have persistence. And understand that his perspective is larger than ours. Keep calm and pray on.

Let's pray. Father, I'm so grateful that we have access to you. That we have a relationship with you. It kind of blows my mind even thinking of the fact that you're here now.

So, Lord, I pray that each of us will come to you as a best friend. As a son. As a daughter. That will come to you. We will ask.

We will seek. We will knock. And we will also trust. That your answer and your provision is better than anything we could possibly ever dream of. Thank you, Lord, for your goodness.

Thank you for this place. For this church. For this body. Thank you, Father, for all of the stories that we have. I pray that we'll share them more and more. In Jesus' name. Amen.