

[3 : 56] And that's when Heather started to panic. You see, Heather and Kyle were both doctors doing medical relief for AIDS patients.

In Zimbabwe. They both knew the risk when they signed up for the mission. And now their greatest fear was being realized. Heather urged her father to take immediate treatment, to start the antiviral treatment to prevent the HIV infection.

Kyle was reluctant because he knew that the side effects of that were often life-threatening. Still, Heather insisted that he do this. And sure enough, within a few hours, Kyle was violently ill. Nausea, fever, weakness. And for 19 days, this only got worse. He then broke out into a rash, which is almost always seen as fatal.

They had to get Kyle back to the U.S. as quick as possible. But they weren't sure that he could even survive the 40-hour trip back home, which included a 12-hour layover in South Africa.

[5 : 12] When Kyle boarded the plane, he had 104.5 fever. He shook with chills. His eyes were turning yellow. He was struggling to breathe.

And they thought his liver would fail. Heather, after days and days of going through this, is absolutely overwhelmed.

And so, a few minutes into the flight, when Kyle drifts off to sleep, Heather quietly steps over him, makes her way to the airplane lavatory, and there she vomits up her water.

She got down on the floor of that airplane bathroom, crawled into the fetal position, and began to weep uncontrollably.

She laid there, for she can't even remember how long, pleading for God to help.

[6 : 21] Faith, let me ask you tonight, have you ever been in a situation where you felt totally helpless? Completely helpless.

I'm talking desperate and overwhelmed. Life was out of your control, and you knew it. You saw no way out, no way up, no idea what to say, and there was nothing else you could do but ask God, help.

It's the only option I have. Maybe for some of you, it was that helpless feeling financially. You had no idea how you're going to pay the bills. Maybe for some of you, it was a helpless situation relationally where you thought, I have no idea how to make this right.

Some of you, maybe you've been in a helpless situation physically. You had no idea if you're going to be able to make it through. And some of you have been in a helpless situation emotionally where you have felt absolutely and totally alone.

In whatever situation it may have been for you, you kind of crawled into that fetal position of life and just pleaded for God, I need you to help.

[7 : 42] Now, faith family, if you know that feeling of helplessness, if you've ever experienced that sense of desperation where you have absolutely nothing else you can do and nowhere else to turn, that's exactly how you should be feeling spiritually at this point in the Sermon on the Mount.

Would you let me take a few moments to explain? Stop for just a moment tonight and give serious consideration to what Jesus has been teaching us about what it means to live a life that's a disciple, what it means to live a life that represents the kingdom of God, which is what Jesus has been teaching here in the Sermon on the Mount.

And I want you to ask yourself, is this you? Is this the life you live? Is yours the life of a disciple? A life, for instance, that's marked by all of the Beatitudes.

Not just one or two, because remember when we studied those, the Beatitudes is an inclusio. You don't get to pick and choose. It's all one life. That is, a life that's marked by spiritual poverty and godly grief and meekness towards other people and you starve for righteousness and your heart is completely devoted to God and you have an evangelistic zeal, so much so that it causes persecution in your life to which you respond to with joy.

Is that what your life is like? Does that represent your life? A life that shines bright in suffering because you have personally embraced the role as salt and light in a dark world?

[9 : 29] In fact, you could not care less about gratifying yourself because the only thing you want to do in life is glorify God. Does that represent your life?

A life that displays a righteousness that's far greater than that of the scribes and Pharisees, so much so that it's not just enough for you that you haven't murdered anybody.

You don't even have anger in your heart towards anybody. You don't want just an eye for an eye. No, no, no, no. If somebody does something to you, you'll gladly give them your other cheek.

You don't find it a big deal that you love your friends. You seek to love your enemies in the same way. Does that describe you? A life that is perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect. And oh, by the way, when it comes to giving, you do that generously. And praying, you do that fervently. And fasting, you do that frequently. And every time that you do, your motivation is purely because you love God, not because you want to look good in front of others.

[10:40] And if we examined your prayer life, what we would discover is that you often spend much more time focusing on God than you ever do on yourself as modeled in the Lord's Prayer.

And of course, all of this is true of you and me. Why? Because our hearts treasure heavenly things, not earthly things where moth and rust destroy.

And that's seen in the fact that we don't ever worry about anything. We don't ever get anxious about anything in this life. Why? Because we always relate to God as our Father.

Oh, and by the way, when it comes to other people, you never judge them. You have no condemning approach to them ever, and you never share that with anybody else.

Why? Because you walk around every day far more aware of the log in your eye than you are the speck in theirs. I hope you're feeling the weight of the Sermon on the Mount.

[11:52] Do all of those things represent your life? What I just went through, are you like, that's me every day? Ask my husband or whatever.

No. When we go through the Sermon on the Mount, when we really understand and give serious consideration to what Jesus has just been teaching us now for several weeks, if you're like me, you want to crawl up in the spiritual fetal position because you're helpless to do any of that.

Do you feel that? Do you feel the way I feel? Namely, you're aware like I am that I don't have what it takes to belong to the kingdom of God.

Anybody with me, or am I the only one? Like, if I've been paying attention, if I really understand what Jesus has been teaching, by this point in chapter 7, I'm feeling a bit helpless.

I'm feeling a bit like Heather. I'm on the floor saying, God, what do I do? How am I going to live this? What am I going to do with this?

[13:05] Are you ready for Jesus' answer? Verse 7. Ask. And it will be given to you.

Seek. And you'll find. Knock. Knock. And it will be opened to you. In other words, faith family, if true disciples, oh, this is going to preach.

Even if I'm preaching to the wall, this is going to preach. If true disciples are going to live out the righteousness that is the kingdom of God, which I have just summarized all throughout the Sermon on the Mount, if we're going to live that out, it's only going to happen through a pattern of persistent prayer.

A pattern of persistent prayer. That is, if you're going to travel very far, you're going to have to stop frequently and get gas. If you're going to live very long, you're going to have to stop frequently and eat.

Christian, if you're going to live out the righteous requirement of the kingdom, you're going to have to stop and pray. You're going to have to seek God.

[14:17] You're going to have to ask God for help to do what you can't do. And if you're sitting there tonight and you're like, Pastor, we just had a Sermon on Prayer a few weeks ago.

My response to you is, the day you don't need another Sermon on Prayer is a dangerous day, dear friend. This is the lifeline of the Christian life. Besides, here in Matthew chapter 7, notice this on the screen, Jesus is not teaching us the content of prayer like He did in the Lord's Prayer.

He's teaching us the consistency of prayer. Jesus is encouraging us to be persistent in prayer because without it, there's no way we're going to live out everything Jesus has commanded in the Sermon on the Mount.

And this idea of persistent prayer is seen very clearly in verse 7. First, the Greek for these words, ask, seek, knock. They're in the second person, present tense.

They're an active imperative. You don't need to remember all that other than to say this. First of all, it's a command, an imperative. So it's something you must do. But it's second person active, which means it's continual.

[15:32] So literally, a literal reading of verse 7 would be like this. Ask and keep on asking. Seek and keep on seeking. Knock and keep on knocking.

It's a persistent life of coming to God. And of course, you also see this just in the very progression of the words. Ask, seek, knock.

That is, you ask, Dad, where are you? Didn't hear anything, so I'm going to seek, find maybe where he is in the house.

Oh, he's in the bedroom. Knock to get his attention. No, no, no. Listen, don't misunderstand the point, faith family. The idea here is not some kind of spiritual game of hide and seek with God. That's not what Jesus is talking about. It's the idea of persistence of coming to God. I ask, and I seek, and I knock.

[16:29] That is, the only way I'm going to do this is a persistent life of coming to the life source of the very life of Christ. Do you see this?

Now, Jesus teaches this same thing in the Gospel of Luke. He gives two parables that make the same point, same idea that we see here in Matthew 7. Let's look at them tonight.

Look at Luke chapter 18. Luke chapter 18, and this is verse 1 through 5. Luke 18, 1 through 5.

You'll see it here on the screen. You can jot it down in your notes.

And Jesus told them a parable to the effect that they ought to what? Always to pray and not lose heart.

So what is Jesus talking about? Persistent prayer. Don't give up praying. Don't stop praying. Always be praying. And he's going to tell them a story that teaches this. Verse 2. He said, In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man, and there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, Give me justice against my adversary.

[17:39] For a while, he, that is the judge, refused. But afterward, he said to himself, Although I neither fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, the old woman won't shut up.

I'll give her justice so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming. Now that's funny.

Okay?

Jesus is being funny here. Okay? This is like having kids. For those of you that have kids, be honest. How many of you have ever made terrible parenting decisions because your kid beat you down and wore you out?

Be honest. Don't act like that's never happened to you. Right? And you spent the \$10 million on Disney. Right? That was funny. Clearly you've never been to Disney or you wouldn't, right?

So, but you've broken down and you've done that, maybe that thing you said you'd never do, but it's like, man, they're so cute and they won't shut up and so, okay, we'll have ice cream at 10 a.m.

[18:41] or whatever. And you gave in. Well, Jesus is saying that here's a judge who gives in to this poor woman because she won't shut up. And that's what prayer is like.

What? And it might be one thing if Jesus hadn't taught the same thing earlier in Luke. Look at Luke chapter 11. Luke chapter 11 and verse 5.

This actually comes right after the version of the Lord's prayer in Luke. Look at Luke chapter 5 verse 9. And he said to them, which of you has a friend?

And we'll go to him at midnight and say to him, friend, lend me three loaves. For a friend of mine has arrived on a journey and I got nothing to set before him. Now, keep that on the screen, but for those of you, we're not from the ancient Near East.

This is a major, major issue. Hospitality in the ancient Near East is a big deal. So somebody shows up and you don't have anything to set before them. That's a serious problem. Verse 7.

[19:44] And he'll answer from within, do not bother me. The door is now shut and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything. Watch what Jesus says. I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything, because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence, that is because of his persistence, he will rise and give him whatever he needs.

And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you. Seek, and you will find, knock, and it will be opened to you.

Now, be honest. How many of you are sitting there like, what in the world does that mean? Like, those seem to be kind of some weird way of teaching persistent prayer.

So, so pastor, tell us what's the point. Here's the point, faith family. Here's what Jesus is teaching in those examples. It's this. You need to keep praying. Amen? You need to keep praying, because eventually, you are going to annoy God so much, that he will give you what you want.

Amen? Amen. That's what the text says. Is it not what the text says? That our goal in prayer is to wear out the God who never tires?

[21 : 09] And be of good cheer, faith family, that when God does answer you, after your persistent pleading, it won't be on the basis of your relationship with him, but on the basis of his annoyance with you.

Let's pray and go home. No! That'd be a terrible ending, right? But be honest. Do you not read those stories, those parables, and think, well, that really seems to be what Jesus is teaching. So now let me relieve us by telling you what Jesus is doing here, and this is really, really, really important. So listen. Notice this on the screen. Jesus is not comparing God to these examples. Jesus is contrasting God with these examples. Here's what I mean, and this is powerful. If the judge, who doesn't care about the woman, still answers her request because she's persistent, how much more will your father, who deeply cares for you, answer your prayers when you pray? If the friend, the neighbor, who doesn't get up because of his relationship, still gets up because his friend is persistent, then how much more will your father, on the very basis of your relationship with him, do for you?

[22 : 37] You. Don't you see? Jesus is making the point, if a judge will do that based on persistence, it doesn't even care about the woman, and if a neighbor will do that based on persistence, who doesn't even really do it out of friendship, how much more your heavenly father who loves you and is in relationship with you?

I'm the only one excited about this. I tell you what, the summer heat has like dried some of you out. Look at verse 11, look at Matthew chapter 7, verse 11. I'm excited for you though, here we go. For if you then, this is back to the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 7, 11, if you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, here it is, how much more will your father, who is in heaven, give good things to those who ask him?

In other words, he's contrasting how we respond with impure motives like the judge, like the neighbor, like me as a dad, with how God responds from pure motives.

This will preach, look at it on the screen. If we answer out of annoyance, how much more will God answer out of affection? God loves it when you come to him.

[23 : 55] God loves it when you ask and seek and knock. And if sinful people give good gifts to their kids, how much more a sinless God to his?

Do you see the point, faith family? You feel helpless? You feel overwhelmed by the Sermon on the Mount? You feel like me? I don't have a chance. I know. Ask.

Knock. Seek. Your father's there for you. And he can't wait to give you what you need. So here's the summary of just verse 7.

We're going through verse 11, so I hope you don't have evening plans. Here it is. There is a second service so far as they know. I'm teasing. When, faith family, when, not if.

This is a when, it's not an if. When you feel helpless in life. When that's your condition, and by the way, that's all of our conditions spiritually, when it comes to living out this thing, then there's only one response.

[24 : 59] And it should be always and repeated. And it is ask, and keep on asking. Seek. Keep on seeking. Knock, and keep on knocking. Here's why.

Because when you do, there's a promise. Verse 8. Now we're at verse 8. For everyone who asks, receives. The one who seeks, finds.

And to the one who knocks, it will be opened. So now we see the promise of persistent prayer. Now, it's important for us, and we've been doing this throughout the Sermon on the Mount, to understand the context of which all these things are coming from.

I mean, we can pluck so much of the Sermon on the Mount out of context, and we end up with something different than what Jesus is really trying to teach here. And I'm not saying I always get it right.

Clearly, I am not a perfect teacher of the Scripture at all, and I can get it wrong. But we work hard here at Faith Family to say, what's the context? What does this mean originally?

[26 : 01] Because we want to understand what Jesus means, not what I think it means. I say, at least amen that. If you don't amen anything else tonight, you should amen that. And I don't care what you think it means.

Just so you know. All right? We want to know, what does Jesus mean here based on the context of the whole sermon? Because Jesus didn't give little sound bites every Saturday night like we do here at Faith Family.

Okay? Jesus is giving this all at once, and so we need to understand the context. And I say all that because so many people quote verse 8 out of context to end up with a conclusion that is opposite of what Scripture teaches.

Jesus, listen Faith Family, Jesus is not teaching a blank check response to prayer. That whatever it is you ask, and whatever it is that you seek, and whatever it is that you knock, if you just do that enough, you will get it.

You want that new camel? It's yours. With the leather seat? Yeah, baby. Right? I mean, you, Peter, Peter, I know, you fishermen, you've been wanting that 18-foot ranger bass boat.

[27 : 11] Okay, maybe that's not Peter, that's me, but whatever. Peter, you just keep praying and asking for that, and you will receive it, brother. That's not what Jesus is teaching here. In fact, let's be honest.

Let's be real. There are some of you in this place tonight that have a real problem with this verse because you have pleaded with God for things, and you didn't get it.

Maybe the healing of a spouse. Maybe the salvation of a friend. Maybe a job that you really felt like was God's will for your life, and you prayed, and you prayed, and you prayed, and you prayed, and you didn't receive what you were praying for.

So you come to a verse like this, and you say, well, that may look good on a coffee cup, but it doesn't jive well in my life. Now, listen, listen, listen, listen.

Sometimes, not always. Sometimes, not always. This is why. James 4, 3. You ask, and you do not receive because you ask wrongly, that is, to spend it on your passions.

[28 : 23] So sometimes that's why you're not getting what you're praying for. But many of you would reply to say, yeah, pastor, but I have prayed for good things with what I believe were good reasons, and God didn't give it to me.

To which my response to you would be this. That's why you need to understand the context of Matthew 7 to know what Jesus is saying and what He's not. What is Jesus promising to give you? What is the very core of this persistent prayer? Jesus is not talking about asking, seeking, and knocking about just anything generically, but something specifically.

What is it? Well, let's figure it out together. Remember, just observing the text, here are five things from the text and six ultimate things that we would observe.

Number one, it is received. That is, we don't get it on our own. If we could get it on our own, we wouldn't need to ask for it.

[29 : 35] Amen? I went to seminary for that, right? PhD, beside my name, because that's how smart I am. No, of course we get that. If the idea is being received, I can't get it.

I need somebody else to give it to me. Secondly, it's a gift. That is, I can't earn it. It's not anything that I have earned in life. Third, it's a good gift, meaning it's a righteous thing.

It's a good thing. Fourth, it's given from God. That is, it originates from Him. And fifth, it's given, according to the text, to evil people.

If you who are evil, that is, unrighteous, and I would add the sixth, it's been the emphasis of the entire Sermon on the Mount. What is the it we're asking for?

Here it is. The promise that Jesus is offering is the gift of righteousness. Because what has Jesus been talking about the whole Sermon on the Mount?

[30 : 39] Righteousness! In fact, if you don't have a righteousness that surpasses the scribes and Pharisees, you don't get in the kingdom of God. If you're not as perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect, you're not a part of the kingdom of God.

And you sit back and you say, I can't be salt and light, and I can't reflect the Beatitudes, and I can't have a heart that doesn't judge other people, and on and on. I know, ask.

Seek. Knock. And the very righteousness that you don't have will be given to you.

Amen. It's not a blanket prayer of whatever it is that you ask, whatever it is that you want in life.

It's a specific asking of helplessness when we come to realize, I don't have what it takes to live this out.

[31 : 36] Let me give you an example in the Apostle Paul's life. We'll do this quickly. I think this is a perfect example of Matthew 7. 2 Corinthians 12, 7.

Many of you know this passage, but notice closely what Paul talks about. 2 Corinthians 12, verse 7. He says, So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to harass me, to keep me from

becoming conceited.

Now, I don't have time to unpack verse 7, but boy, we could have fun doing so. All right? But look at what he says in verse 8. Three times, I what, faith family?

Pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.

Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly in my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Here's why I think that's a good example here of Matthew 7, because number one, Paul persisted in prayer, right?

[32 : 48] Three times. I don't necessarily mean that means on three just random occasions. Likely means three seasons of life, potentially, that I prayed and I pleaded for God to take this thorn from me.

Second, that he pleaded with God. Paul realized, I can't get rid of this. I can't do this on my own. I don't have the strength. And third, God gave him the grace to live out the gospel in his weakness. In other words, not remove the thorn, but give the ability, the grace and strength in his weakness to keep living out of the gospel.

I think that's what Jesus is teaching us here in Matthew 7. Three more verses quickly. Look at verse 9 through 11.

We'll take them as a unit and then we'll close. Chapter 7, verse 9, Jesus says, Or which of you, if his son asked him for bread, would give him a stone? Or if asked for a fish, would give him a serpent?

[33 : 57] If you then, who are evil, and you are evil if you give your son a snake, if you give anybody a snake, you're evil, as far as I'm concerned, know how to give good gifts to your children, well how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask them.

The third and final point tonight is this. It's the pleasure of God to provide. Why it is God's total and absolute pleasure to give this to his children.

I think these are some of the most beautiful verses in the Bible. They remind us of how deep the Father's love for us really is. I think this shines even brighter when you understand the context of what Jesus is teaching.

I'm going to say this fast, so please hang with me. Put your seatbelt on for just a moment.

Remember that Jesus is teaching all of this, the Sermon on the Mount in the context of Jews and Gentiles. And with Gentiles, we've already learned that they would just repeat phrases and they'd say anything and everything in hopes that something would be enough to make the gods happy. And the point is they would never have any assurance, no basis of comfort. The Gentiles would never really know, are the gods happy? Am I going to get a good crop? Do they care at all?

[35 : 09] And not only the Gentiles, but the Jews, they often saw Yahweh as distant. For example, they wouldn't even use God's name for fear of committing blasphemy against the Lord's name.

I say all that to say this, please come in, those of you watching online, please listen closely to this. Jesus has done something in the Sermon on the Mount that is absolutely revolutionary. Absolutely paradigm destroying. And here it is. He's teaching us that the way we relate to God is Father.

Don't pray like this. Pray like this. Our Father who is in heaven. That is, the whole basis of our relationship with God is that He is a Father that delights to do good for us and provide for us. And as I was thinking on these verses, again, this is the last thing, but it's important. This came to me. I think it will be helpful to you. Notice it on the screen.

[36 : 14] Your view of God is directly related to both the content and consistency of your prayer. Think about that.

Your view of God, how you relate to God, not like the Gentiles, not like the Jews, Christianly, kingdomly, when you relate to God as Father, that impacts.

So for instance, if your view of God is only judge, you'll keep your distance from Him, and when you do pray to Him, you're likely always trying to justify yourself.

If your view of God is that of a boss, well, you might approach Him a few times a week, and you keep it mostly businesslike. If you view God as primarily distant, you'll offer up some ritualistic prayer that often is void of meaning.

But, if you view God as your Father, who loves you, sent His Son to die for you, do you know what you'll never be afraid to do?

[37 : 21] Ask. Ask. Man, my three kids, when they were young, you know what they never, ever, ever had an issue doing?

Asking. For anything and everything, and I won't embarrass you, all right? Don't you see, when you get the fact that you relate because of Jesus Christ to God as your Father, that impacts not only what you pray, but how often you pray.

Because when you know as we just sang that He's a good, good Father, you can't wait to talk to Him. And you can't wait to ask and seek and knock, knowing that it's His pleasure to provide for what you need.

Do you get it, faith family? Are you seeing what the Sermon on the Mount is teaching us here? Here's the summary of our passage tonight. When you come to understand what Jesus demands of you as a disciple in His kingdom, you will rightly feel helpless.

Totally helpless. That is why you must always keep in mind that you have a Father who loves to give you what you need and so you never stop asking and you never stop seeking and you never stop knocking.

[38 : 56] Amen? Amen. Heather can't remember how long she laid on the floor in that airplane bathroom crying for help.

But evidently it was so long that some other passengers became concerned for her and they knocked on her door. When she opened it, four men were standing outside.

She explained her father's condition only to discover that those four men were doctors. and so were 96 other passengers on that plane.

One of them was a top infectious disease doctor. They told Heather, we'll take care of your dad. You go sleep.

When Heather woke up, her dad was standing talking to the doctors. still very weak, but on his way to being fully healed.

[40 : 08] Ask. Seek. Knock. Because Jesus says that you have a father that delights to give you good things, and no one would know this more than Jesus.

Jesus. He's the one that in his moment of helplessness pleaded with the father. And through a death and a crucifixion, the father highly exalted him and gave Jesus a name that is above every name.

You see, faith family, Jesus knows firsthand how the father loves to give good gifts to his children. And all God's people said, amen. Let's pray together. God, thank you for teaching us again tonight about prayer. Not just the content of prayer that we learned in the Lord's prayer, but the consistency of prayer.

I have felt so much the weight of teaching the Sermon on the Mount. I think if we really understand it, we just have to feel a sense of I can't do this.

[41 : 24] And God, I know that you're just teaching us tonight to say, I know, but ask. I'll give you what you need. Because if your earthly fathers or earthly parents who are evil, if they love to give good things to you, how much more will I give good gifts to you?

Help us relate to you as father, so that we're unafraid and bold to ask anything often and to come before your throne of grace.

We love you, God. We love you, our father, and all God's people said, amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.