November 22, 2026

Sermon on the Mount

Pray Diligently

Matthew 7:7-11

1. **Sermon Outline**:
    a. Trust that Diligent, Disciplined Prayer Is Effective
        i. Jesus commands persistent prayer
        ii. God aligns our heart to Him as we pray
    b. Trust that God Answers Prayers In the Way that Is Ultimately Best
        i. Trust God's goodness when you pray
        ii. Trust the goodness of God's answers even when they aren't what you prefer
2. ***Sunday –*** As soon as possible after the sermon, consider:
    a. What stood out to you the most in this sermon?
    b. What new truth did you learn, or what truth were you reminded of?
    c. Is there a particular Scripture passage you feel God is leading you to meditate on or commit to memory?
    d. What is one thing God is leading you to do after hearing this message?
    e. Did God convict you of a need to make any changes in your life and walk with Him?
3. ***Monday:***
    a. Read Matthew 7:7-11 3 or 4 times, in different Bible versions if you have them. Then read it and meditate on it once more using the version you find most helpful.
    b. What is the obvious problem ("the elephant in the room") that we all face when we read this passage?
        i. Have you ever prayed for something you felt was really important (perhaps the salvation of a lost loved one) and the prayer was not answered? How did/do you feel about it?
        ii. What explanations have you heard to explain why your prayer was not answered? How satisfying did you find the explanations?
        iii. If you were able to read it in several translations, how different were verses 7 and 8? Did any of the translations provide any qualifiers or exceptions to what appear to be absolute statements in these two verses?
        iv. Before going further, can you agree that if Jesus said this and there is no ambiguity in the translation (evidenced by the consistency across versions), the statements have to be true? We must accept them by faith, even though we may not be able to "prove" them by personal experience?

c. As Jesus is coming to the end of the Sermon on the Mount, we should remind ourselves of what we have seen over the past many weeks:
    i. According to Matthew 5:1-2, who does it seem Jesus was teaching in the Sermon?
    ii. Jesus' disciples likely found His instructions challenging: they were to be merciful and forgiving, yet wisely discerning; to give other disciples the benefit of the doubt while guarding against those who would harm the Church; and to judge no one, yet remain observant of people's true character and deal with them accordingly. What would they need to do so (consider James 1:5 and Proverbs 2:6)?

d. Finish the day by comparing the parallel passage in Luke 11:9-13. What insight does it provide about how God answers our prayers and what He gives us to enable us to observe the commands found in the Sermon on the Mount?

4. ***Tuesday:***
    a. Read Matthew 7:7-11, but this time focus your meditation on the first phrase in both verse 7 and verse 8 (the "Ask" phrase) and note where else the word is used in the passage.
    b. What does it mean to "ask"? What distinguishes an "ask" from a "demand"?
        i. In your view, is "asking" synonymous with prayer? Why or why not?
        ii. The Greek word translated "ask" is aitéō, used to describe a request from an inferior to a superior, a beggar to a giver, a child to a parent, or a man to God. [Jesus uses a different word, one for requesting from an equal, when He asks things from His Father.] Why is it important to acknowledge our inferior position when we ask?
        iii. How is this hierarchy or relationship demonstrated in the illustration/example Jesus uses?
        iv. Read these verses: Matthew 6:8, 18:19, Colossians 1:9, James 1:5-6, 4:2-3, 1 John 5:14-16, and Isaiah 7:11-12. What principles do you find about asking?
        v. What significance is there that "ask" is present tense, indicating continuous activity (compare 1 Thessalonians 5:17 and Luke 18:1)?
    c. Of the three verbs, ask, seek, and knock, why is ask first? Do you believe that seeking and knocking can occur without asking first? Why do you think Jesus only mentions the son asking in His example in verses 9 and 10?

5. **Wednesday:**
    a. Read Matthew 7:7-11 again; this time, focus your meditation on the second phrase in both verse 7 and verse 8 (the "Seek" phrase).
    b. What does it mean to seek?
        i. The Cambridge Dictionary defines "seek" as:
            1. To try to find or get something, especially something that is not a physical object
            2. To ask for advice, help, approval, permission, etc.
            3. To try or attempt

            Which definition do you feel best fits in verses 7 and 8?

ii. The Greek word translated "seek" is *zētéō*, meaning to seek after, look for, strive to find, or to seek in the sense of endeavor or try. Although clearly related, what would you say was the difference between asking and seeking?

iii. Read these verses: Matthew 6:33; Luke 12:29; John 5:44; 7:18; 8:50; Acts 17:27; 1 Corinthians 10:24, 33; Philippians 2:21; Colossians 3:1; and Psalm 34:14. What principles do you find about seeking?

iv. How, if at all, do you think the well-known saying "Pray as though everything depends on God, and work as though everything depends on you" captures the relationship between asking and seeking?

c. Making it practical, if you are asking for the salvation of a loved one, what is the "seeking" step?

6. ***Thursday****:*

a. Once again, read Matthew 7:7-11, but this time meditate on the third phrase of verses 7 and 8 (the "Knock" phrase).

b. What does it mean to "knock"? And yes, the Greek word, *kroúō*, means exactly that: to rap at a door for entrance.

i. Since God doesn't live in a house with a physical door, what do you think the spiritual meaning of "knock" is?

ii. Other than this passage and the parallel passage in Luke, with one exception, the word is only used in the New Testament to describe the physical act of pounding on a door. Read the one exception, Revelation 3:20 carefully.

1. What makes this verse fundamentally different?

2. Knowing who it is that is knocking in Revelation 3:20, how likely is it that He ever gives up and stops knocking?

iii. Since Jesus knocks persistently to be received by Christians who have become self-sufficient, what might we conclude "knocking" would imply in Matthew 7:7-8?

1. Read Luke 11:5-8, the verses preceding Luke's parallel passage to Matthew 7:7-11. What do they suggest might be implied by "knocking"?

2. Read Luke 18:1-5. What might it suggest?

c. Assuming that, spiritually, knocking indicates persistence in prayer, one author defined it as "come continually to the Father in prayer, seek entrance into His will and kingdom, persevere in faith, and trust Him to give what is truly good." In that definition, is the important emphasis on our technique of knocking or on the one who opens the door?

7. ***Friday:***

a. Read Matthew 7:7-11 meditating especially on what Jesus says in verses 9, 10 and 11.

b. Consider carefully the two rhetorical questions Jesus presents in verses 9 and 10. What is the expected answer?

i. While the questions tell us what a responsible father will not do to his son, what do they tell us about what he will do?

1. While the father would not be mean and trick the child by providing something useless as food (a stone) or even harmful (a serpent), are there circumstances when he might not give the child what was requested?
2. Assuming the father is loving, what would be the primary factor that determines how he would respond to a request?

ii. Why do you think Jesus asked two rhetorical questions? What two different explanations are suggested for how a father responds?

c. What does Jesus mean when He calls His listeners (including His disciples) evil (see Colossians 1:21, Romans 3:23 and Matthew 12:34)?

i. What contrast is He introducing when He calls His listeners "evil"? If we are evil, what words would describe our "Father who is in heaven"?

ii. By using that title for God, what specific teaching would Jesus expect them to remember from earlier in the Sermon on the Mount?

8. ***Saturday:***

a. Meditate on the focal passage considering how it should influence your own prayers.

b. What does Jesus promise God will give us? How should James 1:17 expand our thinking about the good things we have? How should John the Baptist's statement in John 3:27 expand it even further? How does accepting (believing) both statements make the instruction of Ephesians 5:20 not only possible but necessary?

9. **Application:** Jesus tells us to ask, seek, and knock. We have no problem asking Him for the things we perceive we need—in fact, too often, that is the extent of our prayers. Seeking is more difficult. We pray for spiritual growth, but do we seek it by spending more time in the Word? We pray for the unreached people groups in the world, but do we seek to reach them by giving more or by going? And when we do both, are we persistent, or do interest, desire, and commitment fade when we don't see the results we requested? Are our prayers "one-and-done," or do we keep knocking? Earlier in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." Could our biggest problem be that we have ignored the priority He established with that statement?

10. **Pray:** As a stable country in a troubled region, we often overlook Thailand when praying for unreached people groups. It may surprise you to learn that Vietnam has five times as many evangelical Christians as Thailand. Nearly half of Thailand's Christians are from tribal groups that make up less than 5% of the population. Pray for these two people groups this week:

a. Thai: Over 55 million Thai are classified into 8 different people groups based on geography and religion. Primarily Buddhist, none of the people groups has more than 2% Christians, with several less than 0.1% Christian – this despite missionaries having worked in Thailand for over 400 years.

b. Lao Lom: Living in northern Thailand, the 29,000 Lao Lom are 100% Buddhist. They enjoy some of the world's most exotic food, hunting snakes, rats, insects, and snails to supplement the fish they catch in the Mekong River.