

Matthew 7:7–12

Growth in Holiness through Fellowship with Father

Saturday, April 20, 2024 • Read Matthew 7:7–12

Questions from the Scripture text: What is the first command in v7? What will happen if you do so? What is the second? What will happen? What is the third command? What will happen? How many who do these things will have these outcomes (v8)? What scenario does v9 ask about? About what sort of response, from the father in question, does it ask? What is the implied answer to this rhetorical question? What other scenario does v10 ask about? What response? What implied answer? What does v11 say about Jesus's disciples? But what do they still know how to give? To whom? To Whom does the verse compare them? Where is He? What will He give? To whom? How does the beginning of v12 connect it to the previous verse? How much of their desires should they act upon? Which desires? What are they to do with all that they desire to be done to them? What does this fulfill? What do the law and prophets tell us about God's intentions? What do the law and prophets tell us about God's requirements?

What is progressing in holiness like? Matthew 7:7–12 prepares us for the morning sermon on the Lord's Day. In these six verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **progressing in holiness comes through fellowship with a good Father. Who even uses us in our brothers' lives.**

Two great errors that v1–6 corrected are judgmentalism (v1) but also failing to value sanctification for ourselves and others (v5–6). But it is hard on us to know both that we are not holy and that holiness is priceless. If we are examining ourselves (cf. Gal 6:4), and aiming at sowing to the Spirit rather than the flesh (cf. Gal 6:8), we may grow weary (cf. Gal 6:9a). The Lord Jesus now teaches us about not losing heart (cf. Gal 6:9b) and serving one another in the same vein (cf. Gal 6:10). Growing in sanctification, growing in grace, must be marked by:

Neediness. The asker knows that he needs something. The seeker knows that he is missing something. The knocker knows that he is on the outside of something. The judgmental person feels (wrongly) that he has arrived. The believer's view of himself is marked by poverty, mourning, lowliness, hunger (cf. 5:3–6).

Dependence. In our foolish inconsistency, we often respond to our neediness by trusting in how sincerely we wish to change, or how hard we intend to try. But asking, seeking, and knocking from Father is exactly opposite that. Growth in holiness is obtained primarily by prayer. Even the use of all other means (cf. Eph 6:14–17) is joined to prayer (cf. Eph 6:18), because they are the Lord's means, and we are looking to Him to give the increase. Although, in our sanctification, we are instructed to work, the holiness comes not by achievement but by God's loving gift.

Persistence. "Ask... seek... knock..." are imperatives in a tense that communicates an ongoing command. They are not something that are done once and disposed of. Asking, seeking, and knocking is always the way of life, the way forward, for the believer.

Confidence. Prayer doesn't just ask and seek; it obtains and finds (cf. Heb 4:16). *Each* who asks receives, seeks finds, and knocks gains entry (v8). Why? Because of Whom it is that we are asking: our Father Who is in heaven (v11). Just as He sustains food to the birds and beauty to the flowers, He sustains even to the wicked world a sense of responsibility for their children. If He had not extended common grace so that fallen man gives his children bread and fish instead of stones and serpents, humanity would soon have perished altogether. And as the very one who grieves over his remaining sin still provides for his dear children, he must conclude that his heavenly Father will most assuredly give him every good thing.

Affection. Partially sanctified men, and even unregenerate men, feel not only a responsibility to their children but natural affection. By extending this to us in both common grace and special grace, God gives us an inkling of His Fatherly affection toward us. Coming to Him as dearly loved children brings forth from our own hearts a reciprocal affection.

Submission. Treating God as Father means more than just knowing His love. It also means trusting His wisdom. We trust His wisdom about what to ask for (cf. 6:8–13), and we trust His wisdom in how He answers. The law and the prophets teach us both what our Father has intended toward us and what our Father requires of us.

Imitation. Having learned from Father what to desire from Him, we understand what to desire from other men. We become grateful for assistance with the planks in our eyes. The "therefore" in v12 shows us that, in this context, the so-called "golden rule" is specifically about loving our neighbor with evangelism and loving our brother by fellowship in one another's sanctification. We learn from the goodness of Father both the goodness that we should desire for ourselves and the goodness that we should desire to show to others.

Behold how good and wise Father is! He has made fellowship with Him the necessary heart of the pursuit of holiness; thus He has infused our lives with much sweetness as we pursue that holiness. Let us learn from Him what is best, and imitate His goodness with others.

What place does sanctification have in your prayer life? What place does prayer have in what else you are doing for sanctification? How does the biblical way of sanctification force you into the sweetness of interaction with your heavenly Father? How does knowing and desiring such sweetness for yourself shape how you interact with your brothers?

Sample prayer: Father in heaven, we feel our great neediness! Thank You for also making us to know Your grace and the sweetness of coming to You for that grace, and depending upon You for that grace. You know how to give good things to those who ask You. Help us to aim at the same good in loving our brethren, we ask through Christ, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP51B "From My Sins, O Hide Your Face" or TPH518 "Come, My Soul, with Every Care"

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. **PLEASE BE AWARE** of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Matthew 7 7-12. These are God's words. Ask and it will be given to you seek and you will find knock and it will be open to you. For everyone who asks receives and he who seeks finds, And to him who knocks, it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who if his son asks for bread, we'll give him a stone.

Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then being evil know how to could give good gifts to your children, how much more will your father who is in heaven? Give good things to those who ask him. Therefore, Whatever you want men to do to, you do also to them For this is the law. On the prophets. So far, the Reading of gods inspired and an errant word. Verse 6, helps us understand what the Lord is talking about when he says Ask seek and knock. Because verse 6 has just been just has just described. What is Holy and what are pearls. Especially as.

The gift that the God, that God gives us. When he has brought us to Faith in Jesus Christ and he's made Christ, our righteousness. And he's given us the right to enter Heaven. he doesn't stop there. He gives us. What is necessary? in order to enter. Into the heaven to which he has given us.

All right. He gives us the Holiness that we need without which we will not see the Lord. He gives us the righteousness in character and conduct that exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees. And so, Knowing then that remaining sin is like a foreign object in our eye.

And that sanctification, and Holiness is like a pearl of treasure. He then comes to us and says, ask seek knock Etc. And this is a comfort to. because as we heard at the beginning of chapter five, In which? Um,

Believers are described as those who are poor in spirit and who mourn over continuing sinfulness and who are lowly before, God and who are hungry and thirsty for righteousness. They're not filled. Now, they will be filled. also Believers are described according to neediness, and we've just had that reinforced In the opening of chapter 7 reminding us. to view others as those who are still in need of mercy, and of sanctifying Grace, and to view ourselves, that way not to view ourselves as having arrived and being, better than others. lest we not be given Mercy and sanctifying Grace. Because we don't see ourselves as needy of it.

He comes now back to our neediness and he says, ask seek and knock. So for the genuine Christian, who feels his sin as a foreign object in his eye, who feels how much he falls short of what he will have to be, in order to enter the heaven that Christ has earned for us and guaranteed to us.

When we feel how much we fall short, it is comforting. Then to read ask seek knock. This is not Our Pleasures. You remember? When Christ's Prophet his Earthly, half-brother James is writing and he says, you have not because you ask not, he follows with you ask, and you do not receive because you ask a Miss to spend it on your pleasures.

And so, we must not come to Matthew 7, 7 and say, oh, here's a verse that says, if you believe hard enough. So you ask seek a knock With faith, you will get whatever it is that you want. No, it is an ask seek a knock that is formed by the knowledge of self.

That we find in the beginning of this chapter, the beginning of Matthew 5 and asks seek and knock that formed by a submission to the father, who knows what we need. And so chapter six when he was telling us about prayer. He says you have your father knows the things you have need of before you ask him verse 8 in this manner, therefore pray and he gives us the Lord's Prayer.

And, and then he tells us in verse 32, your heavenly father knows. That you need all these things. Matthew 6 verse 32. And we know then that it is our father Who knows what we need. And that one of the great things that we still need is Holiness. And so, Growing in sanctification growing in Grace. Is going to be marked by several things that this passage teaches us about. It's going to be marked by neediness. someone who asks is asking because he knows that he needs something. The Seeker knows that he is missing something. And so he seeks until he finds it.

The knocker knows that he is on the outside of something. And so he's not content with the place that he is at. So a judgmental person. Feels that he has arrived. He's not an asker, a Seeker, a knocker. And so this, part of the contrast between the person that we are to be in verse 7, and the person that we are told not to be.

In verse 1. The Christian Life is marked by neediness, it's also marked by dependence. it would be very foolish and inconsistent. To respond to neediness. by thinking that How hard? We try. How sincere. We sincerely, we're resolved to do better. painful and great is the emotion of our remorse.

that these are the things that will provide what we are needy of. No we are needy. We need. We need from God's righteousness. We don't have our own. We need from God's strength. We don't have our own We need from God's goodness. We don't have our own And so asking seeking and knocking, Notice.

especially asking and knocking are Looking. to the Lord. To give to us. And that's how 8 through 11. Follow up on this. Is by. Talking about the Lord as our father who is going to give to us. The good gifts that we ask seek and knock for So, growth and Holiness as obtained primarily by prayer. Even when we use the means we use them in an attitude of Prayer. You know, so, Ephesians 6, when it describes the armor of God, and mostly in the description of the armor, God and armor of God and Ephesians 6, it is Different aspects of God's word as a means of Grace.

And the faith that believes his word and clings to it Etc. But then he says, Verse 18, having finished with the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God and Ephesians 6. 17, he says, then in the next verse Praying, always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit. And so, when we are pursuing Holiness by attending upon other means, By attending upon the reading of his word day by day in the home or the preaching of his word. In the assembly, we must do. So, not just praying beforehand, we do that. We pray before those things, but we must do.

So, in a spirit of prayer or an attitude of prayer, Looking for God, to bless his word to us. Looking for God to act upon our souls. My means of his word looking for his spirit, to apply the life and goodness of his son. To us. By means of his word. And so there's not just neediness, there's dependence, we depend upon him. especially by prayer and everything else that he gives us to use. in a spirit and attitude of prayer. Holiness. in the pursuit of Holiness, God, commands effort. But Holiness is not obtained by achievement.

In that effort, it's obtained by Mercy. By God's blessing, the effort. And so it's not that the effort works. It's that God. By the means of Grace. It's that God. Buy and God blesses. The effort. So there's neediness there's dependence, there's persistence. which is not as obvious. The English.

But you can have. Present imperatives or errorist imperatives? Arrest. Imperative is generally a one-time command and a present imperative. is generally a persistent ongoing command and all of these are present imperatives, so you don't just ask once and it's given to you. The Christian Life is a life of asking.

You don't just seek once and you find that one time. The Christian Life is a life of seeking. you don't just knock once and it's opened once the Christian Life is a life of knocking. And so there's persistence that is communicated here. So you're thinking, what is my life of trying to grow in Holiness trying to have these foreign objects taken out of my eye?

What is my life? A fellowship with God going to look like? So we have so far, it's going to look like neediness It's going to look like dependence, which makes neediness sweet neediness by yourself or neediness without Supply is quite miserable. and so if we find that the neediness is painful or miserable to us, we need to we need to add to that dependence and then it looks like persistence.

It's an ongoing thing. you should not expect immediate complete results. God has given us to. Grow in this way in the rest of our life. This dependent relationship with him and Upon him. And then, it also looks like confidence. As we ask and seek and knock, even though we keep having to do.

So yet, we know that he is giving whatever is actually good to us. We are evil and we are foolish. But, God has spared to us. In his common Grace. A certain measure of natural affection. Concerning our children. So that someone who does not love for someone who does not provide it for his children or love his children.

Is considered. To be unnatural and wicked. And if God had not, Had not in his common Grace. Spared that to man, man would have very quickly destroyed himself from the earth. As fathers refused to provide for their children. And even in our fallen state, he has Given us some measure of wisdom.

so that we know that you can't eat stones. and that serpents. Are not so good as fish. I think the idea here is that the fish. That is requested is a live one that needs to be killed and cleaned and so forth. Much different. If the bucket has a serpent in it instead of having a fish in it.

the child the the picture of the child sticking his hand in to pick up the the fish to clean it and cook it, Etc. You know, children to do that anymore. We have grocery stores, Etc. but you can imagine in their culture without Refrigeration and such, they're incentivized to keep the fish alive as long as possible.

We know not only do does has common Grace extend to us to make provision it extends to us a little bit of wisdom. And much more then for the Christian father. who provides for his son and has affection for his son. and who has better wisdom?

Even not just about Earthly things, but spiritual things, But still is infinitely short of our heavenly father. so so as we ask and seek and knock, even though there is this required persistence, even though, we will not finish being needy and dependent. We're not going to finish being dependent in all eternity.

And we're not going to finish being needy. In this life. Spiritual needy. yet we ask and seek, and knock with confidence because of whom it is. That we are asking therefore we ask and seek and knock with affection. Because that, which was true about men's responsibility to provide for their child and wisdom to know.

How to give their child a good thing. And God infinitely more than providing and wise. Is also true about Affection, we receive help in Holiness from God. as Children from a father. As animals who are being trained. But as those who know that, the Holiness that God is producing in, us comes in this fatherly adopting love.

So, it is because our Father in Heaven is perfect. Chapter 5 verse 48 that we shall be perfect. And he is the one. Who knows? That we need before. What we need before we ask And it comes to to us in all of that fatherly, Adopting love and so we should ask as children. with childlike, love to our father. And embracing and enjoying his love even as we are asking. But this childlike affection, then should come with a childlike submission. Where sometimes we ask for a specific thing and father knows better and he gives us differently. Well. This is infinitely true with God.

And so there ought to be a contentedness as we ask him rather than a worrying, that the answer might be different than we asked. For we, we ask with a contentedness, a humility, a submission that if God does not give me, this precise help that I have been asking for right now, it's because he knows better and it's because he loves with Eternal adopting love with the same love in which he loves within himself.

The father loves us with the love that he has for the son. The son loves us with the love that he has for the father, and the spirit loves us with the love that he has for the father and the son. and so There ought to be this. Submission. Your father who is in heaven, gives good things. To those who ask him. And so, you know, that that's true. And then in the last place, there should be imitation. when Luke gives what we call the good rule, the Golden Rule, sorry. When Luke gives what we call the Golden Rule, he gives it in the context of what to do with enemies.

Do unto man. As you would have them, do it unto you. And so, there's there's a truth there and if you were an unbeliever, enemy what you would have them do unto. You is to evangelize you, in addition to whatever else they did to you, and if it's a Believer enemy, which there are such things as we learned in Romans 12 because of remaining sin We don't repay evil for evil and what we do unto them.

pray and bless and desire, their Holiness. and so forth. And pursue reconciliation, we'll now, get to all of those things. So anyway, Luke Luke there puts it in the context of enemies. This is not in the context of enemies. Notice verse 12, the therefore connects Whatever you want men to do to, you do also to them, it connects that to what father knows that we need.

So if we are submitting to father, And we know that what we need is gentleness patience, kindness provision of Holiness. we see that verse 12 is actually talking about the same thing as the second half of verse five. that my own personal sanctification is important in part. Because my being humbled and realizing how horrible sin is my learning, what it is like to grow in Grace. out of my union with Christ and have these things removed from my eye, my own plank removal experience, equips me to be helpful to my brother who needs the same help with the, the spec that is in his eye.

And, and so God is the Plank removal and spec removal Giver. That's what we're asking and seeking and, and knocking for, and he knows how to give it to us, and, and the pace at, which in dependence upon him, and the sweetness of that relationship with him, that he is going to give it to us in this life.

And that's what we desire from him. And we know that part of what he uses in that is The Fellowship of our brothers and sisters in the church, whom he has appointed as a means unto that end. And therefore whatever you want men. to do to you. You do also.

To them. and that That. Creates an inclusia with judge, not that you be not judged with what judgment you judge. You will be judged with the measure you use. It will be measured back to you. And so verse 12 aligns with verses one and two, even as it is about The second half of verse five.

And this is the law and the prophets, the law, and the prophets tell us God's plan. For how he is going to save. And, God's requirements of. As Those whom he is saving and Those whom he is using in the lives of others. And so, one of the ways of boiling down the law and the prophets is Not just receiving from God, our justification and sanctification.

But seeking to be, used by God and helpful in bringing others, to justification, bringing others, to saving knowledge of Christ, and growing others in, and by the grace, and the knowledge of Christ. and so verse 12 is especially And evangelism and edification verse. It does still mean.

If you know, feeding them when they're hungry, giving them to drink when they're thirsty. Clothing them. When naked Etc, we pray give us this day, our daily bread, we trust our father. To give us what we need to eat and what we need to drink and what we need to wear.

So it includes those things. But it is, especially in this context. Evangelism, unto Christ and edification, into and in Christ being built up in Christ. And in Holiness, this is what we learn from God. To want from him. This is what we learn from God. To want him to use other men to do to us.

And then Having learned that from the law and the prophets. And from Christ here, authoritatively teaching us Whatever you want men to do to you? Also. To. So this imitation of God's fatherly goodness to us. in our brotherly goodness. To one another. So this is what the Christian Life looks like as we pursue Holiness.

And prepare to enter Heaven. Neediness dependence. Persistence confidence. Affection submission. And imitation. Our father has infused our lives with much sweetness. By making our interaction with him. The necessary heart. Of our pursuit of Holiness. And so we are to learn from him. What is best? And also to imitate.

his goodness. To us in. Interaction with others. Let's pray.

Valerie, thank you for this passage. We thank you that we are going to Get to hear it preached tomorrow in the worship. And that. Spirit, then will help us and we ask that he would That for each of us individually in this family and also in our congregation That your spirit would come and The particular part of this passage the particular part of the preaching.

That is most needful for each one, that your spirit would give As a personal and specified gift and help to that one. We thank you for how he has been helping us just now. As we were considering your word and submitting to it as an act of worship as a household and we pray that he would be continuing to use your word.

in our hearts and our minds. even between now and when we worship you through it tomorrow, And for the rest of our lives. So bless us. We pray. Help us. We pray. By this ongoing work of your Holy Spirit. Who is The great gift that you. Our father knows that we need.

For growing us up into Christ. In his name, we ask it. Amen.