

Ask and It Will Be Given To You; Seek and You Will Find; Knock and the Door Will Be Opened to You

Matthew 7:7-12 and Luke 6:31

DIG: What is Jesus stressing about God in these verses? How is this teaching to encourage His disciples? What is the guiding principle of prayer here? How does Kingdom righteousness differ from that of the Pharisees and Torah-teachers?

REFLECT: Is this the conduct of one who already has salvation, or the means of obtaining it? Is this a blank check to ask for anything you want, and God is obligated to give it to you? What is the key for you to understand this teaching? Do you **treat others** the way you want them to treat you? Is that easy? Does your halo slip sometimes? What causes you to mistreat others? Do you know what sets you off? Are there any situations you can anticipate beforehand to compensate for your weakness?

In Jesus' thirteenth example, Our Savior sums up the essence of true righteousness and how the Torah differed from pharisaic Judaism. These verses make a perfect bridge between the negative teaching about a judgmental spirit and the positive teaching of the golden rule. Here is one of the Lord's greatest and most comprehensive promises to those who belong to Him. In light of this great promise we can feel free to fully love others and totally sacrifice for others, because our heavenly Father sets the example in His generosity to us and promises that we have access to His eternal and unlimited treasure to meet our needs as well as theirs. We can do to others what we would want done for ourselves without fear of exhausting His resources and having nothing left.⁵⁸⁸

Having already addressed some earlier questions concerning prayer (see Dp - **When You Pray, Go Into Your room and Close the Door**), Yeshua now summarizes some vital principles on seeking the plan of ADONAI. These verses remind us that prayer is also a key element in finding the will of the LORD. Answered prayer does not often come easily or quickly. Most often it is the result of a longer process of seeking the Father. So God the Holy Spirit inspired the human author Matthew to write to us and say: **Ask, and God will give to you. Search and you will find. Knock, and the door will open for you (Matthew 7:7 NCV).** The fact that we must persevere is seen by the present imperative tenses of ask, search, and knock. The idea is that of persistence. It is as if the Lord is saying to us, "Keep on asking; keep on searching; keep on knocking." We also see a progression of intensity in the three verbs, from simply asking to the active searching to the more aggressive knocking. Yet none of these concepts is obscure. The youngest child knows how to ask, search and knock.

For everyone who asks receives. Contrary to some popular interpretations, this verse is not a blank check. First of all, **everyone** refers to believers who belong to the heavenly **Father** (Galatians 6:10; Ephesians 2:19). Those who are not **God's** children cannot come to **Him** as their **Father**. Second, those who claim this promise must be living in obedience to their **Father**. And **God gives us what we ask for because we obey His commands and do what pleases Him** (First John 3:22 NCV). Third, our motive in asking must be right. **When you ask, you do not receive, James explains, because the reason you ask is wrong. You want things so you can use them for your own selfish pleasures** (James 4:3 NCV). Finally, we must be submissive to His will. If we are trying to serve both **God and money** (Matthew 6:24b), we cannot claim this promise. **That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do** (James 1:7-8). As John makes clear: **This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us** (First John 5:14). To believe that **ADONAI** will answer our prayers on any other basis is presumptuous and foolish.⁵⁸⁹

The one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened (Matthew 7:8). The progression of intensity also suggests that our sincere prayers are not to be passive. If **asking** for a job, we should not be sitting in our bedroom waiting for a knock on the door. We should be out looking for a job while we wait on **His** guidance and provision. If we are out of food, we should be trying to earn money to buy it if we can. It is not faith, but presumption to ask **ADONAI** to provide more when we are not willing to use what **He** has already given us. But as believers continue to pray, answers will be provided **and doors will be opened**. **The Father** promises to answer our prayers, but **His** answer may not be what we had hoped for. **His** answer is sometimes "yes," other times "no," and even sometimes "wait." But rest assured, **God's** answer will come in **His** perfect time.

For those who question **Messiah's** promise here, **He** gives a short parable to affirm this truth. **Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake** (Matthew 7:9-10)? **A fish** is valid kosher meal, whereas **a snake** (or maybe an eel from the Sea of Galilee) is clearly not. A loving Jewish **father** would never deceive and defile **his son** into dishonoring the Word of **God** by tricking **him** into eating ceremonially unclean food. So the obvious answer is no loving **father** would ignore either the physical or spiritual needs of **his son**.

Even though you are evil (Matthew 7:11a)! The Greek literally reads, *ponapoi 'ontes*, or *being evil*. Here is one of the many specific scriptural teachings of mankind's fallen, **evil** or **sinful** nature; **evil** and **sinful** are synonymous here. **Yeshua** is not speaking of specific **fathers** who are especially cruel and wicked, but of human **fathers** in general, all of who are **sinful** by nature. This is called the doctrine of **total depravity**, which means *that the sinner is*

completely unable to extricate himself from his sinful condition. This terminal disease of **sin** has been passed down to us from **Adam** (see my commentary on **Genesis Ba - The Woman Saw the Fruit and Ate It**), and in the New Covenant, Rabbi Sha'ul teaches us that **sin entered the world through one man, Adam (Romans 5:12a)**. The world teaches that we were born sinless, and for us to become **sinful** something drastic has to happen; but the Word of **God** says we were all **sinful at birth (Psalm 51:5)**, and for us to become **a new creation in Christ (Second Corinthians 5:17)**, something drastic has to happen. We need to recognize the hopelessness of our *sinful condition*, surrender and ask **Yeshua ha-Meshiach** to take control of our lives, sit on throne of our hearts and become **the Lord** of our lives.

Even though you are evil - as sinful human fathers - and 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 (Matthew 7:11)! The most naturally selfless relationship among human beings is that of parents with their children. We are more likely to sacrifice for our **children**, even to the point of giving up our lives, than for anyone else. Yet the greatest human parental love cannot compare with **God's**. **Here, Christ uses the rabbinic principle of interpretation first elaborated in seven principles by Rabbi Hillel (10AD)**. Because these principles were used during **Messiah's** lifetime, it is relevant to understand **His** words. Here, **He** uses one of the Middot principles to explain **His** revealed will: If an earthly **father** provides **good gifts** for **his children, how much more** would **ADONAI** provide for **His spiritual children**.

What follows next can be considered one of the best summary statements of the entire Sermon on the Mount. **In a famous Talmudic story, Rabbi Hillel was asked one day by a Gentile to summarize all of the Torah while standing on one foot. He obviously wanted a quick answer! Hillel is reported to answer, "What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. This is the whole Torah" (Tractate Sanhedrin 31a)**. So what **Hillel** explained in negative terms, **Yeshua** described in positive terms what is commonly called **the golden rule: Treat others how you want them to treat you, for this is the meaning of the Torah and the teaching of the Prophets (Matthew 7:12; Luke 6:31 NCV)**. How we **treat others** is not to be determined by how we expect **them to treat** us or by how we think they should **treat** us, but how we **want them to treat** us.

For many years the basic musical instrument was the harpsichord. As its keys are depressed, a given string is plucked to create the desired note, much as a guitar string is plucked with a pick. But the tone made in that way was not pure, and the mechanism is relatively slow and limiting. Sometime during the last quarter of the eighteenth century, during Beethoven's lifetime, an unknown musician modified the harpsichord so that the keys activated little hammers that struck, rather than plucked, the strings. With that minor change, a major improvement was made that would lead to the piano and radically enhance the entire musical world. It gave us a grandeur and breadth never known before.

This is the sort of revolutionary change **Jesus** gives in **the golden rule**. Every other form of this basic principle had been given in purely negative terms by all other religions and philosophies because that was as far as **sinful** mankind could go. They are expressions of self-interest, not **love**. The motivation merely keeps us from harming others so they won't harm us. Those negative forms of **the rule** are not **golden**, because they are primarily motivated by fear and self-preservation. As the Bible continually reminds us of mankind's **sinful**, fallen, human nature: **There is no one who does good, not even one; each of us has turned to our own way (Romans 3:12b; Isaiah 53:6b)**. Only **the Messiah** gives us the fullness of the truth, which embraces both the positive and the negative. And only **the Holy Spirit** can give us the power to live by that full truth.⁵⁹⁰

This essentially summarizes the principle of **the Torah: You shall love your neighbor as yourself**, which **Jesus** identifies in **Matthew 22:34-40** as **the second greatest commandment**. The technique of giving a general summary of a teaching closely parallels what the rabbis call a *klal* or general principle. There can be no doubt that all 613 commandments of Moshe can be summarized by the principle of **love**. For believers in **Yeshua ha-Meshiach**, both Jew and Gentile alike, this is our simple, but fundamental, priority.⁵⁹¹

***Father**, assure us of **Your** desire for us to know **You**, **Your** life, **Your** **love**. Help us to expect answers to our prayers, and to submit our wills to **Your** perfect will.⁵⁹²*