

ASK, SEEK, KNOCK

As we move through Matthew 7, Jesus places emphasis on the application of living out kingdom principles. We cannot be the people that He wants us to be on our own. We need His help!

Matthew 7:7–8 (NKJV)

7 “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

8 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

Ask, seek, and knock are all descriptive of PRAYER. They are all in the present tense, indicating, “**keep on asking**”; “**keep on seeking**”; and “**keep on knocking**”. The sense is we are going to need God’s continual help to live out Christ’s higher standard of righteousness as presented in His teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matt. 5:20).

And that is most certainly true in the matter of “judging” just discussed in the preceding verses. In order for us to see clearly and make proper discernment and judgment calls, we need God’s help, and we need it constantly. Life involves constantly making judgment calls, and to do it right, we need God’s help.

J. Vernon McGee was a pastor for many years and then began a ministry called “Thru The Bible” in which he taught verse by verse through the Bible every 5 years. What made him so popular was that he emphasized “the Bible in shoe leather,” as he might say. He brought it down to where the common man lived in terms of application.

On these verses here in Matt. 7:7-8 he wrote this:

“How to meet the people of this world is the greatest problem facing a child of God. Every day we rub shoulders with princes and paupers, gentlemen and scoundrels, true and false professors. Some folk need our friendship and help, and we need them, and we ought to pull them to our hearts. Others are rascals and will destroy us, and we need to push them from us. How are we to know? To ask, seek, and knock definitely refers to this problem. ... While I was a pastor in downtown Los Angeles for twenty-one years, I met people from all walks of life. ... Some people would need my help, but others might try to put a knife in my back. You would be surprised how many times I have been fooled by people. ... God wants to help you in these matters.”

This is the immediate context – the matter of making proper judgment calls related to logs and splinters, related to dogs and swine. We need to constantly be asking, seeking, and knocking on God's door to help us properly discern and thereby properly respond to each situation as it comes at us.

And God wants to help us. Everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. The problem is we so often try to go it alone without God's help, and that doesn't work well. God is telling us we need His help in dealing with people.

But while I think this has application to the matter of properly "judging" (immediate context), I think it also has application to all manner of kingdom living: to humility, to purity, to sincerity, to love, and to all the righteous standards presented in the Sermon on the Mount. We need help with all of these things, which is why we are ever to be asking, seeking, and knocking.

WE NEED GOD'S HELP TO...

Discern and judge properly.
To not worry and depend upon God.
To keep the proper focus in serving our Master.
To not be hypocritically pious.
To live out how Christ taught us to pray.
To love our enemies.
To be truth tellers.
To be people of fidelity and sexual purity.
To not be retaliatory or hateful.
To live out the beatitudes, such as being pure in heart.

We need God's help in all these areas, and we need it all the time.

Asking, seeking, and knocking imply a state of constant need. We need God's help on a constant basis to live out His kingdom standards. I don't know about you, but I fail to live up to this standard as I should. I will say something or do something and then think: ***"Is that really up to Jesus' kingdom standard?"*** It drives me back to saying, ***"Lord, I need your help. Lord help me be discerning. Lord help me to live it out."***

And here is Jesus point: He didn't just give us a bunch of kingdom directives and then say, ***"Now go do it on your own."*** No, He is here giving us the secret that will empower us to live it. We need to constantly pray – constantly be seeking God for discernment and strength. This is

right in keeping with 1 Thessalonians 5:17, which says, “***pray without ceasing***”. Praying acknowledges our dependence upon God – that we need His help.

James 1:5 (NKJV)

5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him **ask of God**, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

James 4:2 (NKJV)

... **you do not have because you do not ask.**

In the whole surrounding context of the Sermon on the Mount, the great majority of the emphasis is on spiritual character and spiritual qualities. This is the great concern. This is our great need as God’s children – to know how to live and then be empowered in the living of it.

And God is there for us if we will but ask, seek, and knock.