



SERMON ON THE MOUNT DISCUSSION GUIDE

Matthew 7:7-11

INTRODUCTION

After instructing his followers not to judge others, Jesus begins to close out the main body of the Sermon on the Mount with an appeal for his followers to regularly approach their heavenly father in prayer.

MAIN POINT

Christians should pray regularly and persistently to our Father who loves us and gives us good gifts.

REFLECT

All throughout the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus has set a very high bar for his followers: we're to resist anger and lust in our hearts, love those who hate us, always speak truthfully, not be anxious, and be on guard against good works done out of impure motives. It's hard not to get discouraged by how far short we fall of Jesus' standards!

But it's important to remember that Jesus is speaking to those who are "poor in spirit" (5:3), those who acknowledge that they have nothing to offer God. We're *supposed* to marvel at Jesus' teaching and realize how much we don't measure up to it. Rather than discouraging us, though, this realization should drive us to prayer. Jesus now implores his followers to go to their heavenly Father for the strength to live out the lifestyle he has been describing in the Sermon.

The commands "ask...seek...knock" can be better translated as "keeping asking...keep seeking...keep knocking". Because our needs are daily, our prayers ought to be also. For good reason, God's Fatherhood is stressed here. His Fatherhood underscores his willingness to hear and answer our prayers, and knowing that God is a loving and wise Father who is eager to give gifts to his children is foundational to persistent prayer.

The "how much more?" argument from 6:25-34 shows up again here. Earthly parents are imperfect, but even they love their children and will give them what they need. They won't trick their children by giving them something they don't need. How much more then is our heavenly Father willing and able to give us what we ask? By contrast, if we think of God as ill-tempered, we'll be afraid to approach him. Or if we think of him as a

Father who spoils his children by giving them whatever they want, we'll feel entitled to anything we pray for and become frustrated when we don't get it.

The "good things" Jesus promises will be given us can be broadly defined as everything we need to live out the Sermon on the Mount. More specifically, it refers to the Holy Spirit (see Luke 11:13) who helps us to live holy lives. With God as our loving Father, we are never without the resources we need to love God and others. All we need to do is ask.

- How would you describe your prayer life right now? What does the state of your prayer life reveal about how you view God?
- What motivations does Jesus provide in these verses for prayer?
- Which sections of the Sermon on Mount are particularly challenging for you? Who in your life can be praying alongside you for growth in those areas?

MEMORIZE

Matthew 7:7 – "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you."