



**Bible Study, March 01, 2023**

**The Discipleship Training of Jesus Christ | A Study of Matthew 5-7**

**Lesson 8 – Persistent Prayer Explained**

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**Pastor Reginald Rogers, Facilitator**

## **Introduction**

Always pray and do not give up (*CF: Luke 18:1*). These are the words of Jesus as He shared a parable about persistent prayer. Our lesson today is about persistent or constant prayer. But before we examine this teaching moment by the Lord, let us look back and understand His teaching about prayer to His disciples. In Matthew 6, Jesus spoke about not being hypocritical like the Pharisees who love standing in synagogues and street corners to be seen by others. He encouraged them to pray secretly, and the heavenly Father would reward them. Also, Jesus taught them how to pray.

He shared with them six petitions of which three glorify the heavenly Father and three benefit mankind. The three petitions that glorify the Father are (1) give honor to His holy name, (2) seek for His holy kingdom to come, and (3) pray for His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. The three petitions that benefit mankind are (1) ask for His daily provisions, (2) seek His forgiveness of debts or offenses and forgive others their debts or offenses, and (3) pray for protection against temptation and the evil one (*CF: Matthew 6: 9-15*). As we look at this lesson today, Jesus explains persistent prayer. Let us observe our scripture reading.

## **The Scripture Reading | Matthew 7:7-12**

<sup>7</sup> "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.

<sup>8</sup> For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

<sup>9</sup> "Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone?

<sup>10</sup> Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake?

<sup>11</sup> If you, then, though you are evil, 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!

<sup>12</sup> So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

## **Examining the Text**

It is important that when you pray, you do it with persistence. We live in a natural world and the flesh can grow weary when you do not see results in your prayers. Praying without ceasing (*CF: 1 Thessalonians 5:17*) and not giving up is the way to pray persistently. Let us see what Jesus taught His disciples.



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### **Prayer is Important for Believers**

You and I breathe in oxygen every second of our natural lives. GOD created us to live this way. Without oxygen, we would die within a few minutes. For believers, prayer should be like the oxygen we breathe. We must constantly pray and communicate with GOD. Our heavenly Father wants us to call upon Him in prayer. Just like the oxygen we breathe naturally; prayer is necessary for the life of believers spiritually. Jesus knows this and revisited prayer once more in His teaching. The disciples heard what He taught about prayer as part of glorifying the Father and benefiting mankind (CF: *Matthew 6:5-15*). Now, Jesus is going to teach them the importance of being persistent in their prayers.

The first thing that He mentioned to them was how to be persistent when praying. He told them to ask and it will be given to them, seek and they will find, knock and the door will be opened for them. When we read these words, Jesus did not tell them specifically what to ask, seek or knock for in their prayers. So, what do these words mean to believers today? I tell you upfront that these words are not an open invitation to ask for anything we want that is not according to the will of GOD. However, keeping in mind His teaching about the kingdom of heaven and righteousness; you immediately see His statement about seeking first the kingdom and righteousness (CF: *Matthew 6:33*).

I began the introduction to this lesson by recapping what Jesus taught specifically to His disciples about prayer. One of the three points that glorify the Father is to pray His will be done. We heard in recent preaching by Pastor Walt about doing GOD'S will. The church must not lose sight of this teaching point about praying according to GOD'S will. When you ask according to GOD'S will, Jesus said it will be given to you. When you seek according to GOD'S will, Jesus said you will find it. When you knock according to GOD'S will, Jesus said the door will be opened to you. The promise is that you will receive answers to your prayers. This is why Jesus said to His disciples that everyone who asks receives, one who seeks will find, and the one who

knocks, the door will be opened. Do you see in this point by Him that this is answered prayer? John the apostle who was among these first disciples later wrote the church expressing these words in the following verses: *This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us--whatever we ask--we know that we have what we asked of him.* [1 John 5:14-15] What is this confidence that John wrote about? It is a free and fearless confidence that has cheerful courage, boldness, and assurance that GOD will answer our prayers.



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### **1. Why is it important to pray according to GOD’S will and not our desires?**

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<sup>9</sup> "Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? <sup>10</sup> Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? <sup>11</sup> If you, then, though you are evil, 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!"

### **Prayer Must Be Constant and Full of Faith**

Jesus desires that when His disciples pray, they keep on asking, keep on seeking and keep on knocking according to the Father’s will knowing that this constant and persistent prayer is delightful to the heavenly Father. Let us go a little deeper into the explanation. Our heavenly Father never gets tired and weary of hearing the voices of His children calling upon Him in prayer (CF: 1 Peter 3:12). So, when Jesus told the parable about the persistent widow, He used that illustration to encourage His disciples to pray and do not give up on their praying because GOD will answer them (CF: Luke 18:1-8). Praying persistently reminds GOD of how urgent our requests are to us. No, we cannot overturn His will and timing in answering our requests, but we can keep them ever before Him. In due time and right on time, He answers our requests to our delight.

As we continue to observe the verses in the text, Jesus uses an illustration to strengthen the faith of the disciples. He said, which one of them would give his son a stone if he asks for bread? And which one of them would give his son a snake if he asks for a fish? The answer would be none and we are the same way with our children. When our children ask for something to satisfy their needs, we provide for them. Jesus moved from the natural to the spiritual by further illustrating His point to the disciples. He said if you are evil as a result of this fallen world (*my emphasis*) and know how to give good gifts to your children, then how much more does your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask Him? This illustration about the heavenly Father shows the disciples and us His generosity when answering prayers that are according to His will. Also, it increases our faith to believe and know that He will answer prayer (CF: Hebrews 11:6, James 1:5-8, Matthew 7:20).

When Luke wrote his gospel about this same teaching, he stated specifically what the Father in heaven would give to those who ask Him.



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Consider the following verse: *If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!*" [Luke 11:13] There is no higher or better request of the Father than to ask Him to give His Holy Spirit as an answer to a request. Here is a reminder to believers. When we repent and are baptized for the forgiveness of our sins, we immediately receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Notice how Peter preached this point on the day of Pentecost in the following verse: Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." [Acts 2:38]

**2. How does being connected with other believers in prayer increases your faith?**

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<sup>12</sup> So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

**Prayer Must Cause Us to Treat People Like We Want to be Treated**

This last point in this lesson taught by Jesus to the disciples teaches them to let their prayers cause a change in them about how they treat people and want people to treat them. As you know these words spoken by the Lord are commonly referred to as the "Golden Rule." When Jesus taught this point, He was already the target of abuse from the Pharisees and others. Yet, He loved them to the end and had compassion for them (CF: John 13:1, Matthew 9:36).

So, He wanted His disciples to embrace the love of the heavenly Father as He did. He knew from His own private time with the Father that they would be changed after spending time in prayer with the Father (CF: Luke 4:42, 6:12). Treating other people by loving them should be the way they would want to be treated. Yes, this includes loving your enemies and treating them right too (CF: Matthew 5:44-45).

In writing the church at Ephesus, Paul the Apostle encouraged them to follow GOD'S example by walking in the way of love. Just as Jesus loved us and offered Himself as a sweet offering and sacrifice, the church should be a sacrificial offering of love too (CF: Ephesians 5:1-2). It is a very high standard to love like GOD. Also, to treat other people as you want to be treated is a high standard motivated by love.



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**3. What is the motivating factor that GOD is using with you to treat other people as you want to be treated?**

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**Endnotes**

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