

### “Ask, Seek, and Knock” and “The Golden Rule”

#### Matthew 7:7-12

Matthew 7:7-12 - *“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. <sup>8</sup> For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. <sup>9</sup> Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? <sup>10</sup> Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? <sup>11</sup> If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him! <sup>12</sup> Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”*

#### Background Notes

2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”* In these verses we have not only the doctrine of **inspiration of Scripture**, but also the doctrine of the **sufficiency of Scripture**. **All Scripture** -- and that certainly includes the Sermon on the Mount -- is *“profitable for doctrine or reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness that the man [person] of God may be complete thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*

We have seen that the Sermon on the Mount was given in the context of those people who were preparing for the Kingdom of Heaven. John the Baptist and then our Lord both gave the message, “the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” In the Sermon on the Mount the Lord taught the righteous standards of the King and the moral qualities that should characterize anyone who was preparing to enter His kingdom. Sadly, the nation of Israel rejected the King and the Kingdom at that time, but the moral standards of righteousness presented in the Sermon on the Mount certainly apply today. The Sermon on the Mount is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness.

In the Sermon on the Mount, we have the way of righteous living for the believer. If an unbeliever, needing salvation, tells you that he or she will read any chapter in the Bible that you give them, I would not suggest to the Sermon on the Mount. Instead, send them to John 3, because there the gospel is clearly presented. Think of John 3:16, *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”* There’s the gospel, plain and simple.

However, if a believer asks you, “Where is the way of righteous living summed up in the Bible?” you should point them to the Sermon on the Mount. In the Sermon on the Mount the Lord taught the way of righteous living for the believer.

As we read through the Sermon on the Mount, it quickly becomes quite obvious that the moral standards demanded for the way of righteous living are impossible to keep in our own strength. But, praise the Lord, we have the Holy Spirit to enable us and empower us to obey God and do His will. The Holy Spirit dwells in every Christian. Ephesians 1:13: *“In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise...”* In fact, if a person is not sealed and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, he or she is not a Christian. Romans 8:9, *“But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.”*

Because we, as believers, have the Holy Spirit living within us, we are enabled and empowered to follow the way of righteous living as presented in the Sermon on the Mount.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. God expects believers to ask, and seek, and knock.

Verses 7-8: *“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. <sup>8</sup> For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.”*

God expects believers to ask, and seek, and knock because the Greek words for “ask, seek, and knock” are in the present imperative in the Greek language. The present imperative denotes not only a command, but it has the idea of continuous action. In other words, this verse could be translated, “Keep on asking and it will be given to you.” “Keep on seeking and you will find.” “Keep on knocking and it will be opened to you.”

Is verse 8 a “blank check” from the Lord -- a promise that the Lord will give us whatever we want? No! The rest of Scripture does not support such an interpretation! Here are some reasons why the Lord doesn't grant us all our requests:

- a. We make selfish requests. James 4:3, *“You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.”* So don't expect to receive, or find, or have the doors opened if you're only interested in your own selfish and self-indulgent lifestyle.
- b. Our requests are not always in the will of God. This is another reason why God doesn't always answer our requests. I John 5:14-15, *“Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. <sup>15</sup> And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.”* In these verses God puts a gracious limit on our requests, doesn't He? God's will is perfect, and when our wills line up with His will, we can then be sure that God will answer our requests.

So what's the next obvious question? Of course, it's “How do we find God's will for our lives?” Well, about 90% of God's will for us is found in Scripture -- that is God's moral will. Asking God to help you break the law, for example, is obviously not according to God's will! The other 10% of the will of God for our lives -- such as whom

to marry, or what job to take, or where to locate -- that 10% of the will of God is found by walking with the Lord, by using our God-given sanctified common sense, and by availing ourselves of godly counsel from other believers. King David wanted to build the Temple for the Lord. This was a wonderful desire, but God said, "No, this is not my will for you. That is my will for your son Solomon." David humbly submitted to God's will.

Right now, I'm asking the Lord to grant me enough years to finish recording through the whole Bible. As you know, I'm trying to record every book in the Bible in an expository style that's good and helpful for the average listener on the radio and visitor on our website. I'm asking, seeking, and knocking toward that goal. I believe that this is a good request, and I believe it would be in the Lord's will to have audio ministry available on each book of the Bible. However, if the rapture takes place tomorrow, the Lord will have said, "No" to my request! But that's okay -- and His will is perfect!

- c. A third reason why the Lord doesn't always grant us our requests is that He knows what's best for us. That's really the idea here in verses 9-10, *"Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? <sup>11</sup> If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!"*

God will not grant our request for things that will harm us or not meet our needs. Even an imperfect earthly father wouldn't give his children a gift that would harm them! And our heavenly Father will grant our requests in the way that's best for us, because we are His beloved children.

God wants His children to come to Him with their requests. God expects believers to ask, and seek, and knock.

## **2. God expects believers to obey the Golden Rule.**

Verse 12, *"Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets."* Here we have what is known as "The Golden Rule." If you read some of the ancient rabbinic literature that was available at the time of Christ, you can find the "Golden Rule" written there. However, it's always stated in a negative form -- that is, don't do to others what you don't want them to do to you.

Our Lord took this familiar rabbinic rule, turned it around and put it in positive form: whatever you want others to do to you, you should do to them. For example, we should not only refrain from bad-mouthing people because we wouldn't want them to bad-mouth us, but we should go further and say nice things about people (as much as possible, without lying!) because we would certainly appreciate them saying nice things about us.

Now notice it doesn't say "do nice things for others if they do nice things for you"! Rather, it says do the type of nice things for others that you would like others to do for you -- and do those nice things whether the other people do them to you or not!

Do you practice the “Golden Rule,” or do you only want others to practice it in their relationships with you? A few years ago, “The Golden Rule” convicted me in reference to ministry. I always appreciate it when people tell me that they appreciate and learn from my ministry. Well, suddenly I realized that I had a responsibility to tell other people in ministry that I appreciate what they were doing in serving the Lord! Believers are expected to obey the “Golden Rule.”

## **Practical Application**

### **Let’s practice the Law and the Prophets.**

V12, *“Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”* The “Law and the Prophets” means the Old Testament Scriptures. “But wait a minute,” you say. “We’re no longer living in Old Testament times. We’re no longer bringing lambs to the altar.” True, but if we practice the Golden Rule, we essentially fulfill the righteousness of the Old Testament, because the Golden Rule summarizes the moral teachings of the Law of Moses and the writings of the Prophets.

Remember that the Lord said in Matthew 5:17, *“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.”* And Romans 8:4 says, *“That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”* And Romans 13:10 says, *“Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.”* So, when we say let’s practice the Law and the Prophets, we’re not saying let’s go back to an Old Testament religion! No, the Lord Jesus has come and His Church has been formed, but God’s moral laws and righteous standards never change. So, let’s practice the Law and the Prophets!