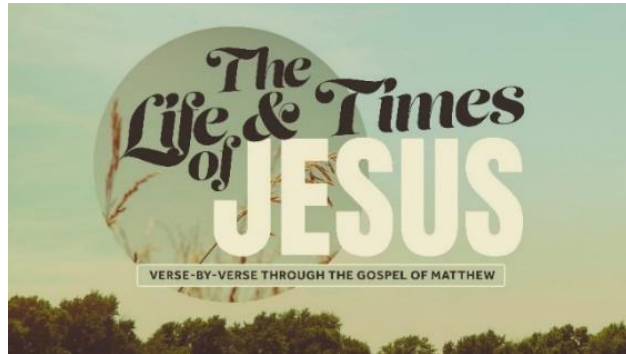


## FELLOWSHIP NOTES ~ SUNDAY, December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2025



### **The World's Greatest Sermon - Part 17: "A.S.K."**

Matthew 7:7-12

Pastor David Cho, now with the Lord in heaven, was a pastor in Seoul, South Korea. When he was alive, he wrote about how he learned the principle of being persistent in his prayer life.

He began pastoring in the late 1950's after the Korean War. His country was in an economic depression, and he began his church in the poorest part of Seoul.

He says he learned how to fast, not because he was spiritual, but because he had nothing to eat! He lived in a one room house. In the winter he would wrap blankets around himself to keep warm because he had no heat in his room.

He had virtually nothing and came to the conclusion that he needed several items to help him in his ministry. So he began regularly praying for these 3 items: a bicycle to visit his church members, a desk so he could prepare his sermons, and a chair so he could sit at his desk.

He prayed and prayed, but God didn't answer his requests. Finally, after several months he said he told God, "If you wait much longer to give me these things, I might not need them cause I'll be dead." Then he felt God impress on his heart the need to be persistent AND specific.

For example, what kind of bicycle did he want? What kind of desk (wood, metal)? What kind of chair? So he decided that he needed a bicycle made in the U.S. cause they were the sturdiest.

And he started asking for a desk made out of Philippine mahogany, and he asked God for a chair with little wheels on the bottom so he could wheel around in his makeshift home office.

Within 2 weeks God had answered all three prayers: he received a slightly used American bike from the son of an American missionary, a desk made from mahogany from the Philipppians, and a chair with little wheels on it, all in answer to his persistent, specific prayers.

This morning, I want to highlight what is probably the most common missing ingredient when it comes to prayer. This ingredient is SO important that Jesus taught about it multiple times during His 3-year ministry.

Here In this next section of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, the topic is prayer. Jesus later in His ministry came back to this very topic and it's recorded in Luke 11 where even more teaching content is provided by Jesus on this topic. So turn over to Luke 11. READ Luke 11:1-4.

Jesus' disciples had the privilege of being eyewitnesses to the prayer lives of the two greatest teachers ever to walk the earth: Jesus and John the Baptist.

They apparently saw or heard that John the Baptist had taught his disciples to pray, so one day after they saw Jesus praying, they asked him to teach them to pray like John the Baptist taught his disciples.

So here in verses 2-4 Jesus gave a shortened version of the model prayer that He had taught His disciples back in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapter 6...

And then He again reiterated this important ingredient to prayer that is often lacking in our prayer lives: He wants us to put into practice in our prayer lives...the ingredient of praying persistently.

Jesus teaches that when persistence is woven into our prayer lives, it elevates our prayers to an all-new level that brings results in answers to our prayers.

Now let's look at the extreme illustration Jesus uses to describe being persistent in our prayer lives in verses 5-8. (READ)

Why did this guy in Jesus' illustration finally get up and give his friend some bread? Verse 8 says because of his friend's "shameless boldness". The footnote at the bottom of my Bible says, "Or persistence."

The idea Jesus uses in this illustration is that his friend was urgent, audacious, bold, relentless, even shameless in coming to his friend in the middle of the night and asking his neighbor to get up out of bed, disturb his sleeping family and give him some bread for his out-of-town guests.

Nobody in the first century culture of Israel would ask this of their neighbor. This was both culturally and socially unacceptable to do something like this in Jesus' day and yet the character in the story shows how desperate they were and therefore audacious and bold in their request.

Have you ever been boldly approached by someone with an audacious request because they were so desperate?

We used to live right on Hwy 28 3 miles straight south of town and one night in the wee hours of the morning we were sound asleep and I heard someone banging on our front door.

I have to tell you I was EXTREMELY nervous and cautious to say the least about opening that door, but I did. And it was someone from town here who I was a little acquainted with. She had some car trouble and was stopped on the side of the road right in front of our house.

Most people today, just like the people of Jesus' day, aren't prone to knocking on a strangers' front door in the middle of the night. But desperate circumstances can call for desperate measures.

This has been so long ago that I can't remember all the details, but we were able to assist her and get her on her way.

But this is the idea behind the picture Jesus is painting in this story - the radical, bold, audacious actions of someone who is desperate, desperate to do whatever they have to, to get what they need.

Jesus goes on then to state the spiritual principle that his story illustrates in regard to prayer. READ vs. 9-10.

Jesus is teaching us that if we take a need or a problem or a situation to God in prayer, and there is no apparent answer that He gives us in response, then not only does He want us to persistently continue bringing these things to Him in prayer, but He wants us to intensify our persistence in prayer. The threefold progression that fits nicely into an acrostic...

**(Slide) Persistence in Prayer Includes Three Elements:**

1. **A.sking**
2. **S.eeking**
3. **K.nocking**

In short, we need to practice persistence in our prayers by ASKING, SEEKING, and KNOCKING. Notice the progressive nature of Jesus' instructions of being persistent.

We start by simply asking the Lord to meet a need, to show us the way, to provide that which we need to bring Him glory and honor. Asking is simply articulating our need to the Lord in simple, specific terms.

And sometimes in His divine purposes, the Lord responds immediately and our need is met. (EXAMPLE HERE)

But sometimes – also in His divine purposes and timing, God doesn't respond right away. So Jesus says, if you ask, and you don't get an answer, then keep asking AND begin seeking.

Seeking takes our prayers to another level. It elevates our request and puts it into action. Seeking is the process of drawing near to the Lord and doing as David said in Psalm 27:8, "Your face, Lord, I will seek."

To seek God's face includes inviting the Holy Spirit to search our hearts as well to see if there is anything in our lives that is blocking our fellowship with the Lord and negating our prayers because we have sin we haven't dealt with and we need to come clean with the Lord.

David said in Psalm 139, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my concerns. See if there is any offensive way in me; and lead me in the everlasting way."

Seeking God involves admitting any sin the Lord convicts us of, repenting of it and drawing close to God in fellowship. This the kind of heart work God wants to do in us as part of our walk and fellowship with Him – and sometimes He want to accomplish this BEFORE He answers the prayer requests we are bringing to him.

God isn't just interested in answering our requests – He loves to do that as we'll see in a moment, but of equal importance to Him is the importance of our daily walk with Him.

Am I walking with the Lord and spending time in fellowship with Him in regular Bible study and time spent with him in prayer? Are my prayers filled with worship and praise and thankfulness and intercession for others – AS WELL AS – requests for things that I need help with?

As we've already learned from Jesus' teaching on prayer in this study of His sermon on the Mount, He taught us to begin our prayers by seeking His face with reverence for Him – to worship and praise Him BEFORE we ever bring our requests in seeking His hand.

And I want to challenge you to model your personal prayer time with the Lord just like He taught us – begin with seeking His face in reverential worship and praise, then humble yourself in submission to who He is... THEN submit your requests to God in recognition that He is and has all you need, then close by seeking His help in the daily battle of spiritual warfare.

This is the 4 R's of Prayer that Jesus is taught in the Lord's Prayer: Reverence, Response, Request, and Readiness. Structure your personal prayer life in this way and you will find your walk with Christ growing healthier and your love for the Lord growing as well.

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As we continue to seek God's face and adjust our lives to His character and His work in our hearts, if God still hasn't answered our request, then Jesus says we should take it up another notch, another level.

We need to keep on asking and keep on seeking Him, and we need to add desperation to our prayers by continually knocking on the doors of heaven with persistence, not giving up, perhaps even fasting which helps bring focus to our praying.

I like how the NIV represents it in Matthew's version of these verses, it says:

**(Slide)**

***"Keep asking, and it will be given to you. Keep searching and you will find. Keep knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who searches finds, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened."***

Matthew 7:7-8

I believe the wording in these verses best represents what Jesus is teaching us here about persistence in prayer: KEEP asking, KEEP searching, KEEP knocking, in prayer.

Like the character in the story He told, there is a persistence that must characterize our prayer if we are to realize the promise that He makes.



And what is that promise? Look at it there on the screen in verses 7 & 8... Jesus says, "Ask, and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened".

And in case that doesn't make His promise clear to us, He reiterates the promise again in verse 10 here in the Luke 11 passage...

If you ask in prayer, you'll receive, if you seek in prayer you will find, and if you knock in prayer, the door will be opened to you. When we persistently pray with God-honoring motives, there's nothing that can stop our prayers from being answered as we go to God in faith.

There are times when we demonstrate our faith in God and His providence by praying and believing God will answer our requests soon. But other times we demonstrate our faith by persistently continuing to pray over a long period of time...

Expecting that one day we will indeed receive God's answer even though it hasn't come yet and understanding that our answer might not be realized until we get to heaven one day.

God alone reserves the right to answer our prayers in accordance with His will, in His timing, for the ultimate glory that His answer will bring to His name.

In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul describes some kind of physical ailment that he doesn't describe but he says he prayed 3 times that God would take it away and each time, God said "no".

God didn't answer Paul's prayer the way he would have liked and in the timing he would have liked, and that's because God was more interested in Paul leaning more on Him and trusting him for the grace that he needed each day. God's plans for Paul superseded Paul's plans for Paul.

Sometimes it's important for us to recognize that God's plans for our lives may not match our plans for our lives, and it's also important that we submit ourselves to God's perfect plans for us, even if those plans include pain and difficulties.

Paul eventually came to grips with this fact and he submitted to God's plans instead of insisting on his own plans for perfect health. And God continued using Paul in his missionary work to bring honor and glory to His name.

In the big scheme of things, eventually God DID answer Paul's prayer when he went to heaven and received his new body, complete, with no flaws or pains.

So we can all see here that Jesus isn't issuing a blank check here to us, that we can pray any selfish prayer we want and expect that He is somehow obligated to answering it.

So what are the biblical conditions to God hearing and answering our prayers as we persist in asking, seeking and knocking?

### **Conditions to Answered Prayer:**

**(Slide) 1. We must align our heart with Him through salvation – Luke 11:11-12; John 1:12**

***“But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God.” John 1:12***

God only hears the prayers of those who belong to Him, who are His children or who are asking by faith to become His children. Are you a child of God this morning? Have you placed your faith in Christ for salvation?

**(Slide) 2. We must align our prayers to the will of God – 1 John 5:14-15**

***“This is the confidence we have before him: If we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears whatever we ask, we know that we have what we have asked of him.”***

**1 John 5:14-15**

This is an important point. The Bible contains the will of God. If we want to know what God’s will is, we have to get into the Word and learn it and then we’ll understand what is God’s will and what’s not God’s will.

Then we need to make it a habit to PRAY the Word of God. Every time we meet with God in our daily time with Him, don’t just read and study the Bible, follow it up by praying what you just read and studied.

In this manner we are praying the will of God. That's why whenever we pray together in any setting here like this or in our growth groups, we encourage you to open your Bible first because we want our time in prayer to begin with the Word of God so that we can pray the Word of God and as we do that we'll be praying the will of God.

And God says here in these verses that we can have confidence that if ask anything of Him that is His will, that He hears those kinds of prayers and He answers those kinds of prayers.

**(Slide) 3. We must align our life with right living – James 5:16b**

***“The prayer of a righteous person is very powerful in its effect.”***

**James 5:16**

The effectiveness of our prayers is dependent on the effort we put in to choosing to live the way God wants us to live.

If we want God to answer our prayers but at the same time we're ignoring a sinful habit and refusing to confess that and with God's help stop doing that habit, then our refusal to do what is right nullifies the requests we're taking to God in prayer.

But when we're seeking with God's help to live a holy and righteous life, He's much more inclined to grant the answers to our requests as we seek Him for ourselves and our needs and for the needs of others.

In the Old Testament God greatly used a man named Daniel who lived a righteous life in a very wicked culture and who had learned the power of prayer.

In Daniel chapter 10 God gave Daniel a vision about the future that was in store for the Jews. Then he sent an angel to help Daniel understand the vision and watch what happened...

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***“Suddenly, a hand touched me and set me shaking on my hands and knees. He said to me, ‘Daniel, you are man treasured by God. Don’t be afraid, Daniel,’ he said to me, ‘for from the first day that you purposed to understand and humble yourself before your God, your prayers were heard.’”***

**Daniel 10:10-11b, 12a**

Daniel lived a righteous life and when he prayed God honored him and his requests because he refused to let sin get in the way of his fellowship with the Lord.

**(Slide) 4. We must align our obedience with His commands – 1 John 3:22**

**“Dear friends, if our hearts don’t condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive whatever we ask from him because we keep his commands and do what is pleasing in his sight.”**

**1 John 3:21-22**

The Bible isn't just meant to fill our minds with knowledge of who God is, just as important, it's a manual of how God would have us live in order to bring Him glory with our lives. That's what obedience is all about.

If we are purposefully neglecting aspects of God's Word because we don't like it or don't feel like it obeying, then our disobedience is displeasing to the Lord and our disobedience is going to radically impact our prayer lives.

God blesses those who are seeking with His help to obey His Word and He hears the prayers of those who are making obedience to His Word their lifestyle.

**(Slide) 5. We must align our faith without doubting – Mark 11:22,24**

***“Jesus replied to them, ‘Have faith in God. Therefore, I tell you, everything you pray and ask for – believe that you have received it and it will be yours.’”***

**Mark 11:22,24**

A lack of faith can likewise impact our prayers being answered, and so can one more factor...

**(Slide) 6. We must align our motives to God's motives – James 4:3**

***“You ask and you do not receive because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.” James 4:3***

If we want God to give us something purely out of selfish motives, or from motives that aren't pleasing to the Lord, He's going to wait til our motives are pure before He moves in response to our prayers.

When we align these conditions with our persistence in asking, seeking and knocking, while God may not answer our prayers in the way we wanted him to, or thought He would, something more important happens.

Our prayerful persistence produces three results which God is much more interested in developing in us...

**(Slide) Prayerful Persistence Results in...**

1. A deepening relationship with the Lord – prayer becomes not an event on our schedule or an item on our “To Do” list, but a continuous dialogue that is shaped by our fellowship with the Lord.

**(Slide)**

2. A growing faith – our trust in God and His purposes and plans develops more and more over time

**(Slide)**

3. A display of the glory of God – God receives the glory through our persistent faith in him as He answers our prayers in accordance with His perfect will.

Jesus then gives the illustration of fatherhood – Read Luke 11:11-13.

He asks, would a good father give his son a snake if he asked him for a bite of fish? The idea here isn't that the snake might bite the son.

Jesus is purposefully using the snake vs. fish illusion because while the Jews were permitted to eat fish, they were forbidden from eating snakes; just like pork, snakes were considered unclean to God's people, and they weren't to eat them or they would be defiled, unholy in God's site.

A good father would never do anything to lead his son to be in an unholy condition before God. This was all about a father protecting his son's SPIRITUAL health.

Then he says a good father would never give his son a scorpion if he asked for an egg. In that part of the world in those days, scorpions were large and they tucked their legs and claws underneath them when they would sleep, so when seen from the top, the scorpion would look similar to an egg.

A good father would never try to trick his son, even in jest, by giving him a scorpion that looked like an egg and if it bit his son could harm or even kill him. This is all about a father protecting his son's PHYSICAL health.

A good father, even one with a sinful nature like all earthly dads have, will do all they can do to protect their child's spiritual and physical well-being and provide for them everything they need. That comes with good parenting, even for imperfect dads.



Jesus emphasizes for us then, that how much more will our heavenly Father, who IS perfect and holy and righteous with no sin nature, how much more will He make sure to provide good things for us that would never harm us, things that would but bless us – like the presence of the Holy Spirit inside us, when we persistently take our requests to him in prayer.

Maybe in part, that is why when his disciples asked Jesus how they ought to pray, he replied, “Well, start like this, “Our Father in heaven...”.

Taking our needs and requests to God our heavenly Father reminds us that He is a perfect Father, and that He knows our needs, and He will never respond to any of our requests in a way that would be hurtful or harmful to us, but only in ways that would be for our good and for His glory. He CAN'T respond in any other way!

But it starts with us. Jesus said God the Father wants us to be persistent in our prayers. He wants us to ASK: Ask, Seek and Knock, and keep on asking, and keep on seeking, and keep on knocking...

And sometimes quickly and sometimes eventually, if not here and if not now, our Father WILL answer us and provide what we need, either in this life or when we are with Him forever in glory.