

The Sermon on the Mount continued

Matt. 7:7-12: The Discipline of Prayer

Christianity has not so much been tried and found wanting, as it has been found difficult and left untried.

G.K. Chesterton

Cheap grace, easy prayers, and everyone walks away scratching their heads wondering if their supposed faith is doing them any good. Perhaps the first thing to consider is whether or not they are seeking that which they want or that which God wants, and the second is to consider whether they can or should seek to change their perspective. Should the desires of our hearts be the desires of God's heart?

An undeniable but frustratingly difficult truth (that is if you believe in Jesus.)

- **A statement of fact;** *Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it shall be opened. Matt7:7-8*
 - A succinct and simple contract, _____
 - Yet frustrating when we look for validation, _____
- **A validating argument;** *If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him! 7:11*
 - The underlying assumption is that God is perfectly good. _____
 - Us: evil, *poneros* (gr.): as to our degenerate essential character. _____
 - This is not so much to render judgment on us, but to distinguish God's essential character. _____
- **Another overlooked advisory;** *however you want people to treat you, so treat them. . . 7:12*
 - The golden rule. _____
 - But, with regard to prayer. _____

The suspension of belief: (disbelief vs. unbelief)

- We pray, but do we believe it. _____
- We pray for what we want. _____
- We are constantly told that if our prayers are not answered we simply don't have enough faith. _____
- Obviously there is a problem. _____

So, perhaps we should reevaluate – ?

Faith is not the same as belief. It is not some magic enterprise whereby we can obtain our fondest wishes and earthly goals by believing God should grant whatever we ask. God's will, and desire, is not ordinarily the same as ours, yet His will is infinitely better than ours. The hardest of human enterprises is laying down what we want in favor of what God wants.

- Prerequisites to effective prayer
 - A confessed life. _____
 - A submitted life. _____
 - An examined life. _____
- Essentials of prayer from a Biblical perspective
 - Seek God's will, Matt. 6:10. _____
 - Driven by love, not self. _____
 - Expect God's true goodness, not your selfish wants. _____
 - Think before you ask. _____
- The faith of an effective prayer, James 5:13-18.
 - Seeking the result of healing and restoration. _____
 - The necessity of confession, and the truth of confession. _____
 - Elijah knew God's will intuitively, and prayed with power. _____

So then, how do we react when we read "*For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it shall be opened*"? Do we wonder that it doesn't work for us, do we think that we just need to "want" something a little harder, or do we consider how we can align our will with God's?