

40-07-02.wpd—Confidence in Prayer
 prayer, Kingdom living, confidence
 Matthew 7:7-11

Kingdom Living means trusting the King to answer our prayers.

INTRODUCTION: (Text as Scripture reading)

–“*Prayer is the trust dreams are made of.*” I made that up, because it goes well with this message (**title**). We were created with *imagination*. We were meant to have *dreams*. In a world where *sin* and *selfishness* disrupt life, *dreams* keep us going, giving us hope—*hope* for a better life, for a happy marriage and family; *hope* for justice, for safety, for achievement, for success. Dreams offer hope, and “*prayer is the trust dreams are made of.*”

–*Hope* in Scripture means *expectation*. Our hope in God is based in our **complete confidence** in Him. This is the kind of trust we need to have in our prayer life. Because God is worthy of our complete confidence,

HOM.idea. *First, let’s look at....*

I. Kingdom Praying (v.7, “*Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.*”)

A. *Prayer is an integral part of Kingdom living:*

1. In cultures where there’s **faith in a Power Higher** than us, *prayer* is promoted as a natural *human response*.
2. *Prayer is **not promoted** in societies where those who **control education** *teach* that there is no **Higher Power**, and where those who **control government** *act* as if there is no **Higher Power**.*
3. **BUT** in the culture of *Kingdom living*, **God expects us to pray**, and to approach prayer in a way that honors His character.)

B. What is God’s character in relationship to prayer? These verses say that we can expect answers.

1. Some religions portray God as a *hard taskmaster* that we must placate by giving Him expensive gifts or by doing a long list of good deeds... otherwise He won’t answer our prayers.
2. But the *heavenly Father* Jesus described is concerned about the welfare of humans, and treats us as His very own children.
3. When Christians feel they aren’t good enough, or they haven’t done enough to deserve having their prayers answered, they’ve not understood the idea of God’s character that Jesus taught.

C. **BUT** these verses also describe the kind of praying that Jesus was promoting for those who belong to the Kingdom of God.

1. **Jesus says “ask”**—but He doesn’t say that God listens only to those in good standing with Him. (If so, only Christians would get answers to prayer [one group giving seminars on prayer passed out bumper stickers that said: “*If you don’t know Jesus, you don’t have a prayer.*” That is not true!]. God shows His goodness to all, to draw them to Himself— **Rom 2:4b**, “God’s kindness leads you toward repentance”
2. **Jesus says “seek”**—God listens to seekers— **Jer 29:13**, You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. (This isn’t about curiosity; it sets *relationship with God* as *life’s highest priority*.)
3. Jesus says “knock”—[When you come to the door of a house, you don’t barge in—you *knock*, it’s part of etiquette.] But don’t pass by God’s door out of fear! Jesus just says “knock”—If you’re serious about the blessings God has for you, you must get on the other side of that door... and you get there by *knocking*.

TRANS: Jesus is talking about Kingdom prayer, and His emphasis is not just on how to pray, but on why we should— v.8, “*For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.*” Our confidence in prayer is based on the gracious character of the One we are praying to. Jesus is saying that a major indicator of Kingdom living is trusting the King to answer prayers. *So, let’s look at...*

II. Kingdom Answers (v.9-11, “Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 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!”)

A. Christ’s reasoning in these verses is based on the special nature of our relationship with God:

1. He is **not** a *divine policeman*— watching to see if we break the law (He’s a *Divine Teacher*, trying to help us obey the law.)
2. He is **not** a *distant deity*— who made us, but abandoned us when we failed to follow him (He’s the *Good Shepherd* who searches for us when we are lost and lays down His life to get us back.)
3. He is **not** an *impersonal force*— the nature of which turns our own human nature and experience into an illusion (NO, He’s the *Creator* who made us in *His own image* and therefore calls us

His children... THIS IS the relationship upon which Jesus bases His argument that we should have confidence in prayer!)

B. Jesus makes His reasoning even more emphatic by comparing our care for our own children with God's care for us.

1. Human parents are never *perfect*. Jesus says, "*you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children...*" (Imperfect parents still know what children need: food, clothing, shelter.)
2. Our Divine Parent God *IS* perfect! If imperfect human parents can take care of us, Jesus says, "*how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!*" This is yet another strong reason used by Christ to teach us confidence in prayer.

C. A last and very comforting point Jesus makes is the fact that our "Father in heaven" will "give good gifts to those who ask him!"

1. If we need *bread*, but in our ignorance ask for *a stone*, He will give us the bread He knows we need ... If we need *a fish*, but in our foolishness ask for *a snake*, He will give us the *fish* we need.
2. This greatly encourages confidence in prayer ["*If I mess up, God will straighten it out!*"], but it doesn't mean we have no responsibility in prayer [quote: "If we ask for the wrong thing, God can say 'No' to bless us, or He can say 'Yes' to discipline us."]. (The best way to pray is to ask the Holy Spirit's guidance— **Rom 8:26** (ESV), Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.)
3. Since we can easily pray with ignorance and folly, it's often wise to close our prayers as Jesus did: "Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done." (This is the final proof of true confidence in prayer.)

CONCLUSION:

—Religion can complicate the spiritual life. But Kingdom living is not complicated. Many books have been written to explain prayer and to lay down religious rules for it. But Jesus made it pretty simple: *ask ... seek ... knock*. As we have seen again and again throughout this "Sermon on the Mount," the key to understanding Kingdom living is to surrender our will to the will of the King. We do that through trust. And so, in this important realm of prayer, **Kingdom Living** simply means **trusting the King to answer our prayers**.

Matthew 7:7-11 (NIV)

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

8For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

9"Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?

10Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake?

11If 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!