A SHORT BIBLE STUDY

Ask, Seek, Knock

Growing Closer to God · Book 5



A Study on Prayer, Matthew 7:7-11 and Luke 11:5-13

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Trinfinity Enterprises

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A Note on the Bible Translation Used in This Study

My preferred Bible for personal study, teaching, and research is the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB). I chose it because it is a word-for-word translation in today's language, built on the ancient Scripture sources: the Hebrew and Aramaic of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament. I prepared the SLB myself, and the Scripture in this book is taken from it.

Where a literal phrase would mislead an English reader, the SLB gives the writer's meaning in plain words. Words added for sense are set in bold italics so you can see what is in the original and what is not.

The complete Steadfast Literal Bible is free to read, search, download, and print at trinfinityenterprises.com/slb. If you want to check a verse in its full setting or read the translation's preface and principles, that is the place to go.

Above all, my desire is not to promote one translation over another, but to faithfully teach the Word of God, encourage careful examination of the Scriptures, and help readers grow in their knowledge, understanding, and relationship with the Lord.

May every page of this study direct attention not to the translation itself, but to the truth of God's Word and the One whom it reveals.

Ask, Seek, Knock

A Study on Prayer | Matthew 7:7-11 and Luke 11:5-13

Passage	Matthew 7:7-11, with Luke 11:5-13
Big idea	God wants us to keep coming to Him in prayer, asking, seeking and knocking, because He is a good Father who gives good things.
Memory verse	Matthew 7:7
Session length	60-75 minutes
What to bring	Bible (SLB), this handout, pen, and one prayer request you have been carrying for a while.

Before You Meet (Leader Prep)

For the leader only. Read the passage at least twice during the week and pray for the group by name.

For a long time my prayers sounded more like a status report than a conversation. It took coming to the end of my own strength, with my drinking, to learn that God wants honest prayer from His children, not polished speeches. I wrote this study for believers who wonder whether God hears them when they keep asking. Jesus' promise in Matthew 7 and Luke 11 gives us a clear reason not to quit.

- Read Matthew 5-7 (the Sermon on the Mount) so you know where these verses sit.
- Read Luke 11:1-13. Luke puts this same teaching right after the Lord's Prayer and a story about a friend at midnight.

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- Read the Leader Notes at the end so you are ready for the harder questions, especially "What about when God says no?"

Opening (5-10 minutes)

Most of us were taught as kids that if you want something, you ask for it. Somewhere along the way a lot of us quit asking God. Maybe we prayed hard once and the answer was no. Maybe we figured God is too busy for our small stuff. In this passage Jesus tells us to keep asking, keep seeking and keep knocking, and He tells us why: because of who our Father is.

I like to break it down with the first letters: **A**sk, **S**eek, **K**nock. That spells ASK, and it is a simple way to remember how Jesus told us to pray.

Icebreaker: When you were a kid, what is one thing you kept asking your parents for until they finally gave in (or finally said "no, and stop asking")?

The Passage (10 minutes)

Have one or two people read the passage aloud.

> **Matthew 7:7-11 (SLB)**
>
> [7] Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. [8] For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. [9] Or what man is there of you who, if his son asks him ***for*** bread, will give him a stone? [10] And if he asks ***for*** a fish, will he give him a serpent? [11] If you then, being evil, know ***how*** to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who ***is*** in the heavens give good things to those who ask Him?

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Luke 11:5-13 (SLB)

[5] And He said to them, "Which of you will have a friend, and will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves, [6] since a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing that I will set before him'; [7] and that one, answering from within, says, 'Do not cause me trouble; the door has already been shut, and my children are with me in the bed; I am not able, having risen, to give to you'? [8] I say to you, even if he will not give to him, having risen, because of his being his friend, yet because of his shamelessness, having risen, he will give him as many as he needs. [9] And I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. [10] For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. [11] Now which of you ***who is*** the father, ***if*** the son will ask for bread, will give him a stone? And if a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? [12] Or also if he asks for an egg, will he give him a scorpion? [13] If you then, being evil, know ***how*** to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Father who ***is*** from heaven give ***the*** Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"

Setting the Scene (5 minutes)

Who wrote it	Matthew, also called Levi, the tax collector Jesus called to follow Him (Matthew 9:9). The Gospel does not name its author, but the early church linked it to Matthew from the second century on (Papias, quoted by Eusebius, Church History 3.39.16).
To whom	Mostly Jewish believers. Matthew quotes the Old Testament often and shows Jesus as the promised Messiah.

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When and where	Jesus spoke these words on a hillside in Galilee early in His ministry (Matthew 5:1). Matthew wrote his Gospel in the second half of the first century; scholars differ on the exact date.
What comes before	Matthew 5-7 is the Sermon on the Mount. Just before this, Jesus taught how to pray (Matthew 6:5-15), warned against worry (Matthew 6:25-34), and warned against judging others (Matthew 7:1-6).
What comes after	Jesus sums up the Law and the Prophets in the Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12), then talks about the narrow gate (Matthew 7:13-14). The same Father who gives good things to us wants us to treat others well.

What It Means (15 minutes)

Matthew 7:7-8: Keep on asking, seeking and knocking

Jesus gives three commands and three promises. In the Greek that Matthew wrote in, all three verbs are present imperatives. That tense points to something you keep doing, not a one-time thing. A fair way to read it is "keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking."

Then Jesus says "everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened" (Matthew 7:8). That is a promise to the person who keeps coming to God, not a vending machine where you put in a prayer and pull out what you picked.

Asking: the two-sided coin

The first step in prayer is simply to ask. Sometimes that is all it takes. If the request fits God's will for your life, He grants it.

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I think of asking like a two-sided coin. On one side, God says yes. On the other side, God says no or not yet, because the request does not fit His plan or His timing. Both sides are an answer. John put it this way: "This is the confidence that we have toward Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us" (1 John 5:14). God always knows what is best for you, even when you cannot see it at the time you ask.

Asking also keeps us honest. James says "You do not have because you do not ask" (James 4:2). Some of us worry about something for months and never once bring it to God.

Seeking: going after it with God

Seeking goes a step past asking. Notice the promise: if you seek, you will find. Sometimes God answers a prayer by leading you to find the answer, and you will only find it if you are willing to go looking. That usually means time alone with Him, reading His Word, talking to Him and, most of all, listening.

God said the same thing through Jeremiah: "You will seek Me and find Me, when you seek Me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13). Seeking is not half-hearted. It is putting your heart and your time into it.

So the next time you have a big request, ask yourself whether God may want you to go into a seeking mode with Him first: reading, waiting, listening for what He is showing you.

Knocking: not giving up

Knocking is the next level of intensity. To knock is to rap on a door, and Jesus promises the door will be opened.

Next time you knock on someone's door, notice what you do. You knock two, three, four times. Knocking once feels strange. Knocking means you keep at it. Luke shows this with the friend at midnight (Luke 11:5-8). The man got what he needed "because of his shamelessness" (Luke 11:8). Jesus told another parable "about its being necessary always to pray and not to lose heart" (Luke 18:1).

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The point is not that we wear God down. The friend in the story is grumpy and God is not. The point is that if a tired neighbor will get out of bed for someone who keeps knocking, how much more will a loving Father answer His children.

I hid my drinking for years. I denied it and pretended everything was fine, and from the outside it looked like it was. On May 29, 2020, my wife caught me, and the hurt on her face finally broke my pride. She took me to my first 12-step meeting that same day. Some doors stay shut for a long time and then open all at once. Keep knocking.

Matthew 7:9-11: How much more will your Father give

Jesus ends with fathers and sons. No decent father hands his hungry son a stone when he asks for bread, or a snake when he asks for a fish. If we, "being evil" (Matthew 7:11), know how to give good gifts, "how much more will your Father who is in the heavens give good things to those who ask Him" (Matthew 7:11).

Luke records Jesus saying the Father will "give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him" (Luke 11:13). Of all the good things God gives, the best one is Himself.

Raising two daughters taught me the difference between what a child asks for and what is actually good for her. Sometimes the loving answer was no, because I could see more than they could in the moment. If an imperfect earthly father wants good things for his kids, we can trust our Father in heaven completely.

What does it mean when God says no?

Look again at Matthew 7:11. God loves you perfectly, so when He holds something back, it is for your good. God never says no out of spite. He always has a reason. Here are some honest questions to ask yourself:

- **How is my relationship with the Lord?** "If I had regarded wickedness in my heart, the Lord would not listen" (Psalm 66:18). God does not shut off His blessing every time you

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stumble, but sin you have not confessed gets in the way of your fellowship with Him. Deal with it and clear the line.

- **Is my prayer specific?** Vague prayers often mean we have not thought it through. Name what you are asking for, so you will know when God answers and He gets the credit.
- **Is the request in keeping with the character of Christ?** Would Jesus pray it? "You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, so that you may spend it on your pleasures" (James 4:3). Why you pray matters as much as what you pray.
- **Do I really believe God will answer me?** James warns that the one who doubts is "a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways" (James 1:8). Hebrews adds that "the one who draws near to God must believe that He is, and that He becomes a rewarder to those who earnestly seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

Even Paul heard no. He asked three times for his "thorn in the flesh" (2 Corinthians 12:7) to be taken away, and God answered, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). Jesus Himself prayed, "nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will" (Matthew 26:39).

God wants you to seek Him more than you seek answers. When He says no, it is easy to want the gift more than the Giver. His bigger goal is to make you more like His Son: "conformed to the image of His Son" (Romans 8:29).

At 16 I tried to join the Air Force. I aced the testing and passed the California High School Proficiency Exam early, but they would not give me the computer job they promised, so I walked away. It felt like a closed door. It led to about 40 years of utility and infrastructure work and a life I never would have planned. God had other plans for me.

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Key Terms

Term	Plain meaning	Where it appears
Present imperative	A Greek command form that points to an action you keep doing, not a one-time act.	Matthew 7:7
Shamelessness	Boldness that will not be put off or embarrassed into quitting. The SLB uses it for the friend who kept knocking at midnight.	Luke 11:8
Sermon on the Mount	Jesus' longest recorded teaching, given on a hillside in Galilee.	Matthew 5-7
God's will	What God wants and has planned. Prayer that lines up with it has His promise behind it.	1 John 5:14

Where Christians Read This Differently

Christians agree that God hears and answers prayer. They differ on how far this promise reaches.

- **Within God's will:** Most churches, Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant, read Matthew 7:7 alongside 1 John 5:14 and Jesus' own prayer in Matthew 26:39. God always answers, but He answers as a wise Father, and sometimes that means no or wait.
- **Faith claims the answer:** Some teachers in the Word of Faith movement read these verses as a promise that whatever you

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ask in faith, believing it, is yours. If it does not come, the problem is a lack of faith.

- **Asking for God Himself:** Many teachers, going back to the early church, point to Luke 11:13. The best gift we can ask for is the Holy Spirit, and our asking is shaped as we spend time with Him.

My view: God always hears, and He always answers, but He answers as a loving Father who knows better than I do. Asking, seeking and knocking keep me close to Him, and that closeness is the real gift. I do not believe a "no" means my faith failed.

Discussion Questions (20-25 minutes)

What does it say?

1. What three actions does Jesus command in Matthew 7:7, and what promise goes with each one?
2. In Luke 11:5-8, why does the friend finally get up and give the bread?

What does it mean?

3. Why do you think Jesus used the picture of a father and his son (Matthew 7:9-11)? What does that tell you about how God sees you?
4. How is seeking different from asking, and knocking different from seeking?
5. How do 1 John 5:14 and 2 Corinthians 12:7-9 help us understand a "no" from God?

How do I live it?

6. Which is hardest for you right now: asking, seeking or knocking? Why?
7. Think of the request you brought today. What would it look like to keep asking, seeking and knocking on it this week?

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Takeaway (5 minutes)

> **This week:** Keep asking, keep seeking, keep knocking, and trust the Father who gives good things.
>
> **Memory verse:** "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" (Matthew 7:7, SLB)

Prayer

Father, thank You that You hear us and that You are a good Father. Give us the faith to keep asking, the patience to keep seeking and the stubbornness to keep knocking. When You say no, help us trust You more than we trust our own wants. Most of all, give us more of Your Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Going Deeper (Optional)

- Luke 11:1-4: The Lord's Prayer comes right before Luke's version of ask, seek, knock.
- Luke 18:1-8: The widow and the judge, another parable about not giving up in prayer.
- Jeremiah 29:11-13: God's promise to be found by those who search with all their heart.
- Philippians 4:6-7: Bring every request to God with thanksgiving, and His peace will guard you.
- Romans 8:26-28: When we do not know how to pray, the Spirit helps us.

Leader Notes

Question 4 (asking, seeking, knocking): Asking is bringing the request. Seeking adds effort: time in the Word, waiting and listening (Jeremiah 29:13). Knocking adds persistence: coming back

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again and again (Luke 11:8; Luke 18:1). Each one moves closer to God.

Question 5 (when God says no): God promises to hear prayer that fits His will (1 John 5:14-15). Paul asked three times and got "My grace is sufficient" instead (2 Corinthians 12:8-9). A no is still an answer, and it comes from a Father who knows more than we do. Be gentle here. Someone in the room may be grieving a prayer that was not answered the way they hoped.

If someone asks "Do we have to beg God?": No. The friend at midnight is a contrast, not a picture of God. If a tired neighbor gives in, how much more will a loving Father give (Matthew 7:11). Jesus also said "your Father knows what things you have need of before you ask Him" (Matthew 6:8). We keep praying because it keeps us close to Him, not because He needs convincing.

Sources

Every outside fact in this study comes from one of these. Scripture is from the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB) throughout.

- The Greek present imperative in Matthew 7:7: summarized in "Matthew 7:7-8," Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matthew_7:7%E2%80%938.
- Matthew as author: Eusebius, Church History 3.39.16, quoting Papias (early second century).
- Word of Faith teaching is described here in summary only, as its own teachers state it; no outside text is quoted.

Acronym List

SLB: Steadfast Literal Bible

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Ask, Seek, Knock

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Jesus told us to keep asking, keep seeking and keep knocking. This study walks through Matthew 7:7-11 and the friend at midnight in Luke 11, what it means when God says no, and why the best gift the Father gives is Himself. Built for one small group session of 60 to 75 minutes.

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

MATTHEW 7:7 (SLB)

Book 5 of 9 in the collection Growing Closer to God

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