

THE RED LETTER LECTURES

LEARNING TO PRAY FROM THE WORDS OF JESUS

Asking And Receiving

I. **"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. 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!" — Mt. 7:7-11**

A. ***Ask and it will be given you . . .***

1. An Imperative Command. *See Margin.*
2. Continuous action. Lit., "Ask, and keep on asking."
3. Explain linear action verbs.

B. ***Seek and you will find . . .***

1. An Imperative Command.
2. Continuous action. Lit., "Seek, and keep on seeking."

C. ***Knock and the door will be opened to you.***

1. An Imperative Command.
2. Continuous action. Lit., "Knock, and keep on knocking."

D. Parallelism or three distinct steps in prayer?

1. A parallel segment repeats an idea found in the previous segment. With this tech-

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Prayer Quote: "We are to ask with a beggar's humility, to seek with a servant's carefulness, and to knock with the confidence of a friend." — Author Unknown, Dick Eastman, *The Hour That Changes The World*.

Imperative Command

A verb form that expresses action which is to be realized by the exercise of the will of one person upon that of another. (*Summers, Essentials of New Testament Greek, p. 112*). In this case, the expressed will of Jesus upon ours.

Imperative Commands:

Everything Jesus taught and spoke is of absolute importance to the believer. However, Jesus emphasized and appears to have placed more importance on some things than others. The Imperative Command introduces these subjects of most importance.

nique a kind of paraphrase is involved; line two restates the same thought found in line one, by using equivalent expressions. See *Psm. 51: 2-3*.

2. Most notable in OT Hebrew poetry but many believe it's style is also seen in the NT.

E. ***everyone who asks receives . . .***

1. Continuous action. Lit., "everyone who continues to ask continues to receive." See *Lk. 18: 7-8*

F. ***he who seeks finds . . .***

1. Continuous action. Lit., "he who continues to seek continues to find."

G. ***to him who knocks, the door will be opened.***

1. Continuous action. Lit., "to him who continually knocks, the door will be continually opened."

H. ***asks for bread . . . give him a stone? Asks for a fish . . . give him a snake?***

1. Rhetorical questions. A rhetorical question is a figure of speech. It is a question asked with an obvious answer.
2. It is used for impact, to make a point.

I. ***you then (an earthly father) . . . your Father in heaven . . .***

1. How do you relate to God as your heavenly Father?
2. The Scripture declares God as our *Abba Father*? See *Mk. 14:36; Rom. 8: 15-16; Gal. 4:6-7*.

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Psm 51:2-3: "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin is always before me."

Lk. 18:7-8: And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?

Mk. 14:36: *Abba, Father*," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

Rom. 8:15-16: For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "*Abba, Father*." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

Gal. 4:6-7: Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "*Abba, Father*." So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.

3. *Abba* is an Aramaic word. It is the word framed by the lips of infants, and betokens unreasoning trust. Father expresses an intelligent apprehension of the relationship. The two together express the love and intelligent confidence of the child.⁸ See *Lk. 18:17*.

J. **good gifts to those who ask him . . .**

1. Lit., "good things." Things that are good, benevolent, profitable, and useful.
2. Luke calls the "good gifts" — the Holy Spirit. See *Lk. 11:13*.

K. Paraphrase of Mt. 7:7-11 from *The Message*:

Don't bargain with God. Be direct. Ask for what you need. This isn't a cat-and-mouse, hide-and-seek game we're in. If your child asks for bread, do you trick him with sawdust? If he asks for fish, do you scare him with a live snake on his plate? As bad as you are, you wouldn't think of such a thing. You're at least decent to your own children. So don't you think the God who conceived you in love will be even better?

II. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." — Mt. 9:37-39

A. **The harvest is plentiful . . .**

1. What moved the heart of Jesus when he saw the people? (vs. 36).
2. There will always be people who are ready to be "reaped" into the kingdom. See *Jn. 4:35*; *Gen. 8:22*.

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⁸ Vines, Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, p.1

Lk. 18:17: I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.

Lk. 11:13: 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 the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!

Prayer Quote: "When we pray for others, we do not stand with outstretched hands hoping to receive something for ourselves. We stand at God's side, working together with Him, in the task of redeeming others." — William L. Krutza, *How Much Prayer Should A Hamburger Get?*

Jn. 4:35: Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.

Gen. 8:22: As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease.

3. God has commissioned and empowered his church to preach the Gospel in all the world. *See Mk. 16:15-16; Acts 1:8.*
4. Will we answer the summons to join in the harvest?

B. but the workers are few . . .

1. Very few Christians have ever led anyone to Christ, although they themselves were introduced to Jesus through another believer.

C. Ask the Lord of the harvest . . . to send out workers into his harvest field.

1. An Imperative Command to pray, asking God to raise up the workers.
2. Please note, "his harvest field."

D. Paraphrase of Mt. 9:37-39 from *The Message*:

When he looked out over the crowds, his heart broke. So confused and aimless they were, like sheep with no shepherd. "What a huge harvest!" he said to his disciples. "How few workers! On your knees and pray for harvest hands!"

III. Questions for further study:

- A. Discuss the role of prayer in evangelism.
- B. Has God placed a harvest field on your heart? Yes _____ No _____
- C. Are you willing to be one of the workers?
Yes _____ No _____
See God's promise in Psm. 126:5-6. See also the parable of the sower and the seed. Mt. 13:1-9, 17-23.
- D. What should you do about it?

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Mk. 16:15-16: He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

Acts 1:8: But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Psm. 126:5-6: Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.