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SERMON TITLE: **Don't Give Up The Ask**  
SCRIPTURE: **Matthew 7:7-12**  
DATE: **April 25, 2021**  
View online service at [www.fpdc.org/live-stream](http://www.fpdc.org/live-stream)

Read also Jeremiah 29:4-7, 10-14.

**H**ow many of you have a friend or a relative you rely on for help and advice? Perhaps you have several friends. This one guides you for financial advice. That one you call when you have problems at work. Another one helps you with projects at your home. For instance, at Christmastime my neighbors came over and said, "When you are ready, we will help you put your Christmas lights up." The husband later took them down too, because his wife made him. ☺

But it's more than that. Part of the richness of life is having someone—a friend or relative and being able to ask them for help without feeling bad. You just know you are not a burden to them.

Do you have that sort of friend?

Let's say you have a difficult circumstance at work. You can trust their judgment. And, they will listen. So you call them and you feel a real sense of provision.

Do you have anyone like that?

Maybe life is just tough for you right now. Once, a friend of mine whose husband lost his job due to some iffy financial transactions, was struggling. Her husband's ability to work was restricted. And this friend had five children to feed and no money. She prayed, *Lord, what am I going to do?* She took the kids to school that day and when she returned home and walked in her kitchen, there were two big sacks of groceries and an envelope on the counter with \$50 in it. No name.

This was in the days when you didn't have to lock your front door and \$50 would feed the family for more than a week if you were careful.

What would we do without good neighbors and close friends?

Can you think of such an occasion in your own life when you depended on someone, or help came at just the right time?

Often these answers come during trying times. Israel had trying times. They were uprooted from their own homes and scattered among foreigners. Surely they cried out to God to restore them to their own land. "It's not going to happen for seventy years," God said. That's a lifetime. Sometimes circumstances do not change the way we want them to.

But then God said, "Stay. Build houses, get married, have children. Pray for the city where you are; work for its peace and prosperity. Seek its welfare. In its welfare you will find your welfare because *I will bless you.*"

Excellent advice. God's advice is filled with hope.

When circumstances are hard, God makes a way. Are you dependent on God or wary of God? Is God your greatest asset or nemesis? Let's hear some advice from Jesus:

"Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. You parents -- if your children ask for a loaf of bread, do you give them a stone instead? Or if they ask for a fish, do you give them a snake? Of course not! So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him. Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets." (Matthew 7:7-12)

Three imperatives: ask, seek, knock

You know what an imperative is? A necessity. Something that is essential. A requirement.

Mothers give imperatives. When mothers give imperatives, it usually follows with something like this: if you don't do it, things will not go well for you!

But in this passage, the emphasis is not on you. You are not given any conditions.

Not only that, there's no object in Jesus' imperatives. His imperatives, ask, seek, knock are open ended. Therefore his statement is simply a broad, non-specific invitation to seek help. This is not really about miracles; it is about needs for everyday life. It's asking for daily needs—food and provision and direction. It is inviting God into your daily life.

Jesus says, "Ask God, seek, knock on whatever door is in front of you."

Once I was given \$200 for my birthday. I hid it really well so I would not lose it. I hid it so well that I could not remember where I hid it. It was a major loss! I was so upset and I searched and

searched to no avail. After days I finally prayed. I asked God to help me find it. I got up from that prayer and walked right to it. I was so happy!

A few months later I was meeting with my small group from my church in Oak Cliff. We were meeting at my home. One of the couples in that group told us they had a financial crisis and needed \$200. Would we please pray? After the prayer, I got up and went and got that \$200 which I was saving for a rainy day and gave it to them and they paid their bill.

God allowed me to hear that need and I am sure he prodded me to remember that money I was saving. God had found it for me. I gave it.

Eventually they paid the \$200 back. So God took care of them and of me. I put it back in its hiding place.

Always trust that when you are generous, you will receive generosity in return. "Do to others as you would have others do to you."

The money was lost; then it was found. It was given; then it was returned. Not a bad system! It all works together with The Ask.

Fast forward a few years. In fact, we were here at FPCD. A family of five was on furlough but it was time to return to their place of work. They stayed with us their last night and the next morning we headed to the airport. Something told me to get the \$200 so I did and stuffed the wad in the man's shirt pocket. "It's a long trip. Have a nice dinner when you lay over." (I'm not saying it was the same \$200 but I continued to receive money for birthdays.☺)

When we got to the airport, the airline charged them unexpected fees for their bags. Guess how much it was? \$200. **God had answered before they even had to ask God for help.** This often happens if you take this Scripture to heart.

"If you make a habit of asking," Jesus said, "God will provide." Jesus does not lie.

Three years ago Dean and I began looking for a house in Duncanville. We made a few offers but they all fell through. I told the Lord "I'm exhausted, I need a house close!" But nothing seemed to be working. Should I be looking? Is this too much to ask? Maybe God doesn't care. Why should I have that blessing?

Ever feel that way?

One day a house came on the market. We looked at it. It was five houses down from the church. When we walked in, there was an air of peace in the house. It was perfect. We bought it and the sale went right through. Then I realized it had actually been Natalie Steward's home (Nyadia's sister). That's why the peace.

"Seek and you will find," Jesus said. But he actually said, **KEEP ON ASKING, KEEP ON SEEKING, KEEP ON KNOCKING.**

The Israelites didn't want to lose their homes, their cities, and be in a foreign land. But God was up front: "This is your life. Now let me make something of it for you." He said it like this:

"You will be in Babylon for seventy years. *But then I will come and do for you all the good things I have promised, and I will bring you home again.* (Please note, that's an entire lifetime for most of them.)

But he added: "For I know the plans I have for you. They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope." (Jeremiah 29:11) God is good!

With God, no matter the lost expectation, no matter the setback, God opens doors when you knock.

Many of you know this story. When I worked at Southwest Airlines and the transition from one President and CEO to another came about, my job was cut in two and eventually eliminated. I had no idea what I was going to do. I began to pray. What would you have Lord? What door would you open up for me? I decided to take a class at seminary just to learn more about the Bible, so I could teach it in my church's Sunday School. And here I am today.

**God is a very large God with God-sized dreams for us. But will we ask? Will we seek? Will we knock?**

God gives every benefit of the Kingdom of God. God gives The Holy Spirit. God gives us each other. Together the Holy Spirit will guide us.

Our Father says,

"In those days when you pray, I will listen. If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me. I will be found by you," says the LORD. "I will end your captivity—(that means whatever has bound you or led you in an unexpected and unhappy direction)—*I will restore your fortunes*" (Jeremiah 29:12-14).

God loves you.

AMEN