

The Potter's Christian Life Center

SERMON NOTES
with Pastor Greg Formey



God Is Not A Vending Machine

Matthew 7:7-11

Sunday, September 13, 2026

7 "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. 8 For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. 9 "You parents — if your children ask for a loaf of bread, do you give them a stone instead? 10 Or if they ask for a fish, do you give them a snake? Of course not! 11 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. NLT

Imagine a mother sitting in a hospital hallway late at night. She has prayed the exact same prayer every single night for an entire year. She has asked for her daughter to wake up. She has asked for a sign, but God's silence is unbroken. In that moment, a painful thought creeps into her mind: *Did I pray wrong? Did God say no? Or does He simply not hear me at all?*

She is reminded of a well-known verse: **"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you" (Matthew 7:7).**

On the surface, those words sound like a blank check. They sound like a golden key to get whatever we want.

We often treat prayer like a vending machine. We drop it in the slot, we push the right buttons, and we expect our desired result to drop into our hands. When the machine fails to deliver, we assume we used the wrong words or lacked enough faith. But Jesus never intended to give us a vending machine.

To understand what Jesus truly promised, we must move past cheap popular ideas and step onto the Galilean hillside to discover the ongoing rhythm of authentic prayer.

THE CONCEPT OF CONTINUOUS ACTION

When Jesus says "ask, seek, knock," He uses a specific Greek tense called the present imperative. This does not mean a quick, one-time action. It calls for continuous, ongoing action. He is not saying, "Ask once and walk away." He is saying: *Keep asking. Keep seeking. Keep knocking.*

Prayer is not a single transaction; it is an ongoing way of life. Knocks on a friend's door in the middle of the night, he does not tap the door once and immediately walk away into the dark.

If he believes someone is inside, he keeps knocking. This does not force the door open. It is the evidence that he believes the friend is inside.

We see this pattern throughout Scripture.

Psalm 27:8

My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!' Your face, Lord, I will seek."

David does not treat God like a quick stop at a convenience store. He chooses a life oriented around continuously seeking God's presence.

WHAT SHOULD WE SEEK?

Misinterpreting Matthew 7:7 happens when we strip it out of its context.

Just one chapter earlier, Jesus uses the exact same Greek verb for "seek" (zeteo).

Matthew 6:33

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Jesus is not giving us permission to chase our personal wish lists. He is pointing back to what He already told us to pursue: the rule, authority, and righteousness of God.

God already knows our physical needs before we even speak. But some may ask, "If God already knows what we need, why pray at all?"

Because prayer is not how we inform God of our needs; it is how we get and keep ourselves aligned with His kingdom. It is how we surrender our plans and open our hands to His eternal will.

Deuteronomy 8:2-3

2 Remember how the Lord your God led you through the wilderness for these forty years, humbling you and testing you to prove your character, and to find out whether or not you would obey his commands. 3 Yes, he humbled you by letting you go hungry and then feeding you with manna, a food previously unknown to you and your ancestors. He did it to teach you that people do not live by bread alone; rather, we live by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. NLT

Israel constantly asked for immediate comfort and familiar food. God did not give Israel everything they demanded the moment they asked for it. A lesser god might have handed them quick fixes that ultimately destroyed their souls.

Jesus picks up this exact argument in Matthew 7:9–10 by using a classic rabbinic teaching method: moving from the lesser to the greater. He asks His listeners, if a child asks his father for a loaf of bread, will the father hand him a stone? If a child asks for a fish, will the father hand him a poisonous snake?

Matthew 7:11

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!

Conclusion

When we bring our requests to God, we often ask for things that might ruin us, feed our pride, or derail our spiritual growth. God sometimes says no to our specific request so He can give us what is truly good.

1 John 5:14

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

The ultimate goal of prayer is not to bend God's will to match our desires. It is to keep asking, seeking, and knocking until our desires match His character.

When you sit in your own quiet corridor of waiting, do not let silence convince you that the door is locked forever. Keep knocking. You are not standing before a cold vending machine trying to earn a reward. You are standing at the doorway of a good Father who loves you, who hears you, and who always gives what is best.