

The Courage to Love

Brandon Phillips / General Adult

The King and His Glory / Love; Prayer; Wisdom / Matthew 7:7-12

In Matthew 7:7-12, Jesus provides us with three promises ensuring we can love others more than we love ourselves.

Pre-sermon Comments

Ephesians 4:2-3 LSB

² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ being diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Sermon Text

Matthew 7:7-12 LSB

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 he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. ⁹ “Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ “Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? ¹¹ “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him! ¹² “Therefore, in all things, whatever you want people to do for you, so do for them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

Introduction to our Text

Matthew 7:7-8 LSB

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 he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

Review

Matthew 5:20 LSB

²⁰ “For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses *that* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:48 LSB

⁴⁸ “Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Leviticus 19:2 LSB

² “Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘You shall be holy, for I, Yahweh your God, am holy.

Romans 3:23 LSB

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

We say, ‘How can we live the Sermon on the Mount? How can anybody come up to such a standard? We need help and grace. Where can we get it?’ Here is the answer: ‘Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.’ That is the connection, and we should thank God for it, because standing face to face with this glorious gospel we must all feel undone and unworthy ~ Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Discussion Questions

Amy Carmichael's childhood prayer seemed unanswered, yet later in life, she saw its purpose. Have you experienced a time when God's "no" or "not yet" turned out to be for your good? How did it shape your faith?

How does the story of Amy's eyes help us understand God's wisdom in answering prayer? How does this apply to our own petitions before Him?

Pastor Brandon shared about praying for an unbelieving man's salvation, yet he passed without showing faith. How should we reconcile Jesus' promise in [Matthew 7:7-8](#) with seemingly unanswered prayers?

How does knowing that God answers prayers perfectly—though not always how we expect—help us trust Him more?

In [Matthew 7:7-8](#), Jesus commands us to ask, seek, and knock. How does this passage encourage persistent prayer? What does it mean to "knock" in faith?

Proposition and Outline

In [Matthew 7:7-12](#), Jesus gives three grand promises, ensuring the Father will give you the courage to love others more than yourselves. The Father's:

- **Commitments secure you ([Matthew 7:7-8](#))**
- **Character assures you ([Matt 7:9-11](#))**
- **Commandments adjure you ([Matthew 7:12](#))**

The Father's Commitments Secure You ([Matthew 7:7-8](#))

Matthew 7:7-8 LSB

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 he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

The Pitfall

Psalm 37:4 LSB

⁴ Delight yourself in Yahweh; And He will give you the desires of your heart.

Matthew 17:20 LSB

²⁰ And He said to them, “Because of your little faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.

The Promise of Effective Prayer

James 1:5 LSB

⁵ But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

James 3:14–16 LSB

¹⁴ But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. ¹⁵ This wisdom is not coming down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. ¹⁶ For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil practice.

James 5:16 LSB

¹⁶ Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

Of the many things for which we should ask, seek, and knock, God’s wisdom is among our greatest needs. We cannot be discerning and discriminating without divine counsel from our heavenly Father; and the primary means for achieving such wisdom is petitioning prayer

The Anatomy of Effective Prayer

Matthew 7:7–8 LSB

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 he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

Perseverance in Prayer

Luke 18:1 LSB

¹ Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart,

Luke 18:2-5 LSB

² saying, “In a certain city there was a certain judge who did not fear God and did not respect man. ³ “Now there was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, ‘Give me justice from my opponent.’ ⁴ “And for a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, ‘Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, ⁵ yet because this widow is bothering me, I will give her justice, lest by continually coming she wears me out.’”

The Actions Accompanying Effective Prayer

Matthew 6:11 LSB

¹¹ ‘Give us this day our daily bread.

The Exceptions to Jesus’s Promise

Matthew 7:8 LSB

⁸ “For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

You Must Ask with Right Motives

James 1:17 LSB

¹⁷ Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.

James 1:5 LSB

⁵ But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

James 4:3 LSB

³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend *it* on your pleasures.

You Must Be Living in Obedience to Christ

John 14:15 LSB

¹⁵ “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

1 John 3:22 LSB

²² and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.

You Must Be Seeking His Will Above Your Own

1 John 5:14 LSB

¹⁴ And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

Romans 8:28 LSB

²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to *His* purpose.

Romans 8:29 LSB

²⁹ Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers;

1 Corinthians 2:16 LSB

¹⁶ For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL DIRECT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ.

James 1:5-8 LSB

⁵ But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. ⁶ But he must ask in faith,

doubting nothing, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, ⁸ *being* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

You Must Be a Believer in Christ

Exodus 20:3-4 LSB

³ “You shall have no other gods before Me. ⁴ “You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth.

Romans 1:21 LSB

²¹ For even though they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish heart was darkened.

Isaiah 1:15 LSB

¹⁵ “So when you spread out your hands *in prayer*, I will hide My eyes from you; Indeed, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood.

Isaiah 59:1-2 LSB

¹ Behold, the hand of Yahweh is not so short That it cannot save; Nor is His ear so dull That it cannot hear. ² But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden *His* face from you so that He does not hear.

Matthew 5:1-2 LSB

¹ Now when Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. ² And He opened His mouth and *began to* teach them, saying,

Discussion Questions

According to [Matthew 7:7-8](#), what does Jesus command His disciples to do in terms of asking, seeking, and knocking? How does this shape our understanding of effective prayer?

Pastor Brandon mentions the "pitfall" of interpreting [Matthew 7:7-8](#) as a promise that God will give us everything we desire. What are some examples of how this misconception is spread today, and how can we avoid falling into this trap?

Jesus uses the verbs "ask," "seek," and "knock" in the present tense, indicating continuous action. How can we develop perseverance in our prayer life, especially when answers seem delayed?

The parable of the persistent widow in [Luke 18:1-5](#) is used as an illustration of persistence. How does this story encourage you to keep praying, even when results are not immediate?

Pastor Brandon emphasizes that prayer should not be passive but accompanied by action. What are some examples from your life where prayer and action worked together to bring about an answer from God?

How can we balance trusting in God's provision with our responsibility to act? Are there any areas where you've been passive when you should have been taking action?

[James 1:5](#) instructs us to ask God for wisdom when facing trials. What are some practical ways you can seek God's wisdom through prayer and Scripture when dealing with difficult situations in your life or in the lives of others?

In what ways has God answered your prayers for wisdom in the past, and how did that shape your approach to future prayers?

Pastor Brandon mentions the importance of trusting in God's perfect timing when praying. Can you share a time when you had to wait for God's answer to your prayers? How did that experience strengthen or challenge your faith?

What steps can you take to remind yourself of God's faithfulness when His answers don't come as quickly as you'd like?

Exceptions to Jesus' Promise:

Pastor Brandon discusses how [Matthew 7:7-8](#) is not a “blank check” from God to grant our every wish. What are some biblical qualifiers or conditions for effective prayer that help us understand why some prayers may not be answered in the way we expect?

How can we ensure that our prayers align with God's will and not simply our personal desires? What role does Scripture play in shaping the content of our prayers?

Pastor Brandon gives examples of how persistent prayer can apply to various areas of life—unbelieving children, marriage conflicts, and church unity. How does this encourage you to keep praying in your own relationships, even when you don't see immediate results?

The Father's Character Assures You ([Matt 7:9-11](#))

Matthew 7:9 LSB

⁹ “Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone?

Man's Character and Love

Matthew 7:10 LSB

¹⁰ “Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he?

Leviticus 11:12 LSB

¹² ‘Whatever in the water does not have fins and scales is detestable to you.

Luke 11:12 LSB

¹² “Or, *if his son* asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?

Matthew 7:11 LSB

¹¹ “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!

The Father’s Character Shown in His Goodness to Us

Ephesians 3:20–21 LSB

²⁰ Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or understand, according to the power that works within us, ²¹ to Him *be* the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

Luke 11:13 LSB

¹³ “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?”

Ephesians 1:16–20 LSB

¹⁶ do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention *of you* in my prayers:
¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you *the* Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the full knowledge of Him, ¹⁸ so that you—the eyes of your heart having been enlightened—will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe according to the working of the might of His strength, ²⁰ which He worked in Christ, by raising Him from the dead and seating Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,

Romans 8:26–27 LSB

²⁶ And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for *us* with groanings too deep for words; ²⁷ and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to *the will of* God.

The Father's Two Great Commandments Adjure You ([Matthew 7:12](#))

Matthew 7:12 LSB

¹² “Therefore, in all things, whatever you want people to do for you, so do for them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

Matthew 22:36–40 LSB

³⁶ “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” ³⁷ And He said to him, “‘YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.’” ³⁸ “This is the great and foremost commandment. ³⁹ “And the second is like it, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’” ⁴⁰ “On these two commandments hang the whole Law and the Prophets.”

Ephesians 1:3 LSB

³ Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ,

1 John 4:18 LSB

¹⁸ There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.

How easy it is to fall in love with loving instead of actually loving! ~ David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (Welsh Preacher and Writer)

What is the Golden Rule?

Matthew 7:12 LSB

¹² “Therefore, in all things, whatever you want people to do for you, so do for them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

You do not love the Lord at all unless you love the souls of others. ~ Charles Spurgeon

Jesus Modeled Selflessness

Philippians 2:1–5 LSB

¹ Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, ² fulfill my joy, that you think the same way, by maintaining the same love, *being* united in spirit, thinking on one purpose, ³ doing nothing from selfish ambition or vain glory, but with humility of mind regarding one another as more important than yourselves, ⁴ not merely looking out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. ⁵ Have this way of thinking in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,

Philippians 2:6–8 LSB

⁶ who, although existing in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a slave, by being made in the likeness of men. ⁸ Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Matthew 16:24–25 LSB

²⁴ Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. ²⁵ “For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

Mark 8:34–35 LSB

³⁴ And He summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. ³⁵ “For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it.

Love does not look at itself—it is absorbed in the object of its love. Therefore, love manifests itself by loving persons in the concrete. ~ **David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (Welsh Preacher and Writer)**

Discussion Questions

Why does Jesus reference the giving of stones, snakes, or scorpions in relation to food? How does this emphasize the contrast between human fathers and our heavenly Father?

How does the phrase "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts" from [Matthew 7:11](#) highlight the depravity of man, and what is the significance of this for our understanding of God's goodness and our sinfulness?

What does Jesus mean when He says, "How much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him"? How does this truth shape our confidence in prayer?

In what ways does God's character, as a good and loving Father, differ from even the best human father? How does this impact the way we approach God in prayer?

How does the comparison between earthly fathers and our heavenly Father help you trust in God's provision, especially in times of uncertainty or need?

[Ephesians 3:20-21](#) speaks of God being able to do "far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or understand." How does this verse encourage you to pray boldly and trust in God's ability to answer?

Jesus' statement in [Luke 11:13](#) highlights the gift of the Holy Spirit as the greatest good. How has the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life reassured you of God's goodness and care?

In what areas of your life can you grow in trusting God's provision and care, knowing that He will give you "good gifts" according to His will?

[Matthew 7:12](#) calls us to "do for others what you would want them to do for you." How does this commandment challenge the way you live out your faith in daily relationships?

What are some practical ways you can reflect the goodness and generosity of God in your interactions with others, especially when resources seem limited?

How does understanding God's limitless provision free you to sacrificially love others without fear of lacking what you need?

The Gospel

God

Created and owns everything

[*Gen 1:1*](#)—*In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth*

[*Psalms 24:1*](#)—*The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains, the world and those who dwell in it.*

Is Perfectly Holy

[*1 John 1:5*](#)—*This is the message we heard from Him and announce to you that God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all.*

[*Matt 5:48*](#)—*Therefore you are to be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

Requires perfect obedience to His Law

[*James 2:10*](#)—*for whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.*

Man

Has broken God's law

[*Rom 3:10,23*](#)—*there is none righteous, not even one...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*

Will pay the eternal penalty for his sin

[Rom. 6:23](#)—*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*

Cannot save himself by his good works

[Titus 3:5](#)—*He saved us not based on works which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.*

Christ

Came to earth both as God and sinless man

[Col 2:9](#)—*For in Him the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form*

Demonstrated God's love by dying on the cross to pay sin's penalty

[Rom 5:8](#)—*But God demonstrated His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*

[2 Cor 5:21](#)—*He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

Rose from the grave and is alive today

[1 Cor 15:4](#)—*And that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures*

Sinners

Must repent of all that dishonors God

[Isa 55:7](#)—*Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and He will have compassion on him and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.*

[Luke 9:23](#)—*if anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.*

Must believe in Christ as Lord and Savior

[Rom 10:9](#)—that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.

Will you repent and believe in Christ?

[Acts 17:30](#)—therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance God is declaring to men that all everywhere should repent.

Don't hesitate to contact Pastor Brandon or Pastor Keith if you have any questions about this sermon or if you would like to know how to follow Christ.

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Additional Quotes

A loving heart is the truest wisdom. ~ **Charles Dickens**

Christians can imitate God by loving others, even to the point of death if necessary ([1 John 3:16](#)). ~ **Harold W. Hoehner**

Love is the overflow of joy in God that gladly meets the needs of others. ~ **R. Kent Hughes**

We say, 'How can we live the Sermon on the Mount? How can anybody come up to such a standard? We need help and grace. Where can we get it?' Here is the answer: 'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.' ~ **Martyn Lloyd-Jones**

The most fatal thing in the Christian life is to be content with passing desires. If we really want to be men of God, if we really want to know Him, and walk with Him, and experience those boundless blessings which He has to offer us, we must persist in asking Him for them day by day. ~ **Martyn Lloyd-Jones**

Training yourself to love involves doing loving things for the other person, whether or not you feel like doing them. It involves putting their interests and

welfare above your own. It involves sacrificial giving of yourself to others for their sakes, not for the sake of appreciation or returned love or favor. ~ **John F. MacArthur**

If we want God to treat us with loving generosity as His children, we should so treat others, because we are those who bear His likeness. ~ **John F. MacArthur**

A man may be a good doctor without loving his patients; a good lawyer without loving his clients; a good geologist without loving science; but he cannot be a good Christian without love. ~ **Dwight Lyman Moody (Evangelist)**

The measure of our love for others can largely be determined by the frequency and earnestness of our prayers for them. ~ **Arthur Walkington Pink**

God has a holy love and a holy wrath, but not a loving wrath or a wrathful love. ~ **R. C. Sproul**

Christ did not die to make his Father loving, but because his Father is loving: the atoning blood is the outflow of the very heart of God toward us. ~ Charles Spurgeon

It is our care for the helpless, our practice of loving kindness, that brands us in the eyes of many of our opponents. “Look!” they say. “How they love one another! Look how they are prepared to die for one another.” ~ **Tertullian**

The great of this world are those who simply loved God more than others did. ~ **A. W. Tozer**