

I. Introduction

Please open your Bibles to Matthew 7:7

Tell the K cookie story

- A. God's intent has always ever been to only give you what *is* good, sometimes at the expense of what we want or what we *perceive as* good.
- B. He doesn't complicate His answers to you with ideas like what I want or what seems fair or what is most efficient.
- C. His answer will always bring glory to Himself and ultimate good to His children.
- D. This passage is certainly about prayer. But it frames prayer in a bigger context than I usually see it.
- E. How do I see Him, what do I believe about Him, do I walk daily WITH Him, do I truly TRUST Him.

Matthew 7:7-8

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."

- F. Before I get deeper into the passage, can I just point out an elephant in the room:
 1. Surface: this Scripture doesn't square with my experience ... yours?
 2. I've asked for a lot of things that I never received, so is this even true?
 3. I think the answer to that tension will become incredibly clear as we discover more of this passage, so just hold onto that tension right now.
- G. Another not-so-obvious "obvious" thing I don't want us to miss:
 1. Jesus is inviting us, even commanding us, to ask Him for things.
 2. How many of us view God as a reluctant giver?
 3. But the very existence of this passage shatters that broken view of God.

II. Objective observations of these verses (and then some implications)

- A. All of these commands (ask, seek, knock) are the present form of the Greek verb: (ask and keep on asking, etc.)
 1. Jesus isn't merely instructing us to do specific actions in prayer. He's painting a much grander picture for us: this surrender of asking, seeking and knocking is a WAY OF LIFE.
 2. This is not about incessantly *demanding* what you want from the Father.
- B. Asking/seeking/knocking keep us surrendered/aware of our need for the Father.
- C. I also notice that the RESULTS of asking, seeking and knocking are not acquired by us, they are *received* (2 out of 3 are passive verbs)
 1. We *actively and continuously pursue* the Father in our asking.
 2. We *patiently and thankfully wait* to receive from the Father for the answer.
 3. It is so important that we get this right.
 - a. If we make the active pursuit part into forcing an answer, we'll stop pursuing God and start pursuing an outcome.

- b. This whole endeavor isn't about pursuing an outcome, it's about pursuing a person—our Father.

III. Implications

- A. Everything we go through is for our transformation.
 1. Remember what Matt taught on prayer (out of Daniel 10): God's answer is always immediate. Waiting time = our humility and transformation
 2. How do we keep on a path of transformation? Keep asking, seeking, knocking
 - a. *This isn't about forcing God to open the door...it's about keeping US on the porch.*
 - b. *This isn't about getting what I want. It's about staying near to the One I need: my Father in Heaven.*
 - c. We always imagine God on the other side of the door waiting to open it.
 - d. I wonder if this is the wrong picture?
 - 1) Isaiah calls Jesus "Emanuel" (God WITH us)
 - 2) I wonder if a slight variation of this picture would be helpful: That Jesus is on OUR side of the door, with us!
 - e. He is with you on the porch, with His arm around you, changing your heart and when that season of transformation has produced His will in your life, He takes out the key, unlocks the door and the two of you walk through it TOGETHER.
 3. But whatever picture we have of this passage, here's what we know for sure: that Jesus's commands define for us a lifestyle of persistent humble surrender.
 4. Now, at this point in the passage, after Jesus has told us WHAT to do (ask, seek, knock) we might expect Him to tell us HOW to do that. But He doesn't. He takes a very distinct left turn.

Matthew 7:9-11

9 Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? 11 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father Who is in Heaven give good things to those who ask Him!

(More tension ... God only gives good, but I've experienced a LOT of bad in life)

- B. **Truth about prayer both in this passage and the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:** Jesus' teaching about prayer, at it's core isn't about *what to do*. *It's about WHO GOD IS*.
 1. Jesus doesn't give further tips and tricks on how to pray.
 2. No. He paints a picture of WHO God is: An unimaginably good, loving Father.
 3. The Father does not answer prayer and give good to us because He is somehow obligated or because we said the "magic words" in just the right way.
 4. The Father's response to my prayer is firmly rooted in the truth that HE IS GOOD. And, He is MY FATHER.
 5. Jesus' teaching on prayer is ultimately about HOW WE VIEW THE FATHER
 - a. This isn't about pressuring God into doing our will.
 - b. It's about viewing Him as the perfect Father, and ourselves as His children.
 - c. If I trust the Father, I will continually come to Him with my needs and will keep coming back.

- d. If I distrust the Father and don't fully believe that His intentions toward me are good and loving, I will ask and then give up.
- e. A person who doesn't truly trust God, when encouraged to pray and surrender his anxieties and needs to God says, "I tried that. it didn't work."
 - 1) This is a tell-tale sign of a person who is trying to control outcomes and trusts their own plan for "how this should work out" above the Father's.
 - 2) A person who trusts God will continue to surrender even AND ESPECIALLY when "it doesn't make sense" because in their heart they believe "This must be God's path for me and it comes from His very good and loving Heart... even though it really hurts."
- C. It's SO important that we have a paradigm for this in our hearts and minds: that our Father can and does deliver pure, fresh, good water to us in the cup of pain and suffering.
 - 1. His good gift to you may be delivered in the cup of cancer, in the cup of broken relationships, in the cup of "I never imagined this could happen."
 - 2. **Share experience of abandonment with Dad. Who would have I become?**
 - a. **I am such an imperfect man, but my heart's deepest desire is to be a man after God's heart. I didn't make myself that way—God GAVE me that!**
 - b. **It was served to me in a cup called ABANDONMENT but it is no less a good gift from my heavenly Father.**
 - 3. He did this for Jesus. "Let this cup pass from Me!" ... "but not My will!"
 - 4. The Father served Jesus the gift of saving humanity, raising in glorious victory and eternal praise as the Redeemer in the cup of torture, shame and crucifixion.
 - 5. Jesus is assuring us: "God LOVES YOU more than you ever hoped or dreamed and He will ONLY, EVER AND ALWAYS GIVE YOU GOOD."
 - 6. Let me show you what Jesus is saying about the Father's love for you.

John 17:22-23

22 The glory that you have given Me I have given to them [*those who trust Jesus as their Savior*], that they may be one even as we are one, 23 I in them and You in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that You sent Me **and loved them even as You loved Me.**

- 7. The Father loves YOU with the same intensity of love He has for His Son, Jesus
- 8. O how tragically small we see God's love.
- 9. JESUS SAID that the Father loves me like He loves Jesus—INFINITELY!
- 10. Our humility and our prayer lives will never be transformed by a list of things to do differently, tricks and tips on how to pray.
- 11. Our relationship with the Father is not defined by figuring out *what to do*. Our prayer relationship with the Father ignites when we realize WHO GOD IS: LOVE.
- 12. When I ask for something and it is a truly good thing for me right now, God's heart of love says, "YES! I want to give you this good thing! I'm thrilled that you trust Me so much that you'd ask Me!"
- 13. When I ask for something that isn't good for me, God's heart of love says, "Yeah, son, we're not going to do *that*. But you have no idea the incredibly good thing I have to give you in its place. You thought you wanted that, but trust My heart for

you. I'd never steer you wrong. I'll never give you anything bad. Here's the good I want to give you!"

IV. Transition

- A. **Our relationship with the Father is transformed when we believe to our core that everything He gives is good, no matter what cup it is served in.**
 - 1. **And this truth has implications for our relationships with others as well.**
 - 2. **Look at what Jesus says immediately after telling us that our Father will ONLY EVER GIVE GOOD TO US.**

Matthew 7:12

So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

- B. This is the simplest idea, but it has earthshaking effects. What does this mean?
- C. In the same way that God only ever gives good to you, you must only ever give good to your fellow man.
 - 1. This goes against our every impulse as sinful, broken human beings.
 - 2. In a culture where revenge, evening the score and stepping on others for your own benefit is praised and hailed as strength, this teaching seems like suicide.
- D. But each one of us must ask ourselves this question: "Am I a son/daughter of THIS world, or am I a son/daughter of my Father in Heaven?"
 - 1. You must answer this question and then do likewise.
 - 2. And the same conditions apply
 - a. All I do must come out of a heart of love, just like the Father.
 - b. Doing good for another person won't always FEEL good to them, just like it is with the Father.
 - c. Long term ULTIMATE GOOD (being transformed to be like Jesus) must always win out over a short term, temporary want, just like the Father.
 - 3. If we live this way, we fulfill EVERY COMMAND OF SCRIPTURE

V. Conclusion

- A. Do you truly believe that whatever you are enduring, God is only giving good to you?
 - 1. This doesn't mean that you have to label bad things as good things.
 - a. A broken relationship is never a good thing (addicted loved one, cancer, losing a child).
 - b. These are all horrible realities of the sin-cursed world we live in.
 - 2. But do you believe that all of these evils—even your worst nightmare come true—that even that God can use as a conduit through which to give you ONLY GOOD?
 - 3. Coffee with a friend and mentor, Marvin Jacobo. His wife's illness. "The only thing we had to hold on to every single day was that God loved us and He always intended good for us, even when we couldn't see anything good in what we were going through."
- B. Ask God to shape your heart in this way now, *before the pain hits if it hasn't already!*
 - 1. The reality of God's loving goodness toward you is the ONLY WAY you'll make it through the worst case scenario with a heart that is more like His.

2. It will give you lenses through which you can interpret all that you're experiencing. It will be no less painful, but it will be infinitely more meaningful and transformative.
 3. This isn't about slapping a smile on your face and saying, "It's ok!"
 4. *So often, **asking** is done with a voice that is hollowed from weeping, **seeking** is experienced through eyes that are blurred with tears and **knocking** is accomplished with a hand you barely have strength to lift.*
- C. Right now, in the quiet, ask God to show you what you have believed about Him.
1. In your mind, is He an irritable, arms-crossed God who only gives reluctantly out of obligation?
 2. Is He a spineless bellhop who's supposed to give you all you ever ask for?
 3. Is it somewhere on the scale between those two?
 4. Ask Him to reshape your picture,
 - a. A loving, generous, can't-wait-to-give-good-to-you Father.
 - b. One Who smiles when He sees you
 - c. One Who loves you so much that He'll only ever give you good, even if it involves deep pain.
 - d. A Father Who doesn't promise outcomes based on your opinions, but beckons you to be with Him for every moment of your life, no matter the outcome.