

ASK AND IT SHALL BE GIVEN YOU

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The New Testament contains many “great and precious promises” (2 Pet 1:4). Among them is the promise given by Christ in Matthew 7:7-8: “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.” As with God’s other promises, this great promise is also conditional. Our faith and our motives are part of the important components to having this promise fulfilled.

Having faith to ask

There is certainly a degree of faith that is required for us even to ask our Lord for something. If we do not believe God is able to hear our prayers and provide what we desire, then why would we even ask? Asking is one of the important conditions for receiving. Christ said, “Ask, and it shall be given you. . . For *every one that asketh* receiveth” (Luke 11:9-10). James 4:2 points this out as one reason Christians may not receive certain blessings from God: “*Ye have not, because ye ask not.*” Joshua was one of the most righteous men we read about in the Bible, yet even he made this mistake. The Canaanites from the city of Gibeon decided to disguise themselves and trick Joshua into making a league with them so that their lives would be spared. They put on old clothes and shoes, and carried moldy bread, informing Joshua that they were from a far away country (Josh 9:3-13). God obviously knew who they were, and it was God’s will for those people to be destroyed, and He had forbidden Israel from making any leagues with them (Deut 7:1-2). God was in direct communication with Joshua and would have easily been able to protect him from this deception. Yet Josh 9:14-15 records that Joshua and the leaders of Israel “took of their victuals, and *asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord.* And Joshua made peace with them, and made a league with them, to let them live: and the princes of the congregation sware unto them.” Three days later, they found out those people were actually from nearby Gibeon, but by then it was too late. They had not received God’s help, because they had not asked. Many years later, God lamented the rebelliousness of the house of Israel, who would “take counsel, but not of me” (Isa 30:1). He should be the first one we turn to for “grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:16). To God, our prayers are like sweet incense coming up to Him on His throne (Rev 5:8; 8:3-4). God is *pleased* for us to ask of Him. He says, “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer

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and supplication with thanksgiving *let your requests be made known unto God*" (Phil 4:6), and, "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you" (1 Pet 5:7). This should motivate us to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thes 5:17).

Asking in faith

In addition to having enough faith to make our requests known to God, we also need to have faith when we pray. In Matthew 21:22, Christ says, "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (see also Mark 11:24). I remember someone once telling me that God would give us a new sports car if we really believed we would get it when we prayed for it. Is that what Jesus was talking about? Psalm 78:18 says that the Israelites "tempted God in their heart by asking meat *for their lust*."

Therefore, our motive, *why* we are asking God for something, is extremely important. James 4:3 says, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts."

Romans 10:17 tells us that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." To be able to ask in prayer *believing* requires the proper basis for that faith, which means we must first hear it in God's word. When God has *promised* something in His word, we still need to ask for it. An example of this is the promise the Lord gives to provide our food, drink, and clothes when we seek first his kingdom and righteousness (Matt 6:24-34), yet we are still taught to ask for our daily bread (Matt 6:11). But when we ask God for those things He has promised, we must not doubt Him when we ask. James 1:5-7 says, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord." If we are asking for something that God has not promised, 1 John 5:14-15 says, "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing *according to his will*, he heareth us: and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." Jesus exemplified this in Matthew 26:39: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." When we make our requests properly, God may grant those things that we long for (Job 6:8).