

Ask, Seek, Knock: God's Formula for Persistent Faith

If faith without works is dead, then asking without seeking and knocking is just as lifeless.

There are many reasons why you may not be receiving **prayer** answers, from doubt in your heart (see Rom. 10:9) to asking with wrong motives (see James 4:3) to unconfessed sin (see Is. 59:1-2) to unforgiveness (see Mark 11:25) to strife on the home front (see 1 Pet. 3:7) to turning away from Scripture (see Prov. 28:9).

But you can believe purely, ask with right motives, have a clean heart, forgive all your enemies, avoid arguments and soak in the Word all day and still not see prayer answers. That's because asking—without seeking and knocking—flows from the same lazy river as faith without works.

Before you take offense and stop reading, ponder Jesus' promise on determined, active faith, and then consider two Bible characters' strategies for getting what they wanted. Let's start with Jesus' promise: "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened" (Matt. 7:7-8).

Most Bible translators didn't do us any favors with this rendition because it suggests a single request will get the job done. Sure, sometimes a single request suffices. You ask Him. You thank Him for it. And you keep praising Him until you see the prayer answered. But sometimes it takes persistent faith to receive God's promises. Sometimes you have to go after it with godly determination that won't quit.

Three Steps to Reviving Your Faith

That's why I like how the *Amplified Bible* translates Matt.

7:7-8: “Keep on asking and it will be given you; keep on seeking and you will find; keep on knocking [reverently] and [the door] will be opened to you. For everyone who keeps on asking receives; and he who keeps on seeking finds; and to him who keeps on knocking, [the door] will be opened.”

This is a promise from God. So long as what you desire is His will—and His Word is His will—you can be assured that if you keep on asking, keep on seeking and keep on knocking, you will eventually receive the promise. Let me expound on these three principles:

1. Ask. Although God knows what we need before we ask Him, He usually won't provide our needs until we ask because He wants relationship with us. So ask, and keep asking, until you feel a release in your spirit—and then thank Him until you see the promise manifest.

2. Seek. It's not always enough just to ask. More often than not, you also have to seek. In other words, add some works to your faith. If you've asked Him for a new job, seek a new job. If you've asked Him for reconciliation in a relationship, seek reconciliation. If you've asked Him for healing, seek healing. Don't sit back and wait for an angel to do all the work. Faith without works is dead (see James 2:26). (Be led by the Spirit, of course. You can't bulldoze your way through the doorway to God's promises.)

3. Knock. If you seek, you will find. Once you see God's promise in clear view, knock and keep on knocking until the promised door is open. Let's say you've asked Him for a new job. You're seeking a new job and you know in your Spirit (or even hope in your heart) that it's a perfect match. Start knocking. God opens doors that no one can shut (see Rev. 3:8), but often, you have to knock.

So, How Do You Knock?

In the context of Matthew 7, knocking means “importunity in

dealing with God,” according to *Vine’s Expository Dictionary*. That suggests urgent and persistent requests. In other words, once you’re sure you’ve found what you have been asking for—once you see the breakthrough within reach—turn again to asking but with greater urgency.

David sought the Lord in this manner: “One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple” (Ps. 27:4, NKJV). David didn’t just have a desire, he sought after the object of his godly desire. He had persistent faith. If you read the Psalms, pursuing God was a constant theme in his writing. Looking at our three-step process, David desired (ask) and sought (seek). Based on David’s relationship with the Lord, which we read about in the Word, I believe he found what he asked for, then inquired (knocked). God opened the door to intimacy.

Much the same, consider the parable of the persistent widow. Jesus used the parable to teach us that we should always pray and not lose heart. Jesus also showed us that the widow did more than ask: she kept on asking, kept on seeking and kept on knocking. Read the parable and see this with your own eyes:

“There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, ‘Get justice for me from my adversary.’ And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, ‘Though I do not fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.’” Then the Lord said, “Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:2-8)

Pray Once or Keep Praying?

Can you see it? There is a time to pray once, hand it over to God, and trust Him to answer. But there is also a principle of persistent faith where you ask and keep on asking, seek and keep on seeking, and knock and keep on knocking until you receive the promise. How do you know the difference? The easy answer is to be led by the Spirit.

A deeper answer is to consider the opposition. When you face opposition to walking through the doorway of promise, ask God to show you what to do to position yourself for the manifestation, then take any God-inspired action (seek) to find the doorway He leads you to. Once you find the door, start knocking and keep knocking. God will surely open it at the appointed time. Amen.

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