

SESSION 1: ASK, SEEK, KNOCK

Watch the video or read the script together as a group; then discuss the following questions. Keep in mind the questions are meant to prompt conversation, so don't feel the need to use or discuss every question.

BIBLE REFERENCES

Jeremiah 29:12-13; Matthew 7:7-12; Mark 9:22-24

QUESTIONS

1. What is the purpose of prayer in your life? What effect does prayer have on our relationship with God?
2. Why should we entrust our doubt to God? What other seemingly negative feelings or things can we entrust to God through prayer? See the Psalms for some examples.
3. Share with the group a time you have felt doubt, whether it was doubt in God, in a situation, etc. What did you do in this moment of doubt?
4. What do you think it is about doubt that can make it dangerous?
5. How does prayer help someone to defeat the power of doubt?
6. Expound on what it means to search for God with all your heart. What are some practical things that we can do to seek God each day?
7. In Matthew 7:11, Christ calls mankind evil ("If you then, being evil..."). Why do you think Christ uses such a strong word here? What is the point He is making?
8. What role does the condition of a person's heart play in their prayer life?

[illegible]

SCRIPT & ADDITIONAL CONTEXT

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In this session, we'll look at another of Jesus' teaching from the Sermon on the Mount to help us understand how we can conduct ourselves so that our actions are aligned with God's will.

In Matthew 7, we read: *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. Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? 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 good things to those who ask Him! Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets* (Matthew 7:7-12).

In these verses, Jesus is urging us to pray. God has given us the gift of prayer so that we may seek Him, come into His presence, express our worship, and bring our petitions to Him. It is in prayer that we develop our relationship with Him, a relationship that is built on trust. We trust that when we ask, seek, and knock, He is there to answer and guide us according to His will. We believe God is always willing to help us when we call on Him.

However, sometimes there are circumstances in life that cause us to doubt. Perhaps we question if God will be there when we seek Him, or we doubt that He can help us in our need. Maybe we worry that if we express our doubts, God will not help us because our faith is not great enough. Doubt in and of itself is not evil, but the devil can use doubt to separate us from God.

When we find ourselves in moments like this, we must remember Jesus' words – *For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened*. God doesn't want our doubt to be a reason for us not to come to Him. He understands that as humans, we will be inclined to doubt in certain situations because it is an effect of the ability to reason, which is a trait given to us by God. So what is His solution for our doubt? He does not turn away from us. Instead, He invites us to seek Him! He asks us to come to Him in prayer so that we can be renewed in our faith and trust in Him.

We see an example of this in Mark 9, when a man approaches Jesus and asks Him to heal his sick son. *Jesus said to him, "If you believe, all things are possible to him who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"* (Mark 9:22-24). When the father recognized that he did not have enough faith for the Lord's help, he could have made the decision to leave in disappointment. However, he turned to Jesus, even with his doubt and unbelief. He asked for help, believed, and he received it!

God gives His people the assurance that He will listen to their prayers, and that if they truly seek Him, they will find Him. In Scripture, we can read what the Lord told the Jewish people through the prophet, Jeremiah: *Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart* (Jeremiah 29:12-13). Even when we doubt, if it is our earnest desire to seek the Lord, we will find Him. He will not hide from us.

How can we search for God with all our heart? We come to Him with humility and thankfulness. When we seek Him in this way, we will feel His presence in our prayers. Especially in times of doubt, we persevere in asking, seeking, and knocking. We continually pursue Him in prayer.

God desires to give us good things according to His will. When we come to Him in prayer, we express to Him that we want these gifts. We need His help, His grace, and His love. And when we embrace these riches that He so freely gives, we in turn share them with others so that they may come to see that God also longs to have a relationship with them.