

# Savoring God's Word

## A Meditation on Matthew 7:7-11

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This meditation exercise on discerning God's purpose for your life is especially for those wishing to move beyond mediocrity in the journey of becoming a disciple of Jesus.

If you wish to have a group meditate on the passage together, the instructions for the group leader are in italics. If you wish to use it alone, ignore those instructions. This meditation roughly follows the pattern of *lectio divina*, but also includes elements from the Ignatian style of Scripture meditation. For more information about how to meditate on Scripture, see [Savoring God's Word](#) or the recording [Meditating on Scripture](#) (scroll to bottom of page).

### **WARMING UP** (5-10 minutes)

Center yourself by breathing in and out several times. Relax your neck and then take time to let your muscles relax. Offer distracting thoughts to God, one by one. Ask yourself the following question to help focus your thoughts for the meditation: **What, if anything, do you think God may have been telling you this week?**

Close your eyes and take a few minutes to reflect on this question, pondering the events of the week, words of friends you've talked with or books you've read. See if anything comes to you. If not, that's fine. Simply enjoy the presence of God.

*Group leader: After group members have had a chance to greet each other, read the centering instructions above. Then present the above "quiet question" and let them reflect quietly for a few minutes. Repeat the question and ask them to share their thoughts in a sentence or two. Anyone who wishes to pass may do so.*

### **READING the PASSAGE** (15-20 minutes)

Read silently the passage printed below, noting the explanations in the right column.

*Group Leader: Ask a group member to read the passage below aloud. Suggest that other group members might want to close their eyes.*

MATTHEW 7:7-11

#### TRUSTING GOD

7 Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be

#### ITALICIZED WORDS & PHRASES

*BREAD . . . STONE* The little, round limestone stones on the seashore were similar in shape and color to bread loaves of that day.

*FISH . . . SNAKE* "Snake" probably refers to an eel, which was deemed unclean in Jewish dietary laws

opened.

#### THE KIND OF FATHER GOD IS

9 "Which of you, if his son asks for *bread*, will give him a *stone*? 10 Or if he asks for a *fish*, will give him a *snake*? {Luke 11:12} Or if he asks for an *egg*, will give him a *scorpion*? 11 If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give *good gifts* to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

and, therefore, a sneaky, forbidden substitute for a fish.

EGG . . . SCORPION A stinging scorpion, potentially fatal, when curled up in a ball and pale in color looks like an egg.

GOOD GIFTS The parallel passage in Luke uses the words, "Holy Spirit" instead of good gifts. Jesus probably taught this several times, and once when He did, He mentioned specifically the gift of the Holy Spirit.

If you haven't read the notes in the right column, read them silently now. Take a minute to consider the following questions.

*Group leader: After the passage is read, ask group members to read silently the explanations in the right column and then to jot down answers to the questions below. After a few minutes, have them choose one question and share their answer to that question in a sentence or two. Or they may pass, if they wish. Explain that this is not a time for discussion, but for reporting responses to the questions.*

#### ASKING, SEEKING, KNOCKING

1. This passage has sometimes been viewed as a recipe for getting what we want from God rather than as instruction on what kind of heart to have. What kind of heart do Jesus' words urge us to have?
2. Based on this passage, what words would you use to describe the Parent-heart of God?
3. Verse 8 has been interpreted to mean that if you ask God for something, you will get it. As a result, people feel injured by God because of unanswered prayers and longings. Asking, seeking and knocking implies a conversation with God that's more intricate and involved than, *God, please give me \_\_\_\_\_*. Think of something you have asked God for (perhaps related to a goal, relationship or job) and write here some questions you can ask God since you have a relationship with Him in which you can ask, seek and knock.
4. Which of these asking-seeking-knocking questions would you like to pose to God concerning your purpose here on earth?
  - What next?
  - Who should I be listening to?
  - Which direction should I take?
  - What have you put in my heart to do?
  - Your question: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Your question: \_\_\_\_\_

#### CONTEXT CONSIDERATION

5. This discourse falls between a section on avoiding judging others and another on choosing the narrow door. The first asks us to be merciful and the other points us toward integrity. How does an asking-seeking-knocking heart help build mercy and integrity in us?

## PICTURING THE PASSAGE (5-10 minutes)

Before reading the passage again, consider this cue.

### CHARACTER CUE: JESUS' USE OF ABSURDITY IN TEACHING

Jesus did a good job of making unforgettable points with absurd examples. For example, the prodigal son story began with the absurd idea that a son might say, "Dad, let's pretend you're dead. I'll take my half now"? Jesus told another parable about two brothers who couldn't get their intentions and behavior straight: one said he'd work in the vineyard, but didn't; the other said he wouldn't, but he did (Matt 21:27-31). Another time, Jesus compared the learned Pharisees to people who think nothing of drinking out of a dirty cup because, well, it's immaculately clean on the outside, isn't it? (Matt. 23:25-26).

In this passage, Jesus' absurd comparisons were designed to help people think, *Of course, God is not like that! God is not a sneaky trickster or an inattentive parent who would give you the wrong thing when you ask.* Imagine the good feelings about God that Jesus' listeners must have had after they'd laughed at Jesus' absurd pictures.

Now read the passage again -- aloud, this time, and close your eyes, picturing the comparisons Jesus made (listed in the right column above) and the passion involved in trying to explain to humans the love of God.

*Group leader: Have group members read this cue silently. Then ask a group member read the passage aloud while the others picture the comparisons.*

## SOAKING IN THE PASSAGE (5-15 minutes)

Consider how in the midst of your everyday events this passage touches your life today. Read the passage aloud again and ponder the following question for several minutes: **What word or picture emerges from the passage and stays with you?** It often helps the close your eyes in order to shut out distractions.

After several minutes, write below about the words or pictures that resonate with you from the passage.

Words: \_\_\_\_\_

Pictures: I hear . . . or, I see . . . \_\_\_\_\_

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*Group Leader: Have a different group member read the passage aloud and then state the question printed in bold. After the group sits quietly for a few minutes, ask each group member to read what they've written.*

## PONDERING THE INVITATION (5-15 minutes)

Perhaps God is offering you an invitation in this passage to do or be something in the next few days. What might that be? Reflect quietly for a few moments, pondering this question:

**What do I sense this passage is calling me to consider?**

*Group leader: Read the above instructions aloud and after a few minutes, repeat the question printed in bold. Ask group members to respond by saying, I SENSE THIS PASSAGE CALLING ME TO CONSIDER: and then completing that statement with a short phrase. Anyone who wishes to pass may do so.*

## PRAYING (5-10 minutes)

Take a few minutes to respond to God by telling him what you sensed or didn't sense during this meditation. If you need to present questions to God, do so.

*Group leader: After allowing a few minutes for private prayer, ask group members to pray for the person on their right. Anyone wishing to pray silently may do so, saying, "I'm praying silently." When they're finished, they can say, "Amen."*

## **DAILY LECTIO:**

Use the above format to enjoy God's presence between group meetings, using any of the following passages:

- Isaiah 65:19-24 (how God delights in answering us when we call)
- Psalm 24:1-6 (the generation of those who seek him)
- Psalm 105:1-5 (seeking God's face always)
- Psalm 138:1-8 (God will fulfill his purpose)
- Amos 5:14 (the Lord is with us with we seek good instead of evil)
- Acts 17:26-28 (God's design that we seek Him)

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