Ask Like a Child, Give Like a Father

MATTHEW 7:7-12 (BSB) · SMALL-GROUP LESSON · DIGDEEPER.AI

The Big Idea

God isn't a reluctant vending machine you have to feed the right coins. He's a Father who's already glad to give, so keep asking and then turn around and treat people the way you'd want to be treated.

Opening Lines

Hold up a smooth gray stone and a piece of bread and ask the room which one they'd hand a hungry kid. Nobody hesitates. Now tell them Jesus builds his whole argument about prayer on exactly that no-brainer.

Before You Teach

- Goal: The room leaves trusting that when they ask, the Father hands them bread and not a stone. And they walk out having already picked one prayer to bring back and one person to treat well.
- If you're short on time, cut: The rabbinic background on compressing the Torah into one line. It's rich, but the bread-and-stone image and the golden rule carry the lesson without it.
- Where the moment lives: In the pivot from 'ask' to 'do' — verse 12's 'therefore.' Transformation happens when someone names both a request they'll bring to the Father and a kindness they'll give a person this week.
- Your prep: Bring an actual stone and an actual piece of bread. Also come having already prayed the persistent prayer you're about to ask them to pray.

Run It In Your Setting

The same lesson, sequenced three ways. Pick the one that fits your group and your clock.

CLASSROOM · ~20 PEOPLE · 45 MINUTES

Classroom opening with the stone and bread (4 min). Read the passage aloud (3 min). Teach 'ask'/aiteo with the knocking image (8 min). Questions 1, 2, and 4 with full silence (18 min). Turn to verse 12 and the two take-home asks (7 min). Out-loud commitments in pairs (5 min). Transformation lives in the pivot at verse 12 — protect it. If time runs short, cut question 2.

SMALL GROUP · ~8 PEOPLE · 60 MINUTES

Small-group opening on the belief-vs-practice gap (6 min). Read the passage (3 min). Teach 'ask' with the knocking (8 min). All five questions, lingering on 3 and 5 where the room gets honest (30 min). Commitments out loud around the circle (8 min). Spontaneous

closing prayer over their actual words (5 min). Transformation lives in question 3 — the abandoned prayers named aloud. Cut question 2 first if needed.

COFFEE · 2-3 FRIENDS · 30 MINUTES

Coffee opening — trade abandoned prayers (5 min). Read the passage off a phone (2 min). Say the 'how much more' line and let it sit (3 min). Talk through questions 3 and 4 only (13 min). Each name one prayer to bring back and one kindness to give (5 min). Pray briefly over each other's real words (2 min). Transformation lives in actually naming both, not just discussing. Cut the word study if pressed.

Silence

Silence is a habit for every lesson you'll ever teach — this week we drill it deliberately. Remember week 2 and week 7, where you learned to ask a question and then simply stop talking. Level four asks for a harder rep: after you ask your sharpest question, silently count to fifteen — not five — and do not rescue the room by rephrasing, adding an example, or answering it yourself. Fifteen seconds feels like an eternity when you're up front; that is the point. The person who finally speaks is usually the one the Spirit was quietly loading up while you kept your mouth shut. If your hands need something to do, hold the stone.

Why This Passage Matters

Most people in your room are quietly convinced God is stingy. They pray like they're filing a request they don't expect to be approved, bracing for a stone. This passage goes straight at that. Jesus doesn't argue God into generosity with theology; he points at the most ordinary thing in the world — a father handing his kid a piece of bread — and says God is at least that good, and far better. The people who first heard this had grown up seeing loaves the size and color of the stones lying all over Galilee, and dried fish that looked like coiled snakes in dim light. The picture was designed to be obvious. No decent father makes that cruel swap, and neither does the Father in heaven. Then Jesus does something the room won't see coming: he turns prayer outward. Because the Father gives, you give. The golden rule isn't a nice add-on; it's the overflow of trusting a generous God. You get to hand people two things this hour: permission to ask boldly, and a plain instruction anyone can start obeying before bedtime. Few passages let you give both in one breath. This one does.

Catch the Fire First

Before you stand in front of anyone, do the exercise yourself. Pick one thing you've stopped praying about because nothing changed — a real one, not a safe one. Bring it to God this morning, out loud, plainly. Then pick one person and one specific kindness you'll do for them before the day ends, the kind of thing you'd want done for you. If you haven't actually asked and actually given, you'll teach this as a concept, and the room will feel the difference. The bread-and-stone image only preaches from someone who's been eating

the bread.

Bring Your Own Story

- A time you kept asking for something and had nearly given up, and what came back was better than what you asked for.
- A moment a parent, or you as a parent, handed a child exactly what they needed — and what it revealed about being trusted with a request.
- One time someone treated you the way you'd secretly wished someone would, and how it landed.
- SAMPLE (polished vs. real): Polished — 'God is always faithful to provide in his perfect timing.' Real — 'I prayed for that job for a year, gave up, and the door opened the month I stopped asking. I felt caught, in a good way.'
- Guardrail: keep it raw and specific, not tidy and resolved — the full storytelling coaching is back in week 1's drill.

Three Ways to Open

CLASSROOM: "Set a stone and a piece of bread on the table where everyone can see. 'If your kid asked for one of these, which do you hand them? Right — nobody thinks about it. Jesus is about to build his entire teaching on prayer out of a decision this easy.'"

A physical object cuts through abstraction faster than any sentence.

SMALL GROUP: "'Be honest for a second: when you pray, do you expect God to answer, or are you mostly bracing for silence? Don't answer out loud yet — just notice where you actually land. This passage is aimed straight at that.'"

Start with the honest gap between belief and practice — it gives people permission to be real.

COFFEE: "'What's something you gave up praying about because nothing ever changed? I've got one too. Jesus says something in this passage that I don't think either of us takes seriously enough.'"

A single concrete question invites the other person in before any teaching starts.

Teaching the Word

Teach the word 'ask' — the Greek is *aiteo*, and the grammar matters. In verse 7 it's a present-tense command, which carries the sense of keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking. Not one polite request filed and forgotten, but a child coming back again and again. Perform it: knock on the table once, pause, then knock three times, steadily. The first knock is a person testing whether anyone's home. The steady knocking is a child who already knows their father is inside and it's only a matter of time before the door opens. That's the posture Jesus is teaching — not begging a stranger, but pestering a good Father who already wants to answer. Then read the line and let it sit: 'How much

more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!' (Stop. Let the silence do its work.)

Discussion Questions

1. When you honestly picture God receiving your prayer, what's his face doing — glad, annoyed, distracted, indifferent?

Coaching note: This surfaces the real image of God they carry. Don't correct anyone's honesty; the point is to get it named out loud so the passage can address it.

If it stalls: Simpler: does asking God for something feel more like asking a good friend, or more like asking a busy boss for a favor?

2. Jesus says even 'evil' fathers give their kids bread. Why do you think he calls us evil right in the middle of a comfort passage?

Coaching note: This is the edge. The argument only works because we're the flawed ones and God is not. Let the discomfort of being called evil stand instead of softening it too fast.

If it stalls: Try: what happens to the promise if Jesus had said 'you good people'? Would 'how much more' still mean anything?

3. What's one thing you stopped praying about because nothing changed — and what stopped you?

Coaching note: Go first if the room hesitates. Ask your sharpest version and then hold the full fifteen seconds of silence. Do not rescue it.

If it stalls: Lower the bar: just yes or no — is there anything you used to bring to God and don't anymore? You don't have to say what it is yet.

4. Jesus links asking and doing with a 'therefore.' How does trusting a generous Father actually change how you treat people?

Coaching note: Watch for the room drifting into warm agreement here. If everyone's nodding, push: 'We're all agreeing fast — who would the golden rule ask you to treat differently that you'd rather not?'

If it stalls: Concrete it: name one person this week you did NOT treat the way you'd want to be treated. What would the golden rule have you do?

5. If God gives 'good things' but not always the thing we asked for, what do we do with the prayers he seems to answer with a no?

Coaching note: The deepest and riskiest question. Point them to James 4 (wrong motives) and Luke 11 (the Spirit as the best gift) without tying it in a bow. Sit with the tension honestly.

If it stalls: Make it personal: has there been a time God gave you something better than what you actually asked for? Or a no you now understand?

Questions You May Hear

"Is this a blank check? 'Ask and it will be given' — does that mean I get whatever I want?"

No. James 4 guards it: 'when you do ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives.' This is a child trusting a Father, not a mechanism for indulging cravings. And Luke names the best gift God gives — the Holy Spirit, himself.

"Why does Jesus call regular fathers 'evil'? That seems harsh."

It's the whole engine of the argument. He's reasoning from the lesser to the greater: if even flawed, self-interested people reliably feed their kids, how much more will a perfect Father give good things? Calling us evil is what makes 'how much more' land.

"What does 'this is the essence of the Law and the Prophets' mean at the end?"

That phrase named the entire Hebrew Scriptures. Rabbis of the day tried to boil the whole Torah down to one summarizing rule, and Jesus does exactly that — every command God ever gave about your neighbor folds into 'do to others what you'd want done to you.'

"Why bread and fish specifically, and stone and serpent?"

In Galilee, round loaves were the size and color of the smooth stones lying everywhere, and a small dried fish in dim light looked like a coiled snake. Jesus set two ordinary foods beside two things that could kill you — the swap no sane father would make.

For Experienced Leaders

- Bring the real stone and real bread. Passing them around the room does more than any slide — people literally weigh the two in their hands.
- When someone shares an abandoned prayer, resist the urge to fix it or explain God's silence. Just receive it. The passage's comfort works better than your commentary.
- The 'therefore' in verse 12 is the hinge of the whole lesson. If you feel time slipping, protect the turn from asking to doing — that's where people actually get moved to act.

Landing the Lesson

Commitments: Before you leave, say two things out loud to the person next to you: one prayer you're going to bring back to the Father this week, and one specific kindness you're going to give someone before you sleep tonight.

Close by praying out loud over the actual requests people just named — the prayer someone said they'd bring back, the person someone said they'd treat differently. Don't reach for a written prayer; name their real words back to the Father, because that's the whole point of what you just taught.

If you run out of time: If the room only gets to question three and stays there naming abandoned prayers honestly, stay there. That's the heart of it. Don't rush to five to feel finished.

Midweek follow-up: Midweek, text each person one line: 'Did you bring that prayer back? Did the kindness happen?' The follow-up is what turns tonight from a nice hour into a habit.

Free at digdeeper.ai/devotionals/matthew/7-7-12/lesson

Handout

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During the lesson:

- When I picture God hearing my prayer, his face looks like: ____
- One thing I stopped praying about because nothing changed: ____
- Fill in the line that carries the whole passage: 'How much more will your _____ in heaven give _____ things to those who ask Him!'
- One thing I wish someone would do for me this week: ____
- One person I did NOT treat the way I'd want to be treated — and what I'll do about it: ____

Take-home actions:

- Pick one thing you've stopped praying about and bring it to God again tomorrow morning, out loud and plainly, before you leave the house.
- Tonight, watch for one small ask from your child, spouse, or roommate — a snack, a hand, five minutes — and stop what you're doing and give it gladly.
- Take the one kindness you wish someone would do for you and do exactly that for one person before the day ends.

Ask your Father for one good gift this morning, and give one good gift before you sleep.