

# Asking and Receiving

*Gospel of John*

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**Bible Text:** John 14:11-14

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Please look with me in your Bibles to John 14. We'll begin reading in verse 11 and read down to verse 14. I want to speak with you about this matter of asking and receiving. Here our Lord says to his disciples,

“11 Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake. 12 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. 13 And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.”

Several times in here our Lord speaks of asking. It's a reminder to any of us that are his that we never ever stop being needy. To ask, means to beg. It's a strong word. It means to call out for, to cry out for, much as a child would cry out for their parents. It means to crave; to be so hungry as to crave or thirsty as to desire drink. So, in a very simple way, our Lord is reminding those that are his never to become presumptuous in what we have by his grace. We can do that, can't we? We can get cocky about what we know or think we know. We can become self-satisfied in the fact that, “Well, my sins are forgiven in Christ. I stand in his righteousness so what else is there?” That is an attitude of the heart which ought to cause us to fall on our face before the Lord and cry even more for mercy, to presume that we ever get beyond being needy sinners.

So, as you hear the words of the Lord, I ask you: are you asking? Do you, right now, seek him every bit as urgently as you did when the Spirit first began a work in your heart? If not, you're in trouble and I'm in trouble because to get away from ever seeing our need as sinners before a holy God, our need of Christ. You say, “Why should I ask?” Well, even that, shows hardness. Even, “What should I ask?” Well, you know what you need to ask. When you get hungry, what do you ask for? A stone? You ask for food. When you get thirsty, what do you ask for? Water. It's natural. It's as natural as life itself. Do you have anything to drink? Our food and our water is Christ. Why would we ever ask for anything else? Such is the work of the Spirit in our hearts to direct us constantly to his Son. I've had people chasten me with their words because they say, “You act like your sins have never been forgiven because you always keep talking about the need for

forgiveness.” Well, I know myself as a sinner and I know, as well as anybody, that my sin by his grace has been put away in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ but, you know what? When I sin, it creates in me that craving and desire all the more to seek the Lord’s forgiveness, to ask for it.

That’s what I am as a needy sinner. I hope that’s how we come. Come asking and receiving. This is not something mechanical. If you look over in Matthew 6, this is instruction that our Lord gave continually to his disciples and to us as his followers. Notice in Matthew 6:5, “And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men.” What is prayer but asking? And what has religion done but made it to be something of a formality to even change the language. They say, “Let’s have the invocation.” Do you realize to “invoke” means “to ask?” So, even an invocation, and you’ll see people come up at certain events and they’ll pull out a piece of paper, they’ve taken the time to write out some eloquent words, they don’t want to look bad. A lot of people reason that way but, dear friends, that’s not prayer.

Christ said, “Verily I say unto, they have their reward.” What is their reward? Why do they even start out? It was to be seen of men; it was to look good before men. But that’s not what prayer is. Verse 6 says, “But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret.” Certain ones want to make sure that you know that they are praying. When I used to travel quite a bit and stay in different homes and preach in some different types of congregations as the Lord opened up opportunities, a lot of this was particularly in Africa, I would stay in homes of people that felt that it was their duty to keep you up all night raising the roof and if you didn’t join them, you were unspiritual. I’m in there trying to get a good night’s rest and they’re in the living room gathered just raising the roof until 2, 3, 4 in the morning. You wonder where does this energy come from? But they do it to be seen of men.

In reality, if we do it here as the Lord says, we’d never see each other praying. Now, I know we address our Lord in a public manner here but it ought to be in such a manner and way that when we’re done, men aren’t looking at us. As we lead up here in prayer, it’s as if no one else is here. We’re addressing our Father in secret, you happen to be listening in. That takes grace.

And it says, “and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.” Verse 7, “But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do.” You shouldn’t be able to say of somebody, “Well, let’s just hit the recorder on this one because he’s going to say the same thing every time.” This is not rote and regurgitate. There is a relationship of asking and seeking and receiving.

It says here, “for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.” The length of a person’s prayer is in no way an indication of the spirituality of it. You and I have endured such prayers when in a group, someone is asked to say the blessing and I don’t even like that term. Say the blessing. And they’ll get up and they’ll carry on and on and on and on and on. They’re preaching all the while calling it prayer. It would be better not

to. It would be better just to dig in than to subject ourselves to somebody that has as their one desire to be heard for their much speaking. Their tone changes. How we address our father. If my children came to me and started speaking to me in a sanctimonious type of tone, I'd think something was up. "What are you talking that way for?"

This is something which is from the heart and it says in verse 8, "Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him." Now, to some, that might be a turn-off. "Well, if he already knows before we ask him, why ask?" But I truly believe that such is the work of the Spirit in a heart that you cannot help but ask even knowing that he knows before you ask. Such is the craving. Such is the hunger. Such is the need. Such is the desire. In reality, it's the reason we should pray because he does know before we ask and we don't. That's the reason why we're called upon the continue to ask because we don't even know how to ask as we ought.

So that ought to be the first expression of our hearts, "Lord, I don't even know what to say." This matter of seeking the Lord, it's not trying to package some words that are going to impress him. There is nothing about you or me that impresses God. If he hears any of us it's going to be because of his Son. It's going to be because the Lord Jesus Christ is there as your representative, that's it. So, I come just as I am. Not as the hypocrites in verse 5. Hypocrites like to put on that front. There is no front to put on. I'm a needy sinner. It's only by the blood and righteousness of Christ that I could ever enter into God's presence and on that basis, I come.

So, we have that instruction given but if you look over just a chapter, Matthew 7, we see again this instruction that the Lord gives and it fits what we're reading here in John 14. He said, in John 14, "If you shall ask anything in my name, I'll do it." Here, he says, in verse 7 of Matthew 7, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Where does the asking come from? Well, it comes from the Spirit of God giving you the ask. "Seek and ye shall find." Where does the seek come from? Well, it's the Spirit of God causing you to seek.

"Knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth." Here's where we have to be careful. It doesn't mean that you necessarily will receive exactly what you asked but you will receive. You will receive the answer. He that seeketh findeth. What are you going to find in seeking? You're going to find Christ to be exactly who he says he is. You're going to find God to be exactly who he says he is whether you get exactly what you want or not.

You see, this matter of seeking and asking is not a cookie-cutter way like a vending machine, "I want that Snicker's bar. It says \$1 and I'm going to put \$1 in and I'm getting my Snicker's bar." That's how a lot of people understand this portion of Scripture but that is not what it's saying. Notice the open endedness with which this word is written. Ask and you will receive. It may not be in the way that you think but you will receive the Lord's will and purpose for you. I can't tell you what it is. You see, he's the one that erects it but you will receive.

“You seek, you will find and him that knocketh it will be opened.” It will be opened. Our problem many times in our depravity, is that we’re not looking in the direction where the Lord has opened. We’re still whamming on this door and trying to handle and pushing until he makes it clear that this is the way, walk ye in it. You will receive.

Look how it follows in verse 9, “Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?” Here’s the thing about asking and receiving: the Lord will never give any of his own something that’s going to harm them. You compare a stone with bread. He doesn’t play cat and mouse with his own. You might not necessarily receive the kind of bread that you were thinking of but one thing’s for sure, you’ll never receive a stone. You’re never going to bite down on it and all of a sudden realize, “Wow, broke my tooth. Got tricked.”

“Or if he ask a fish,” imagine someone delivering you a fish in a bag and you reach your hand in it and instead of a fish, you get a serpent, a snake? The Lord is not evil in any way in how he deals with his children. It may not be necessarily the fish that you thought you should have or want but one thing’s for sure, you’ll never get a serpent. The Lord will never, ever deal with you in such a way. But how many times have we gone through a trial and a difficulty and we’ve questioned the Lord? We’ve wondered, “Is this a serpent that he’s given us?” Such a thought is just blasphemous concerning God and his glory.

He says in verse 11, “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good,” now “things” is in italics, “give good to them that ask him?” Do you realize that if you’re the Lord’s, Christ has paid your debt and he receives you as his own Son. He receives you in his Son. He receives you because of his Son. Is there any good thing that he will withhold from you?

If you look over in Romans 8. You know, sometimes the strongest medicine is the most bitter but if the doctor prescribes it, it’s for your good. I’ve got an associate that’s going through cancer treatment right now. They’re after the cancer and it’s a kind that can quickly multiply throughout the body and so they were hammering him with some chemotherapy mix that N. D. Anderson recommended and it was about killing him. And the doctor kept saying, “We’ve got to find the right mix but we can’t let up because we have to go after this cancer.” It seems now that they’ve found the right mix because it’s not affecting him as much. It just wiped him out for 4-5 days, a week of vomiting but he had to rest and trust in the fact that that doctor had his best interest in mind and he stuck with him until now it appears they’ve got what’s right.

I’m thankful that with the Lord, there is no trial and error. He is the Great Physician and although the medication may, at times, seem bitter yet what he gives is for our good. That’s what we see here in Romans 8:28, “And we know that all things work together for good,” there’s the word, like we read over here in Matthew 7, “If you, being an earthly father, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?”

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God.” You say, “Well, who loves God?” Well, look at the rest of the verse, “to them who are the called according to his purpose.” “That work together” is a pharmaceutical term which means “to take a mixture of powders.” Apothecary is the word in the original. To take a mixture of powders and mix it together in the right proportion so that when it’s given, it’s for the good of the patient.

On what basis would a holy God ever give anything good to a sinner? As I stand here and as you sit there, I know I deserve that stone. I know I deserve nothing more than the bite of a serpent. My own condemnation. Yet, for God to be gracious and merciful to me a sinner, well, this very portion of Scripture tells us in verse 32, “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” All things pertaining to salvation, our good and his glory.

“Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” This is why the Lord sends these things in our lives, lest we become presumptuous. Did you ever sit and think, why can’t I just have one quiet day? It seems like every day there are waves and rocking and rolling and turning upside down and back and forth. I’ll tell you what, it keeps you needy. It keeps you needy.

But none of that, if you’re the Lord’s, if Christ has paid that debt, is going to be for your destruction. What it does is it causes you to see your need and that’s what Paul says here, “Shall tribulation, or distress,” see the word “stress” in there? “Or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” If you ever get thinking yourself deserving of more than what a sheep gets in being born in this world and that is to go to slaughter, then you’ve got too high of an opinion of yourself.

“Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,” whatever is ahead coming, “nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” So, the Lord sifts me, shakes me. All of that has for its purpose, to draw me again and again and again to ask, to seek, to knock and to find.

So this is what our Lord is saying to his disciples. Not a new teaching but in light of what they were about to go through themselves with Christ being taken from them to be crucified and them being scattered. How needy would they be. And that they should not presume upon their standing or relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, that they continue to know their need.

Coming back here to John 14, just a very simple outline here. Who is it that we ask? In verse 11, Christ said, “Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else

believe me for the very works' sake.” There is a notion in some religions, that Christ is severe in how he deals with people and so if you don’t get what you want from him, you can always plead the saints, so called. Or you can, they say, address Mary, the mother of Jesus. She’s a little more sympathetic; she’s a little more compassionate; she’s a woman. That’s the mindset. So, you’ve got options to get to the Father. As ridiculous as that may sound, that is fundamentally what the majority of people believe. They truly believe that if you can’t get to the Father this way then let’s work it another way to get his ear. So what the Lord is saying: there is only one way to the Father.

So singular is that way, he’s saying, “I and the Father are one.” See how this connects with everything he said to this point? There is no coming to the Father, there is no removing Christ from the formula, if you will, and still getting to the Father like so many do in these public invocations. So as not to offend, we’re not going to mention the Lord Jesus, we’re just going to address the Almighty. Or, we’re going to talk to the Higher Power. I don’t know about you, but I don’t trust the person down there that’s doing invocations. When they say, “Bow your head. Close your eyes,” I’m keeping my head up and looking straight forward. I’m just like those friends of Daniel when Nebuchadnezzar said, “When you hear the trumpet and the harp and the flute and all that, bow.” They didn’t bow. They stood. They stood out in a crowd.

I can’t enter in to any such sort of invocation. I can’t even, when asked to give an invocation, and rarely you get asked. Many times you get asked once and that’s it. But the reason is: this persuasion that there is absolutely no way to come to the Father except by the Lord Jesus Christ, that’s what Christ is saying. That’s the very basis on which we address God the Father. There is nothing that you’re going to find in Scripture that our Lord emphasized more with his disciples than his oneness with the Father. What God has put together, let no man put asunder.

If you’ll just look back in John 5, again, this is no new teaching. In John 5, we saw this in our Bible class this morning out of Psalm 7, David being persecuted and how he was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. We see that here in John 5:16, “And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day. But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.” There is perfect harmony between the Father and the Son. You can rest assured of that. The Father is not doing one thing and the Son another and they’re both trying to win followers. No. Whatever the Father has purposed, the Son does. All judgment has been given into his hand.

But, you notice when he answered them, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.” Verse 18, “Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath,” according to them, “but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God. Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them;

even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.”

You know, this is a thing that shook me to rock bottom back in 1984 as the Lord opened my eyes and saw how blasphemous of a preacher I had been to that point and if anybody wonders why does he make such an issue about honoring the Son, if you’ve not heard it before I’m going to tell you now: it’s because of this verse right here that the Lord dealt in my heart. You will never, ever, by God’s grace, ever, hear me stand in this pulpit and do anything but determine to preach unto you Christ and him crucified. I fear God would kill me if I did anything less and he’ll kill a number for doing anything less. He’ll send them to hell.

Do you see how important this is? Let God give you that persuasion. Be satisfied with nothing, asking nothing, but that God would honor his Son through everything you do, say and are. There is a reason that this persuasion is there. May God grant it to each of us.

But we ask because of who he is. Secondly, how we ask. Come back here to John 14. How are we to ask? Well, it says there in verse 11, “Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.” Verse 12, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me.” How are we to ask but in faith. I don’t find any contradiction in the command to believe on the Son and the fact that to believe, it’s God that gives the grace to do so. I know that also by experience because as the Lord began to deal in my heart as a lost sinner and I read those commands, I realized I could not believe. I could not. Given that command a thousand times over, I could not come. I could not rest until the Spirit of God opened my eyes and caused me to cry out as a needy sinner and I’ve never stopped crying.

Again, I’ve been criticized for not preaching up faith. I hear it all the time. But I’m telling you my persuasion is I must preach up Christ and him crucified. And where he grants faith, I know this, that sinner will believe and he will look to Christ. It’s not preaching up faith, it’s not defining faith that causes a sinner to see. It’s Christ that causes a sinner to see and therein is faith. That sinner then, is not looking to the fact that he sees but who he sees. He sees Christ. That’s his glory. Christ. Not that I believed. Can’t you believe? No. Obviously you can’t.

Christ said here in verse 11, “Believe me.” It’s not just believing but “Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works’ sake.” He that believeth on me. There is a reason why these words are here. To believe on is to rest wholly upon. Christ is that foundation. Christ is all. Believe on me. That’s how we ask, in faith. Nothing wavering.

If you look over in James 1. The Africans have a little proverb that they’ll say when they see somebody being two-faced. They’ll say, “Which leg are you dancing on? You seem to be dancing over here and now you’re over here.” When we went to India, it was the

bauble head. The head was doing like this: if you asked somebody and they weren't sure really what answer you were looking for, they would do this with their head. You watch them on tv, I mean, it was so predominant that I asked somebody. I said, "Why is everybody talking to you and babbling their head back here?" One of the Indians said that, he said, "Well, here we respect so much the other's opinion, if we don't know what they want then we do this."

But that's not faith. Faith is asking based upon what God has revealed of himself. That's all it is. It's asking in accord with what he says here in his word. In James, again, what do these trials bring but need? Verse 2, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect," or mature, "and entire, wanting nothing. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God," there is that word "ask" again. Plead, call for, cry out for, crave, desire in all things, "that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."

There, again, you might ask for something that is not wise. Here it says, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask." What God gives is wisdom. Wisdom to see how things pertain to his glory even though, at the moment, you might not see it. Wisdom to bow to his will even though it's contrary to your will. Wisdom to glory in the Son.

But it says here in verse 6, "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. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways." If the Lord has showed you your lostness, you will be exclusive in how you approach God because you know there's no other way but to come through his Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

"A double minded man is unstable in all his ways." It's the yea/nay. Believeth by God's grace but you also have to furnish a little bit of your will like them that like to preach. God provides you the shoes but he's not going to tie them for you. This kind of mixed thinking is not what it is to come to the Lord. It's not what it is to pray. It's not what it is to seek. It's not what it is to ask. When we ask, we come as desperate sinners. We come knowing that but for Christ giving us everything that we need, we're nothing and it's believing on him. It's believing that he is that he says he is.

Come back here to John 14. How is it that we ask? It's in faith but it's also wholly based upon, founded upon, the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, you notice here in verse 11 "works" is in the plural. You might think, "Well, I thought it was the work. Why does he say, Believe me for the very works' sake?" "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father." A lot of people think that refers to his miracles and so they jump on that and say, "Well, if we really believed, then we're going to do even greater things than he did by way of miracles." But I believe here the "works" is in the plural because everything Christ did from the cradle to the cross, he did to work out and



establish a righteousness for his people that they might be declared righteous and holy and just before the holy God.

So when he says, "Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake." That takes the revelation of Christ. That takes knowing why he came and what he accomplished and we believe on him because that has been revealed. When it says there, "the works that I do shall he do also," what is that talking about but in your life as the Lord has taught you, you know nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified. You know of no other righteousness. You speak of no other righteousness than what he accomplished and that's what you do, "the works that I do shall he do also."

We live, we breathe, we move, based upon this justifying grace that Christ accomplished at the cross on our behalf. It's not talking about miracles. Christ raised the dead. You're telling me you can go out and do something greater than that? But when it says "in greater works than these shall he do because I go unto my Father," it's talking there about the extent, the far-reaching extent of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. When he was on this earth, it seemed to be on behalf of just this small band of disciples and yet those works that he was accomplishing were on behalf of a number that no man can number. We just continue to find out about it. I would not know you sitting here today were it not for the works of Christ on my behalf. And the greater works is my being able to fellowship with and glorify this Christ and Savior to a greater number or with a greater number than he ever did.

I believe that's what he's speaking of there, that what appeared to be a very little work in the eyes of men in his day, in his time, would be shown to be such a great work, that one day around the throne, there is going to be a number that no man can number, that Christ paid their debt, forgave their sin. Do you know what? They will be sinners just like you and me that have nothing to glory in but the works of Christ. That's to his honor and glory. That's the reason we ask. It's because of that work.

Finally, why do we ask? Well, look in verses 13 and 14. It says there, "And whatsoever ye shall ask," does your Bible say "And that will I do"? Don't jump over those few words there. "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name." That's what's glorifying to God the Father, is asking. To ask in a person's name is to ask based on their character, that I'm accepted in the Beloved and so when I ask in his name, I'm heard.

But it says there, "that the Father may be glorified in the Son." Could we just set aside any request or asking that is not to the glory of the Son? Sometimes that takes away the whole list. You come with a list, I'm a list person, but when you realize and you look at it and you think, "This is just nothing but fodder if it's not to the glory of the Son. So, Lord, I don't know what to ask. Just glorify your Son. Whatever the circumstance. Whatever the event. Whatever the path." Do you think God will honor that? You know he will because he says, "If ye shall ask any thing," again, "in my name, I will do it." It's in his name. It's for his glory. For his honor. Let that be the reason.