

A·S·K

Ask

with faith,
expectation

Seek

the father

Knock

with boldness,
persistence



Bible Study Guide

Ask, Seek, Knock

Welcome to our series based on this invitation from Jesus:
“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.”

Jesus invites us to recognise that God is not distant nor disinterested, but that He is engaged in this world and in our lives. We can approach him in prayer,
Asking with faith and expectation
Seeking the Father’s love and grace, and
Knocking with boldness and persistence.

This booklet accompanies the sermons and can be used by small groups or for individual study.

The booklet provides questions for reflection based on the previous Sunday’s sermon, however our desire is that we would move beyond a theoretical discussion of the sermon content to the practice of earnest, heartfelt prayer. We encourage each person and each group to commit themselves to praying regularly, using the “Table Asks” cards as a guide.

God is engaged in this world and in our lives to transform us into the likeness of Jesus Christ. This is both God’s work and ours. It is God who is at work in our lives through His Holy Spirit. Yet we are called to join in this work by setting our heart and mind on Christ, allowing them to be transformed.

It is our prayer that during 2019, as you ask, seek and knock that you will see God’s transforming work in your life and the lives of those around you. And it is our prayer that during 2019 there will be testimony after testimony shared among us of what God has done.

May it be so to His glory.

week #1 – God Responds to Earnest Prayer

Write down any reflections coming out of Kathy's sermon on the earnest prayer of Mordecai and Esther.

Reflect

Share a time (if any) when you have prayed earnestly, as though your very life depended upon it.

Read Acts 4:23-31 and Acts 12:1-5. What adjectives would you use to describe the prayer that these believers engaged in?

What do you think motivated them to pray like this?

During the times when you engage in prayer, either alone or with others, what similarities and/or differences do you recognise between your prayers and those we read of in Acts 4 and 12?

If you recognised some differences, what might be some reasons for those?

Matthew 7:7-11 will become a familiar passage to you during this year. What strikes you from this passage about the nature of prayer and the motivation behind our prayers?

Act

Look at the Table Asks card from Sunday. For each of the Ask, Seek and Knock descriptions, spend some time thinking about what and who you would commit yourself praying for. Write these down.

Reflect on your motivation behind these prayers. What will it be that motivates you to persevere in praying?

Having people to pray alongside can be both a motivation and encouragement to persevere in prayer. Are there others who would join you at a “table” each week or fortnight to pray?

Spend time now praying for those things you have committed to.

week #2 – What Are You Asking For?

Write down any reflections coming out of Steve's sermon on February 10.

Reflect

The author Phillip Yancey, when reflecting on his experience of prayer meetings, remarks that the content our prayers is dominated by “trivia” and “trouble”. Is this a fair observation? What point is he wanting to make?

Read Matthew 6:5-13. As Jesus teaches his disciples about prayer, what is he instructing them regarding the *content* of prayer?

How does the Lord's Prayer guard us against seeing prayer as a “one-way transaction” between us and a heavenly deity?

Of the recorded prayers of Jesus, there are only two where he prays for himself. Read John 17:1-5 and Matthew 26:36-42. Even in these instances where Jesus prays for himself, what is it that he most desires to be outcome of his prayers?

Read Romans 8:26-27. As we seek to come before God praying the 'kingdom-prayers' in accordance with His will, what encouragement comes from Paul's experience of prayer?

Act

From what you have looked at today, write down 1 kingdom-oriented ask that you will commit to regularly praying for this week.

Write down also 1 ask for yourself that you know is in accordance with God's will for your life.

For those meeting in groups, feel free to share these asks with one another, pray for one another and be prepared to share next week how you went with these commitments.

week #3 – Who Are You Asking For?

Write down any reflections coming out of Travis's sermon on February 17.

Reflect

How did you go last week with your commitment to regularly praying the kingdom-oriented ask and your personal ask?

Share about a time when you were very aware of the importance and impact of people praying for you.

The New Testament is filled with accounts of Jesus and the early church praying earnestly for others and for others to be praying for them. As you read the following passages, note down anything that stands out to you.

Matthew 19:13

John 17:6-20

Ephesians 1:15-23

Ephesians 6:18-20

Colossians 4:2-4

James 5:13-20

What insight do the above passages give us as to the content of our prayers for other people?

When you read those prayers, what sense do you have for what is motivating those prayers? Why is that motivation so important?

Act

Look at the Table Ask card you received a couple of weeks ago. If you haven't done so already, commit to praying for 2-3 specific people regularly, using what you have discussed tonight to shape the content of your prayer for them. If you are comfortable doing so, share with your group who you are committing to pray for.

If you are doing this study with others, pray in pairs or triplets for one another, using the passages you have looked at to guide your prayers.

week #4 – What Are You Seeking?

Write down any reflections coming out of Kathy's sermon on February 24.

Reflect

How did you go last week with your commitment to regularly praying for your specific people?

One the pastoral team (who shall remain nameless) has managed to lose 2 wedding bands. Despite retracing his steps and searching desperately for them each time, they could not be found. Have you ever lost something of great value and devoted passion and energy in seeking to recover it?

In Luke's gospel, there are a series of stories and teaching that relate to what we 'seek'. Look at these passages and discuss what Jesus points to as being worthy of being sought:

Luke 10:25-28

Luke 12:13-21

Luke 12:22-31

Read Luke 11:1-13. In the middle of this passage we again come to “ask, seek and knock”. When we read “ask, seek and knock” in the context of the verses before and following it, what do you sense Jesus is asking us to seek?

What do the short parables of the pesky friend (verses 5-6) and the hungry son (verses 11-13) tell us of the nature of God and our response to His character?

How will this influence the way in which you approach prayer?

Act

In your own quiet space. Meditate on Psalm 42. After you have read through the Psalm, go back to verses 1-2 and put yourself in the place of the writer, allowing his cry of the heart to become your own. If you can identify with the writer’s anguish, finish your time by praying and memorising verse 11.

In your group. In pairs or triplets, pray Paul’s prayer in Ephesians 3:14-19 (or your paraphrase of it) into each other’s lives. As you receive these words, open your hands to symbolise the receiving of the gift this passage speaks of.

week #5 – How Are You Seeking?

Write down any reflections coming out of Steve's sermon on March 3.

Reflect

As you look back over your walk as a Christian, what things have you found to be distractions or deterrents to your desire to seek the Father?

There is no place for being a “passive observer” of the Christian faith. The Bible portrays a God who from the very beginning of our existence has sought to walk and work alongside us. God's Spirit is at work in us, transforming us into the likeness of Jesus Christ and producing within us the fruit of the Spirit. Yet it is equally true that we have the choice and responsibility to draw near to God and live in ways that are in accordance with His will. Looking back, what things have you found helpful in drawing near to the Father?

Read Acts 2:42-47. Early believers quickly developed a rhythm of life that strengthened both their faith and their numbers. What practices did they include in this rhythm and how would each of these practices have strengthened them?

In Romans 12:1-2 and Philippians 4:4-9, Paul urges us to live in such a way that reflects God's will. What specific habits does he encourage believers to build into their lives?

Read 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12. How does Paul in this passage bring together the work of God in our lives and our own commitment to live in accordance with His will?

Act

Which of the many spiritual practices that we read about in scripture do you believe would be helpful in your seeking of a closer walk with the Father? If you are part of a group, share your answer.

Pray for yourself or in pairs/triplets using the 2 Thessalonians passage as a guide.

week #6 – Where Are You Knocking?

Write down any reflections coming out of Travis's sermon on March 10.

Reflect

Who are the people in your life, or the places where you live, work, study or play that feel like a “closed door” when it comes to the Christian faith?

Read Matthew 7:7-11. What sense do you get from the passage as to what Jesus is referring to when he speaks about “knocking”?

Read Matthew 15:21-28. What is the significance of this interaction between Jesus and the Canaanite woman in our discussion of knocking? What were the barriers (real or perceived) that the woman experienced in bringing her petition to Jesus? What did Jesus commend her for?

What does Jesus' parable in Luke 18:1-8 reinforce about persistent prayer?

In his missionary travels, Paul uses the metaphor of a door being opened in Philippians 4:2-6, 1 Corinthians 16:5-9 and 2 Corinthians 2:12. How is this an effective picture for us as we pray?

Act

Pray for those people and places that you shared about at the beginning of this study, that would become open to a move of God.

For this week, commit to pray regularly for those people or places.

week #7 – Jesus Transforms Lives

Write down any reflections coming out of Kathy's sermon on March 17.

Reflect

Share about 1 aspect of your life that has been radically changed since becoming a Christian, i.e. what is your "before" and "after" story?

Choose 2 of the following list of Biblical characters and discuss their before and after story. What was it in their character and actions that was transformed by their encounter with Jesus? What brought about their transformation?

- Zaccheus
- Peter
- The woman at the well
- Paul
- The thief on the cross

Read 2 Corinthians 4:7-18. Paul uses the image of treasure in jars of clay. Why is this such an appropriate description of us?

What point is made by his contrast of death and life?

What encouragement is Paul wanting believers to take from his description of the Christian life?

According to 2 Corinthians 3:17-18, what work is the Spirit up to in our lives?

Act

As we come to the end of this series, we finish with another of Paul's prayers. His prayer in Philippians 1:3-11 is filled with hope and promise. Meditate on the promises and assurances that are in this prayer.

In pairs or triplets, pray that God by His Spirit would continue His work of transforming us into the likeness of Jesus Christ for the praise and glory of His name.