

**Jesus' Principles for Changing the World - #3 God Delights in Helping
From the Series, "The King and I – Matthew Tells Us About the King of the Universe"
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Introduction

Imagine one day that you go out for a drive. You're alone. You need to drive a long way. As you drive, you notice that the distance between you and other cars is getting longer and longer. You notice that the distance between you and places to stop is getting longer and longer. Before you know it, you're in a wide-open area, alone on the road. To some, that's a good feeling. Sometimes it's good to be alone.



Until something goes wrong. And this day, it does. Your car starts acting odd. You start hearing noises coming from the engine. Then, the engine stops. So, you aim toward the shoulder of the road and glide to a full stop. You get out. You lift the hood, and you come to a very troubling realization - You have no idea what went wrong, or how to fix the problem. And you forgot your cell phone.



You can only stand by the car and wait for help. Then, you see something off in the distance. It's a jogger. When the man reaches you, he asks if you're OK. You say, "At the moment, yes. But I have no idea what to do. Do you know how to fix a car?" The man says, "sorry, no." You ask, "Well, do you have your cell phone with you?" The man replies, "No – I don't bring it when I'm running." The man apologizes for not being

able to help and runs on.

Then you see something else. You see a kid on a bicycle. He asks if you're OK. You say "yes". It's obvious that the kid is too young to know anything about cars. He doesn't have a cell phone. His bicycle is too small for you to hitch a ride. He bicycles on.

Finally, you see the thing you're looking for. You see something you could only have imagined. You're in the middle nowhere and lo and behold, you see a tow truck. Surely, that truck has someone in it who will know how to help. The truck likely has tools and other equipment. If they can't fix your problem, they can tow your car to a garage. Imagine that! What a stroke of luck!

As the truck gets close, you smile and start to waive. Then you notice, it's moving kind of fast. Is the driver going to be able to stop at that speed? You waive faster. You waive with both arms. You jump up and down. Then, you watch in horror as the tow truck just drives by.

You're all alone, again.

What do you need right now? You need someone who knows how to fix a broken-down car - You need someone with know-how. The jogger and the kid on the bike didn't have this. You need someone who has resources - Tools that will help them implement what they know how to do. Neither the jogger nor the kid on the bike had any resources. And finally, you need someone who is willing to help. They need to have some reason to apply their know-how and resources. The jogger and the kid on the bike were willing, but they couldn't help. The driver of the tow truck had everything you needed, but for some reason you could only guess, they were not willing.

Is that only true for when a car breaks down? I think it's true for all of life. Wouldn't it be nice if any time we run into a problem, there was someone who had all these qualities? Someone who could help. As it turns out, there IS someone to help us when we have problems. Someone who has all these qualities and more. Let's read about it.

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; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. 9 "Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 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! 12 So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets. (Matthew 7:7-12)

So, as we said, there is someone who can help us when we run into problems. Let's break this apart.

I. God is Able to Help

The first thing we're going to see is that God is able to help.

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; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. (Matthew 7:7-8 Emphasis mine)

Ask and it (what)? It WILL be given to you. Not might be given to you. Not probably. It WILL be given to you. Seek and you (what)? You WILL find. Knock and the door (what)? The door WILL be opened to you.

Why would we do any of these things?

- Ask means you don't have something you need.
- Seek means you don't know where it is.
- Knock means that once you know where it is, something is in the way.
 - (You're facing an obstacle)

This pretty much describes any time in life when we lack something. Jesus says if you need something – just ask. He will see that it is given to you. If you don't know where to find something, seek. He can guide you. If there's something in the way, an obstacle, he can take it out of the way. It's like a door. You don't have to be stopped by a locked door – Just knock.

This is very straightforward. We don't have to spend a lot of time explaining it. But we do have to ask a question: This is clearly beyond what any person can do - Why can God make such a promise to us? Answer: Because he is God.

“Ah, Sovereign Lord, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you. (Jeremiah 32:17)”

The God who created the heavens and the earth has the power to take anything from his creation and give it to you. He knows where everything is, so he can guide you. He knows how everything works, so there is no obstacle too mysterious for him to remove. That's why God can make such a promise to us - Because he is God.

Now, at this point, we confront a fact. Sometimes we ask for things, and it doesn't look like we get it. Why is that? As we've said in other articles, if this were the only set of statements in the Bible, we would be left with a problem - An apparent contradiction. As it turns out, these are not the only set of statements in the Bible.

Here's one possible explanation.

1 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? 2 You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. 3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. (James 4:1-3)

To put it simply: Sometimes we want things that God thinks aren't good for us. Our desires sometimes come from our bad side - Our sinful nature. Sometimes we want things that are good for us, but we don't think to ask. Sometimes we ask, but as James says here, we ask with the wrong motives - We want it for selfish reasons.

I've said in the past, and I'll say it again. When you ask something from God, you will get one of three answers: 1) Yes. If God thinks you need something, you'll get it. I've heard wonderful and miraculous stories of God's provision. 2) Wait. You have asked for something good, but it's not the best time. Here we have to add a quick note about the language. The verbs that Matthew uses here – ask, seek, and knock, or ongoing verbs. They're not just one-time events. So, this could be translated as "Keep on asking. Keep on seeking. And keep on knocking." For reasons that we do not know, God sometimes has us ask, seek, and knock more than once. Finally, 3) No – Because God has something better.

That's it. Those are all the possibilities.

This is illustrated really well in a story I once heard. A man graduated from seminary and was called into the Chaplaincy. He was assigned to his first post – a military base. He spent some time learning what he had to do. After he learned everything, he discovered that he had some extra time. So, he decided to start a Bible study.

He went to his commanding officer and shared his desire. The commander asked, "What do you need?" The chaplain replied, "I need a room somewhere on the base." The commanding officer said, "Over there is a pile of requisition forms. With those forms, you can request what you need. Fill one out."

The chaplain filled out the form and gave it to the proper person. A few days later, he got a note telling him that his request was approved. That was a great start.

He thought it would be a good idea to check out the room that had been assigned. When he did, he saw that there were no chairs in the room. So, he went back to his commander and told him he needed chairs. The commander just pointed to the forms. The chaplain filled out another form and voila - A few days later chairs were brought to the room.

The army of the United States has a yearly budget measured in billions of dollars. If anyone in the military thinks they need something, they ask for it. If the army thinks they need it, they get it.

Friends, the Lord God is the Creator of the universe. He controls the whole thing. If you ask him for something, and he thinks you need it, you'll get it. So, ask!

Let's ask a question here: Let's say you need something. When you need something, do you ask God for it? If not, why not?

Here's another question - A tough one. What does it say about your view of God if you have a need, and you don't ask him to help you? Remember our opening story. A man is alone with his non-functioning car. Two individuals come by – a jogger and a kid on a bike. They don't know how to help. They don't have the resources to help. If you have a need, and you don't ask God for it, you're saying that to you, God is like those people. You're saying that you think God doesn't know what he's doing. You're saying that even if he did know, he's too small to help.

Let's take our Lord Jesus at his word:

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. (v 7-8)

At this point, let me explain something. As we said, this is not the only statement in the Bible. I don't have time to go into the particulars, but when Jesus says "everyone", he's speaking to believers. He's saying that this applies to everyone who believes in him and follows him.

Are you a follower of Christ? Have you been saved from your sins? If not, then the "ask" means, "Ask God to forgive your sins." He will happily do it. "Seek" means "Seek after God." "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. (Hebrews 11:6)" "Knock" means, "knock on the gates of Heaven." If you're sincerely looking for God, the gates will open wide.

Contact us. We'll be happy how help you ask, seek, and knock - And to know with certainty that God answers. There will be some helpful links at the end of this article.

Now, there's another thing to consider. In our story, there was one more player. There was the tow truck. The driver of the truck had the know-how, and he had the resources. But for some reason, he was unwilling to help. Is God willing to help us?

II. God is Willing to help us.

We're going to find that yes, God is willing. Let's read on.

Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 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! (Matthew 7:9-11)

Is God willing to help you? Is he willing to give you what you ask for? Of course! Why? Because he's our loving Heavenly Father. Sadly, in the world of humans, sometimes fathers don't act very well. Well, this is not an earthly father. This is our heavenly Father. He is perfect. He loves you as a perfect father loves his own child.

The Lord your God is with you,
the Mighty Warrior who saves.
He will take great delight in you;
in his love he will no longer rebuke you,
but will rejoice over you with singing."
(Zephaniah 3:17)

If you've been following my ministry for a long time, you know what we've been saying about God's love. The English word "love" doesn't cut it. In fact, God **cherishes** you. If you have asked God to forgive your sins through Jesus Christ, he will no longer rebuke you. He will rejoice over you with singing. We're told here that God takes delight in his children.

Friends, God is not only willing to help you, he delights in helping you. Why? Because he delights in you.

It would be enough to just say it, but Jesus helps his followers even more by giving some images. A little boy comes home one day. He's hungry. He asks his dad for a loaf so he can eat. The dad hands him a stone. What kind of a dad would do that? He might as well slap the poor kid in the face.

So, try again. The little boy is hungry. He asks for a fish. Dad hands him a snake. This is even worse. Instead of nutrition, the father just handed his son something dangerous that could bite him and even kill him.

If you're the little boy, what are you thinking of your father? You're thinking your father is a big joker. Is God a big joker? Does he laugh at us when we feel pain? Does he answer our needs and our deepest longings with tricks?

Here's another tough question: Could it be that this is what we're thinking when we need something, and we don't ask God for help? That's the temptation that the Devil would have us believe.

Sometimes we pray and the answer is yes. That's great. Sometimes we pray, and the answer is "wait", or "no". That's harder. Sometimes it's tempting to think all kinds of bad thoughts at times like that. Sometimes, it's easy to give up. And that's a shame, because our Father in heaven is a perfect, loving father who delights in his children. He has the knowledge. He has the resources. He is not only willing to help, but he delights in helping us. If we don't get what we think we need when we think we need it, it's because he has our best interest in mind - He has something better.

That's why the second principle for changing the world is to remember: God delights in helping you.

This is all very important. But, there are two more things we need to look at.

Jesus says, "If you then, though you are evil... (Matthew 7:11)" Gee, that sounds unkind, doesn't it? Why does Jesus use unkind words to describe people? In fact, he's talking to his followers here. If people can be evil, isn't it all the other people?

No, Jesus calls his followers evil. Why does he do that? Because every human being on the planet has a problem of evil. It relates to the problem of our sin. Many of you know the verse:

...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God... (Romans 3:23)

"All have sinned." That means you – that means me. You see, sin goes deeper than mere disobedience to God. Something happened when the first humans, Adam and Eve ate from the tree of the knowledge of Good and evil. They took evil into their souls. It was that evil made them disobey. Disobedience is sin. Once we understand that, we can talk about the penalties and effects of sin: Separation from God, death, and judgement.

It's vital that we all understand this: We are not slightly imperfect beings who make occasional mistakes. We are deeply flawed beings. *We are evil*. If you don't understand this, then you will think of God as highly unfair.

Ask yourself: What kind of God would send good people with a few little problems to hell? But you see, God doesn't send good people with a few problems to hell. God sends evil people to hell. I apply this to myself. I believe that, if I had not met Jesus Christ, when I died I would have been sent straight to hell - And I would have deserved it. Until you understand this, you will never understand God's grace and goodness and love.

God loves you so much that he sent his Son Jesus to save you from your evil. And this is grace: Even though you are evil, he gives you good gifts. He comes to your aid, he delights in helping you, even though you are evil.

If you understand that, Jesus can build on that picture.

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!
(v 11)

Why does God give good gifts to his children? Because he is good! God is so good that he delights in helping you!

That's a lot to think about. But, lets look at just one more thing.

So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets. (Matthew 7:12)

This is often referred to "The Golden Rule." I've seen it on plaques in homes. I've seen it in magazines. These words are very well known.

It's interesting, Jesus isn't the only person to say something like this. Something similar was said as far back as 500 B.C. by Confucius. Only he said it a little differently: "What you do not wish for yourself, do not do to others." When I teach comparative religion, this causes my Christian students some confusion. They're surprised that Jesus did not originate the concept. It also my atheist students some encouragement. They say, "So, it turns out Jesus wasn't the first one to say this!"

But, not so fast! Notice that there is a subtle difference between the two statements. Confucius states this in a negative way: "What you do not wish for yourself, do not do to others." So, this is a kind of defensive statement. It's based on your desire to live a happy life. Why should you do this? It keeps you safe, supposedly. If you do this, you'll live a happy life. All over the ancient world, others made similar statements. Philosophers, religious leaders, and even kings. They all do the same thing: They state this in the negative.

Jesus is different. He states this in a positive manner. "Do to others what you would have them do to you." So, Jesus raises the requirement. Rather than simply defend yourself, Jesus says, actively treat others the way you wish to be treated.

Why should you do this? Because it will make you happy? No – Do it because this sums up the Law and the Prophets. Do this because it fulfills the will of God for the human race. What is the will of God for the human race? That we know our God - That we become like him. God is kind and generous. When we choose to be kind and generous, we become like him. When we become like him, we can know him, and experience him.

Notice that this starts with the word "So". This indicates that the words that follow are not a separate statement to be given its own message. It's related to what Jesus just said.

Why is it possible to be like God - To be kind and generous to others? Because he is kind and generous with us. Because he happily gives us everything we need, we are free to serve him.

This statement, the so-called “Golden rule”, is often given its own sermon. When that happens, it becomes a list of “do’s” and “don’t’s”. It becomes a list of all the things the speaker thinks you should be doing. But, we don’t need a list. All you have to do is look around you and ask, “How would I like to be treated.” If you do that, you don’t me to give you a list.

Let’s pull this all together.

Conclusion

Today we’ve learned the third principle for changing the world: Know that God delights in helping you.

When you go out into the world to do what you believe God wants you to do, he is able to help. He has the know-how and he has all the resources. And he is willing to help. In fact, he is more than willing to apply these things to your situation – he delights in helping you.

Because he is God, he is able. So if you need something, ask. If you don’t know where to look, seek. If you run into an obstacle, knock.

Because God is good, he can treat you like a perfect, loving father treats his children.

And so, go into the world. You don’t need a long list to get started – just do to others what you would have them to do you.

With all of this, go, and let God use you to change the world.

Thanks for reading! Here are some helpful links:

Trinity Church
www.TrinityTeaneck.org

Phil’s Site
PhilBrainerd.com

To learn how to begin a new life with Jesus Christ, visit Billy Graham’s site:

PeaceWithGod.net