

Marinating in God's Word:

Matthew 7:7-11

Jesus is the master teacher in all matters, including prayer. So, during the fall we're returning again and again to learn from him about prayer, both through what he taught and how he prayed himself. Today's teaching is from his great Sermon on the Mount.

For further reflection on your own or in a small group, consider these questions:

What was a time when God's answer to your prayer was better than you ever imagined? What was a time when it seemed that there was no answer? How do you sort out these varying experiences?

What is your heart's default posture toward God as you pray? That is, do you pray assuming that God is eager to bless you with good answers (bread, not a stone), or do you see him as requiring intense and persistent petition in order finally to give what is good? What led you to this posture? How would Jesus' words here change your assumptions?

Recall a season when you persisted in prayer for a long while. What happened – in you? Through you? What wisdom do you bring from that experience into new occasions for persistent prayer?

Some teach that Jesus' "ask, seek, knock" are successive stages or intensities of prayer. That is probably over-interpreting Jesus' images here. But the three-fold piling up of images, then repeated, brings its own message. And each of the images brings its own flavor. What do you learn about prayer from this repetition of prayer images?