

Looking and Finding

“Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you,” Matthew 7:7. Jesus’ words in this verse are inspiring, and filled with hope and encouragement. But are these promises open-ended and unqualified? Or, are they predicated upon *for what* you’re asking, *what* you’re seeking, and upon which *doors* you’re knocking?

While Donna was homebound following surgery, we “binge-watched” several seasons of a program called “Forensic Files” on Netflix. The shows were engaging, but unfortunately highlighted how cruel, sadistic, and just plain old devoid-of-basic-human-emotion people can treat one another. But the series also demonstrated how determined, courageous, smart, and doggedly determined criminal investigators could be in sniffing out and catching these heinous perpetrators. However, in watching one episode in particular, a statement made really struck me....

A destructive and deadly fire had been scrutinized and ruled “arson” by investigators. Later, prompted by the subsequently “caught” and convicted man’s pleas of innocence, another expert re-examined the scene and determined that the fire was, in fact, an accident. He found several previously unnoticed factors that, in combination, produced the deadly blaze. When asked to explain why or how the previous investigators had missed these details, he gave what I thought was a remarkably profound answer. Paraphrased from the best of my memory, he said, “Investigators *find* what they’re trained to find. *Arson* investigators usually find arson.” He went on to further explain what went wrong, “What was needed was a *fire* investigator to find the cause of the fire rather than an *arson* investigator who was trained to find arson.” He supported his assessment further, “*Insurance fraud* investigators also usually find insurance fraud because it’s what they’re trained to find.” Makes sense. Coon dogs find coons, squirrel dogs find squirrels, and drug dogs find drugs because that’s what each is trained to find.

Now, what are you “trained to find”- either by the influence of others or your own personal desires and intentions, in the spiritual realm? Hypocrites in the church? Yep, you’ll “find” them. Contradictions in the sacred text? You’ll “find” those too, if that’s the thing for which you’re looking. Reasons to dismiss God, the Bible, and religion in general or specific? If that’s what you’ve been trained (consciously or subconsciously) to spot, you’ll “find” those also. But if on the other hand, you’re *asking, seeking, and knocking* in order to find truth instead of lies, hope instead of despair, goodness instead of evil, kindness instead of cruelty, and eternal salvation instead of earthly ease, they’re EXACTLY what you’ll find! Does this mean that “It all depends on how you look at it?” Sort of. Jesus said of some people that they would “...*keep on seeing, but will not perceive; for the heart of this people has become dull, and with their ears they scarcely hear, and they have closed their eyes; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart and turn again, and I should heal them,*” Matthew 13:15. So, heart matters; intentions matter; and, purpose matters.

Please consider Cornelius in these regards. The apostle Peter said to him, “*Cornelius, your prayer has been heard...*” Acts 10:31. Think about it: for what had Cornelius been praying? Though v.2 describes him as *devout, God-fearing, generous, and prayerful*, he was evidently praying for guidance in truth toward salvation, because that is exactly what got, Acts 10:34-48. He *found* and *received* that for which he *looked* and *prayed*!

So, for what are YOU *asking, seeking, and knocking*? To have your “*senses trained to discern good and evil,*” Hebrews 5:14; or for the opportunity to “*call evil good, and good evil;*” to “*substitute darkness for light and light for darkness,*” Isaiah 5:20? For *wisdom* to understand your *trials, tests, and temptations* for what they are and for *strength* to

overcome them, or for God to remove them so that you can have the life of comfort and ease you want, cf. James 1:2-8? For *physical* health, or *spiritual* perfection, cf. Colossians 1:28? For *earthly wealth*, or *heavenly rewards*, cf. Matthew 6:19-34? To *please yourself*, or to *please God*, cf. Philippians 2:21? Ect. Ect. Ect.

Jesus did NOT promise to provide us with anything and everything our hearts may desire in Matthew 7:7 UNLESS and UNTIL our hearts desire spiritual *truth*, *salvation*, and *security* over earthly lies, depravity, and comfort. Indeed, “*Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of our Jesus our Lord; seeing that divine power has granted to you everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence,*” 2Peter 1:2-3. You will likely *find* that for which you *look*, but it is my prayer that you *look* for the “right” things- the *spiritual* and *eternal* things of God! (Philip C. Strong; Southport Church of Christ; 7202 Madison Ave, Indianapolis, IN 46227; online at southportcofc.org; email to mrpcstrong@hotmail.com)