



**WHAT DOES JESUS SAY  
ABOUT CLOSED DOORS?**

**EXPLORING THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT**

Series: What Does Jesus Say About \_\_\_\_\_?

Title: What Does Jesus Say About Closed Doors?

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## Two Prayer Items this Morning

**Pastor Verner is in Spain** this morning. He is speaking in the churches in Spain during a pivotal time. This past weekend has had a series of services, and in the upcoming week he will be meeting with leaders and pastors in churches in the area. Be praying for Verner in the coming week as there are big decisions being made where his influence might be significant.

**Our Church is also in a Pivotal Time**, on September 24, Pastor Verner preached a message that looked at our Story, as we celebrated our the end of our 10 year vision. He also shared how we are looking as a church to 'The Road Ahead.' With things now in full swing for the fall we are turning our attention in the coming weeks to the prayer and conversations that are starting.

Be praying as we reach out to our volunteers and leaders, and to our membership very soon. Also, if you are a part of our church we invite you to attend one of the discussion groups as part of our listening phase. We are having two meetings, on Sunday, October 29 and Monday, October 30 at 6:30 PM. You can sign-up online for these or contact the office. We are capping these at 25 people so that there will be room for everyone to share and discuss, and will add more as needed.

## Our Series: What Does Jesus Say About \_\_\_\_\_?

The past couple weeks we've begun a series, based on Jesus' sermon on the mount.

Week 1: What Does Jesus Say about Posers? We read Jesus warning of not doing our acts of righteousness before others. And how, "Actions taken in secret break the bondage of approval addiction."

Last Week, What Does Jesus Say about Rogations? Pastor Verner looked at how Jesus introduces us to a deeply personal, uninhibited relationship to God as 'Abba' / Father.

## Today We Look at the most Puzzling Verse in the Sermon on the Mount

### **Matthew 7:6 (NIV)**

“Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.

What do we do with this? A very good question, as even New Testament scholars who study the scriptures and teach them in seminaries for a living struggle to say exactly what is going on here.

Some debate if this was part of what comes before it, or is it connected to what comes after, or is it just a floating saying, perhaps stuck in the middle as Matthew was writing his gospel and he knew Jesus said it and needed a place to put it?

What we do know:

- ‘Dogs and Pigs’ were derogatory ways to refer to Gentiles (those who were not Jewish people) in Jesus’ day. It seems like the passage is making a reference in their direction.

After that, it is a bit of a mystery.

- Is Jesus saying you need to judge who you share the gospel with?
  - Problematic in that the passage before is about not judging.
  - But there is wisdom in not trying to force someone to be receptive who is not.
  - A number of scholars go with this view.
- Is Jesus saying not to share the gospel with Gentiles
  - Jesus eventually sent his disciples to all nations, so this seems unlikely.
- Is what Jesus said in this verse connected to the next verse?
  - Most scholars don’t think so...

### **THE LIBERTY IN SAYING: I’M NOT SURE**

**WHEN WE READ THE BIBLE, THERE ARE TIMES WE MIGHT NOT FULLY UNDERSTAND SOMETHING. THERE IS A LIBERTY IN BEING ABLE TO SAY, I’M NOT SURE. IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT TO NOT TRY TO BASE OUR LIVES AND DOCTRINE ON PASSAGES THAT WE’RE NOT SURE WHAT TO DO WITH. ON THE OTHER HAND, WE DON’T THROW THEM OUT, WE SHOULD WRESTLE WITH THEM TO SEE IF THERE ARE TREASURES THEY MIGHT HOLD FOR US.**

## One Possibility: It Connects to What Comes Next

If you have your Bible, or access to it on your device, I really would encourage you to open up to the passage today.

Now I do want to say this, with a passage like this, where there is debate about how it fits, I'm not going to say that this is the definitive interpretation of these verses, there are scholars more educated than I who seem them going with what is above, or what is below. But using them as a clue to what comes next, I believe could help ask helpful questions on verses that follow, and these questions I believe you could come to without.

For those of you who are interested, my thoughts on the passage are shaped by a book called *Kingdom Ethics* by Glen Stassen and David Gushee.

- There is The Pattern in Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount
  - Jesus introduces an 'Old Way' / 'Traditional Righteousness' and its destructive pattern
  - Jesus then presents a Transforming Initiative with New Result, a way to break out of the old way
- Examples
  - Keep your Oaths (Matt 5:33-36)
    - Old Way / Problem: Keep oaths, however, swearing on anything involves making promises on stuff that is God's not yours. It is a false claim.
    - Initiative: Let your yes be yes, no be no, live with integrity
  - Prayer, Fasting
    - When you pray don't do it for show, when you fast, don't look sombre
    - Do it in secret, and break the bondage of approval addiction Dress up (and your Father will reward you)

## All of Today's Passage

With that in mind, let's look at more of today's passage.

### **Matthew 7:6–8 (NIV)**

"Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.

“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.

The Initiative in this is to direct your requests, prayers toward God, our Heavenly Father. (verses 7-8)

So what is the problem? Could it be that Jesus saying in verse 6 could refer to those around him not looking to the Roman occupiers to provide for their needs.

Let's put some context on this: in an occupied country, the temptation to collaborate, to bend your ethics to get the favour of the occupier as a means of finding security is a real temptation.

Jesus' teaching in the sermon speaks to Jews in that context. Earlier in the sermon, Jesus preaches about loving your enemies (which flies in the face of rebellious movements like the Zealots that wanted to start a military revolution against Rome). Could it be that here, Jesus is warning against the other temptation that faced the Jews in that day, to compromise convictions and see the powers of their day as their true provider?

For some Jews, this was a temptation that they caved to. Isn't this why tax collectors were seen as traitors in the population (but they also happened to be wealthy, and when they met Jesus often repented). This is what happened to the temple leadership (Saducees) in Jesus' day, they became the political ruling class among the Jews and had connection to the Roman government. It came to a point that Romans would have a hand in appointing the chief priests.

In the end, verse 6 came true to these folks. The powers they put their trust in trampled them and turned them to pieces.

### **What does this have to do with us?**

Even if this isn't the precise interpretation of verse 6, I think it gets us to think about Ask, Seek, Knock in ways that are helpful.

**Because We All Ask, Seek and Knock.**

**WE ALL 'ASK, SEEK AND KNOCK', THE QUESTION IS, "WHERE DO WE TURN WHEN WE DO?"**

***Pickle Jar Illustration: When you have a jar of pickles you can't open, what do you do? Often we look for someone to help us get the lid off.***

When we have needs, or problems or 'closed doors' in relationships or finance, or emotion, we all have places we turn to try to fix them.

- Job / Employer
- The lotto / Gambling
- Substances (alcohol, drugs, chocolate, Lays Chips)
- Therapy
- Family (Father / Mother)
- Children
- Friends
- Sometimes it is to turn inward to ourselves

All of us continue turn somewhere when we hit the wall.

The verbs, ask, seek and knock are not one time words, these are words that talk about what we do, and we keep doing. When we hit the wall, or have a need, we have practices we do over and over again.

When we hit a closed door in a relationship, in the bank, in our health. Where do you go.

**IPHONE QUESTION: OFFER SOMEONE MY PHONE AND ASK, WHO DO YOU CALL (OR IF YOUNGER, MESSAGE). HERE IS THE THING, WE ALL HAVE SOMEWHERE WE GO. LIKE THE FAVOURITES LIST ON OUR IPHONE, WE HAVE PLACES WE TURN TO QUICKLY.**

Here's the thing, where you turn matters.

**Job** – have you known someone who thought the solution was to work harder, earn more, and in the pursuit of those things, their work began to devour their life.

**Substances** – do we need to explain this. How many lives have been destroyed by people who sought relief in drugs or alcohol. When they hit the door they went to the pills, the bottle. And it turned on them.

**Family / Friends** –

Ourselves – bottling it up inwardly, until eventually the anxiety and stresses start creating cracks. Coming out in physical or psychological trauma and sickness.

## Where Can We Turn in the End?

### **Matthew 7:9–11 (NIV)**

“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!

The point of Ask, Seek, Knock is not that we can get whatever we want, it is to direct us to place our trust where it belongs, in our heavenly Father.

## **WHEN DOORS SEEM CLOSED, JESUS DIRECTS US TO KEEP PLACING OUR TRUST IN OUR HEAVENLY FATHER.**

### **What if we placed our trust in God, when we hit the closed doors in life?**

We will discover he is trustworthy. We will discover he is good, even when some doors stay open. As we keep coming back to him, rather than going back to the easy answers we chase in other ways, we will find that as we ask, God will give good gifts to us. As we knock, good doors will open, as we seek, we will find, not just answers, but the one who loves us perfectly, more than the imperfect, yet good, love we find in others here on earth.

### **Circle Group Questions**

- **When you hit a wall in your life, something hard, what is your normal reaction? Who do you call? Do you talk with your heavenly Father about it?**
- **What kind of concerns or needs weigh heavily on your mind and heart?**