

Selective Hearing

Our vacation condo overlooked the Gulf of Mexico at Alabama's Orange Beach. I knew we were near the border so on a morning walk my goal was to "walk to Florida." That sounded impressive but was just a way of setting a goal for a longer fitness walk. When I asked Kathy how close we were she indicated the state line was just beyond a canal a little further up the beach. Eyeing a jetty not too far away I set out to accomplish the goal of walking to Florida. When I reached the jetty I was informed by a local resident that the Florida border was still several miles up the beach. He pointed out a couple of hotels located on the Florida side. Unfortunately, it was too far to walk in the time I had. As it turns out I had only half-listened to Kathy's description. I was too eager to reach my goal and I only heard what I wanted to hear. It is often referred to as selective hearing.



One of the commonly paraphrased verses in the Bible is "ask and it will be given to you." For many people those words are all they want to hear, and then they tune out the rest. When we read a scripture verse we often ignore the context of the full passage because, in an abbreviated form, it is what we want to hear. This particular verse seems to hint for us to seek our wants instead of our genuine needs. Being a Christian has its benefits if we can spout off our wants and expect God to provide. It is like having our own personal genie. Or is it?

There was a big difference between my hope for how close the Florida line was and reality. Perhaps if I had listened to the rest of Kathy's explanation I would have better understood the right answer. In the same way, reading the rest of the "ask and you will receive" passage provides the fuller answer.

This verse is important enough that it is included in all four Gospels. In John 14:13 Jesus starts to explain the meaning of the passage. *"And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified."* It is not about me, but glorifying God. Now let's look at the fuller context of His statement. The preceding verse speaks to our role when it says, *"Truly, truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I am doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father (John 14:12)."* We must be willing to do God's work and believe in Him.

And read the next verse which says, *"You did not choose me, but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will remain – that that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He will give you."* It confirms that God has chosen us to serve, and we are not to ask for random wish-list items.

God empowers us to be successful in accomplishing His tasks – to bear fruit in a lasting way. In fact, we can be confident of God's enabling support. *"And this is the confidence that we have before Him. If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us (1 John 5:14)."* When we are seeking to do God's will, He will bless our efforts. The results will bring God the glory.

When we take one small verse out of context we miss the fuller explanation of God's Word. We can call on God for support as we seek to do His will. It is not intended to be a self-serving passage, but one that serves Him. That, my friend, is worth the walk.

Questions: What requests have you made to God? Were they for wants or needs?

Prayer: Most gracious Heavenly Father. Sometimes it is difficult sorting out the difference between wants and needs. May we seek to do your Will in all that we ask. Amen.