

Luke 11:5-13

Luke 11:5-13 And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; (6) For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? (7) And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. (8) I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity (persistence) he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. (9) And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. (10) For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. (11) If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? (12) Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? (13) If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

Here we have Jesus speaking a parable on prayer. Back in vs 1-4 Luke preserves the scene that leads up to this parable of Jesus on prayer. One of the disciples came to him and said, *Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples*. Prayer was not unfamiliar to them. But when they saw and heard John pray it seems as though they had never heard a prayer before. Whatever it was that John had in his prayers they wanted in theirs. They wanted to learn something about prayer. Jesus gave them a model prayer and then he followed with this parable.

Luke is the only gospel that gives this parable. In fact, Luke tells of several occasions where Jesus prayed that the other gospel accounts do not mention. There is the baptism of Jesus. Luke is the only writer who mentions that Jesus was praying when the Holy Spirit descended upon him (Luke 3:21). It is Luke who tells us that Jesus continued all night in prayer before choosing the twelve apostles (Luke 6:12-13). Again it is Luke who describes the Great Confession at

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Caesarea Philippi as being accompanied with prayer (Luke 9:18). And Luke is the only writer to point out that Jesus was praying at the time of his glorification on the Mount of Transfiguration (Luke 9:29). The image of Jesus was precious to Luke and to the early church. If Jesus needed prayer, and if the early church needed to pray, we cannot need less today.

The Friend at Midnight (Luke 11:5-13) Jesus continues his answer to the question of the disciples about prayer. Now he is going to show the certainty that prayers are answered. He tells a story that the people in the first century would understand. The Parable of the Friend at Midnight is a touching story about a traveler that stopped at a house late at night. He was welcomed, but since his arrival was unexpected there was no food to put before him. It was a most embarrassing circumstance, for the hour was late and nothing could be obtained from the market place. It was not uncommon for people of that time to travel at night to avoid the heat of the day; so he shows up unexpectedly at midnight. It was the custom of that day to cook your own bread and usually they cooked just enough for a single days use; so the host had no bread to feed the stranger. It was also the custom to feed a strange should he come regardless of the hour. The host had no food so he hurried down the street to the house of a friend. He banged on the locked door and cried out to his friend inside, explaining his predicament and asks for three loaves of bread. But his friend did not want to be bothered.

In Palestine during that time, people opened their door in the morning and it was open all day; but at night when they closed it, it stayed closed. A closed door was like a “*do not disturb*” sign. It is easy to see why he did not want to get up. The majority of the people in that region were poor and most of the houses were one-room cottages. The house was built with beaten clay serving as the floor and animals were commonly kept inside to protect them. Often part of the house had a raised platform above the floor where the family cooked and ate and slept together.

Quite naturally, then, the man did not want to get out of bed at midnight because it would disturb the whole household. But the desperate host continued to bang on the door outside. Soon it became obvious that if the family was to get any rest at all, there was nothing else to do but to get up, let the man in and give him what he wanted. The point of this story is “persistence” pays off.

Lessons On Prayer. This parable teaches us three certain things on prayer. I’m going to let each loaf of bread represent a point in prayer.

LOAF #1. RESPONSIBILITY IN PRAYER. Jesus taught that prayer is useful in time of need. The man ran down the street and woke up his friend at midnight because he was in need and he did not know where else he could go. Men have a responsibility to pray when they stand in need of something which they cannot supply for themselves. ***1 Thes. 5:17 Pray without ceasing.*** This man’s request was granted, but it would not have been so had he not taken the responsibility to seek help from a known source of help.

LOAF #2. REQUIREMENTS OF PRAYER. In the illustration of the host, Jesus gives some of the basic requirements of effective prayer. **First, A Prayer Must Be Direct And Definite.** The host went directly to his friend and made a personal request. The request of the host was specific. He did not say, “I need some food to help someone.” He said specifically, *"Friend, lend me three loaves."* Our prayers should be just as specific. When we pray there is a danger of dealing with too much generalities. In fact, many prayers are so general they can be made to fit most any occasion. Often our prayers become mere forms of memorized saying that we heard others use. If we were more specific in prayer, we would **NOT** be so apt to rhyme off phrase after phrase which has little meaning to us. Instead of acknowledging that we are a blessed people, let us mention some of our blessings

and thank God for them one by one. We sing the song, "*Count your many Blessings.*" It's been said, "*What if today we received only the things we thank God for yesterday.*" In the same way let us in our private, personal prayers detail OUR sins, absolutely and literally and grievously confessing them to God. We can be frank when we speak to God.

Second, A Prayer Must Be Sincere. In the parable the host was utterly sincere in his petitions. Prayer, by its very nature, must come from the heart. Possibly this was what astounded the disciples about the prayers of Jesus. His prayers were with feeling; they were the expressions of intense desires. The prayer in Gethsemane was so earnest that "*his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down upon the ground*" (Luke 22:44). Jesus did not enter into prayer lightly.

There are good reasons why effective prayer depends on true sincerity. What father would feel obligated to give a gift to his son when he knew that the gift really made no difference whether he received it or not? So God is not impressed when we routinely ask for things that really mean very little to us.

On the other hand, God knows that when we come to Him with a most urgent request and that we will do all that we can to bring about the accomplishment of the prayer, then we are sincere in that request. That is exactly what God wishes for He cannot answer our prayers apart from our willingness to help.

- *We may pray for the sick and the afflicted and the poor, but what is the prayer worth unless we are willing to help those for whom we pray?*
- *We may pray for the salvation of souls over the world, but will God not grant that request as long as our hands are clasped in idleness?*

God will not hear unless it is a prayer of faith, and if it is a prayer of faith, then it demands every effort of cooperation on our part. In our story, the host got up and

went to his friend's house.

Third, Prayer Must Be Persistent. This is the main point of the parable. The host, even though it was late at night, battered and beat on the friend's door until finally he got an answer. Thus Jesus says, *"Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened."* These words emphasize the effectiveness of prayer.

- Ask implies humility and consciousness of need. You recognize a need so you ask - *"keep on asking"*
- Seek includes both asking and acting. Asking God for something and then doing what you can to obtain it - *"keep on seeking"*
- Knock is asking plus seeking plus persevering. One knocks repeatedly until the door is open - *"keep on knocking"* and the response is sure to come. It is not that God needs to be begged, but he appreciates persistent effort on our part.

LOAF # 3. REWARDS OF PRAYER. In this parable we see that earnest prayer is rewarded. The host did not go away from his friend's door empty handed. His efforts were favorably rewarded. God always rewards true prayer, and His reward is abundant. This is clearly brought out in the context of this parable. The passage reads: *"For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?"* The expression **"how much more"** is very important. The point is this: if men will respond when requests are made of them, *how much more* will God give good things to those who ask Him!

This parable teaches that God gives blessing upon blessing to those who make

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sincere request of Him. This is the thought given by the apostle Paul. *Ephesians 3:20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.*

Yet it is quite true that not all prayers are answered as we might expect. In spite of David's pleading, his little child died (2 Samuel 12: 15-24); and notwithstanding Paul's prayer, his "*thorn in the flesh*" was not taken away (2 Corinthians 12:7-9). The fact is that if God is indeed a wise Father, and as long as He is the Supreme Sovereign of the universe, there will be certain things that we ask for that will not be granted.

Past experience tells us this is so. Today we may pray for something which is directly opposite to what we asked for a year ago. We may even find ourselves thanking God because He did not answer some prayer in the past. This happens because we cannot see into the future, we don't always understand the past, and we only know a little piece of the present. God alone knows the whole scheme of things. Therefore, the perfect prayer is the outpouring of a strong, intense desire, but with the humble resignation "*Not my will, but thy will be done.*"

Invitation. This parable deals with a friend going to another friend for help. *John 15:14 Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.*