

# The Parable of the Friend in Need

Luke 11:5-10

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## Context of the Parable

- We are now here at portion of Scripture where our text appears: “Lord, teach us to pray.” This was perhaps the noblest request the disciples of Jesus had ever asked – let it be our prayer.
- Why did they ask?
  - (1) Perhaps it was in response to Jesus’ challenge to vain repetitious prayer (Matt. 6:7) which then follows with the same model prayer presented.
  - (2) They seeing John teach his disciples wanted to learn the ways of prayer from their Master.
  - (3) They saw the prayer life of Jesus, His communion with the Father, the answers He received of God and they longed for this kind of “power with God.”
- I believe it is the (2) and (3) – Seeing John teach his disciples stirred them to be taught of the One whose praying transfigured His countenance. Luke 9:29
- Jesus answers them in a two-fold manner:
  - 1<sup>st</sup> by a direct theological discourse on prayer.
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> by an exhortation to the spirit of prayer. I want to take the second for our text today v5-10
- The Lord’s model prayer has no direct intercession within it. However this is arguable because the Lord’s Prayer does mention “Give **us**” this day our daily bread and also “forgive **us**.” The reference to **us** could imply intercessory prayer.
- Here as an extension to the “Lord’s prayer” we find intercession. Namely, a friend asking a friend for the needs of another friend.
- Here we see the importance of helping the needs of others, by asking One Who can help! This is noble!
- The exhortation comes in the form of a parable that is explained in v9-10.
- It is the parable of *persistent prayer*.

## 1. The Parable – v5-8

- a. V5 – A *friend* visits another *friend* at midnight (awkward hour) and asks him three loaves of bread. He obviously was out of bread for the day. No stores around to buy, he is out of supply.
- b. V6 – The reason for this night visit was most likely because this traveller wanted to escape the heat of the hot sun. However a *midnight visit* is way past dark or a usual “night visit.” The reason for the midnight visit could be because the friend was delayed by *camel/donkey* troubles.
- c. V7 – The friend in the house with the bread says:
  - i. (1) “Stop troubling me...”
  - ii. (2) The door is now shut – *perfect* tense – lit. shut to stay shut, not to open again. It was not easy to open (locks were complicated/noisey), probably a “bar iron lock”
  - iii. (3) my children are with me in bed – poor households would have the entire family sleeping in the same room (on raised platform)
  - iv. (4) I cannot arise and give thee. – More like *I will not arise and give thee*. It obviously was not impossible.
- d. V8 – It was not his “friendship” that caused him to obtain what he asked for, but it was rather his importunity. As one man said: “*Where friendship cannot prevail, importunity wins the day!*”

## 2. The Parables Truths – v8-10

### a. **Important Truths**

- i. God is **unlike** the *reluctant friend*. He is not like a *grouchy neighbour*.
- ii. He is in fact contrasted here and as seen in v13 – “*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 (good gifts) to them that ask him?*” If a *reluctant friend* could meet the need, how much more a loving Father.
- iii. It is called “arguing from the lesser to the greater.”

1. As one man said “*Prayer is based on sonship (our father), not on friendship.*” – v2- “Our father which art in heaven...”
2. God never *sleeps*. Cf. Elijah statements to the prophets of Baal – 1 Kings 18:27.
  - a. Ps. 121:4 – “...*he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.*”
3. He is not *reluctant*. He does not say “*stop bothering me.*” He is *willing* and *ready* to hear our requests. There is not an *inconvenient time* to address God; in fact He looks well upon even the midnight hour of prayer.
  - a. Jer. 33:3 – “*Call unto me and I will answer there, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.*”
- iv. The emphasis is not on the friend’s reluctance but on man’s persistence.
- v. This parable is not here to cause us to question God but rather to question ourselves and our persistence in prayer.
- vi. It is not designed to teach us the character of God, but to teach US HOW TO PRAY. However it is true that sometimes when we pray with “importunity” our flesh tends to see God as this kind of friend.

**b. Central Truth – v9-10**

- i. **Importunity:** Without bashfulness, shameless persistence. The word is used in context of desiring to “get something from another.” Unashamed to ask and to keep on asking. *Audacity – not timidity*. The word is connected to the idea of *impudence* which carries a sense of boldness.
- ii. **V9-10** – Ask, seek, knock – *present tense verbs* – keep on asking, seeking, knocking.

### 3. The Parable's Application

- a. **Where did this importunity come from?** V6 – *I have nothing to set before him...* Here is a cry of *helplessness*. The cry of *desperation* that I really need what I am asking for!
  - i. Luke 18:3 – A widow (poor helpless woman, often mistreated and taken advantage of). “Avenge me of mine adversary.” – I cannot avenge myself, please bring justice to my situation. Look upon my need! It’s a cry of help!
    1. V5 - “*Because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me...*”
  - ii. Hannah’s helplessness/need: *And her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the LORD had shut up her womb. And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD, and wept sore.* 1 Sam. 1:5-11
  - iii. It is hard to persist for things when you are not *in need*. In fact, *persistence* out to come from a *needy heart*. A heart that realizes *I HAVE NOTHING*.
    1. Self-sufficient hearts never earn the ear and favour of God!
- b. **Why Importunity?**
  - i. Importunity not only shows how much we need something but it builds the Christian up in their walk with God.
  - ii. If we received everything the first time we asked for it we would never grow. We by perseverance and importunity are brought to *brokenness*.
  - iii. We are brought to *humility*. We begin to break out of our “hardness” our “dignified composure.”
  - iv. It builds stronger Christian character. It helps our faith to grow – the longer we wait to see God answer our prayer, the more outstretched the patience of our faith becomes.

### c. Scriptures that teach Importunity

- i. *I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence, And give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.* Isaiah 62:6-7. The prophets were the watchmen. Those that “make mention of the LORD (those that remember Him)” keep on praying, give Him no rest till he fulfil His will toward Israel!
- ii. *And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that **men ought always to pray, and not to faint**;* Luke 18:1
- iii. We can have our “Our Fathers” and follow the systematic theological formula of prayer but where is the persistence? Where is the spirit of need and the persistence of faith.

### a. Examples of Importunity:

- i. Genesis 18:23-33 – This *intense* situation was called in v33 – “communing...”
- ii. Genesis 32:9-13; the desperation. The claiming of the promises.
- iii. V24-30 – Jacob’s persistence – wrestled even with a thigh out of joint (v25). V26 – “I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.”
  1. V28 “*Thou hast power with God and men, and hast prevailed.*”  
Prevailing prayer!
- iv. Elijah - Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and **he prayed earnestly** that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. James 5:17
  1. The 1611 KJV Marginal Note for the word *earnestly* is as follows: “Or, in his prayer.” He literally PRAYED IN HIS PRAYER!
  2. *Pray fervently or you do nothing. Cold praying is no more prayer than a painting of fire is fire. How can prayers that do not even warm your own heart move God’s? A fervent prayer will never find a cold reception with God. Elijah’s prayer*

*called fire down from heaven because it carried fire up to heaven.”— William Gurnall*

- v. The Friend in Need; The Widow; Abraham; Hannah; Jacob – etc. all show us what it means to *wrestle with God in prayer*. To lay hold of God. Not a mediocre “sweet” prayer but groaning and pleading before God’s throne of grace.

## Conclusion:

God delights in persistent prayer. It is part of our *communion* with God and a *partnership* by which we become privileged intercessors uniting to fulfil the will of God. It flows from the attitude “I have nothing” and it also contains a sense of security in the character of a good and gracious God.

*“Sometimes I go to God and say, "God, if Thou dost never answer another prayer while I live on this earth, I will still worship Thee as long as I live and in the ages to come for what Thou hast done already. God’s already put me so far in debt that if I were to live one million millenniums I couldn’t pay Him for what He’s done for me.” — A.W. Tozer*

## Memory Verse:

*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. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.*

Luke 11:9-10

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