

Relentless Request

#8 in Series: *Stories from The Master*

We arrive today to our last message in the series *Stories from the Master* – at least for now... There are over 40 parables of Jesus recorded in the gospels, and today, we look at our 8th one...

In our series, we may have failed to look at your favorite parable of Jesus, but we have considered some of the most challenging themes 21 century Christians need to face. Today, is no different. We are very much in need of having our prayer-life challenged... For most of us, it needs more than tweaked, it needs revitalized...

Prayer is one of the greatest privileges and responsibilities of the Christian. Prayer involves expressing to God our love and gratitude for Who He is and what He does... It involves making requests of Him for either ourselves or someone else. Prayer is the means whereby we confess our sinfulness in repentance and whereby we express our utter dependence upon Him... Prayer is a pleasure and a chore...

I remember one of my seminary professors defining prayer as simply “*pouring our heart out to God*”... Pouring out whatever is in our heart at any given time.

I said that prayer is both a privilege and a responsibility... Having the privilege of being welcomed into the very throne room of God is indeed a privilege. The writer of Hebrews says –

Heb. 10:19, 22 (NKJV)

¹⁹ Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus,... ²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith...”

The Lord desires your presence... He wants you to draw near to Him...

In [Luke 11:5-13](#) we read an interesting and challenging appeal from our Lord about prayer:

Luke 11:5-13 (NASB)

⁵ Then He said to them, “Suppose one of you has a friend, and goes to him at midnight and says to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves; ⁶ for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; ⁷ and from inside he answers and says, ‘Do not bother me; the door has already been shut and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up and give you *anything*.’ ⁸ I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him *anything* because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs.

⁹ “So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened. ¹¹ Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? ¹² Or *if* he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he? ¹³ If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?”

(Let’s pray)

As we begin our journey through this profound passage – think with me first about what we may call a –

1. Persistent Plea :5-10

Jesus begins by telling a story that, for many of us can be categorized as –

➤ **An Uncomfortable Illustration** :5-8

⁵ Then He said to them, “Suppose one of you has a friend, and goes to him at midnight and says to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves; ⁶ for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; ⁷ and from inside he answers and says, ‘Do not bother me; the door has already been shut and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up and give you *anything*.’ ⁸ I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him *anything* because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence (Lit *shamelessness*) he will get up and give him as much as he needs.

This a simple story that Jesus told – comes immediately after He gave His model for prayer in an answer to His disciples’ appeal to teach them to pray...

Let me point out a few of the cultural differences from that time that would have been understood by Jesus’ audience – but can leave us a little confused.

First, there were not any stores open late at night where one could go to purchase food or other items... The disciples were mostly from the small towns and villages of Galilee – and in rural areas people relied on neighbors for help when they needed it... That could even include getting food when you run out.

It may not be common in our part of the world where we have grocery and convenience stores close by that, in many cases are open all night...

There was a time even in our culture when people would go to their neighbor to borrow a cup of sugar or flour when they ran short while cooking a meal... No one thought twice about borrowing such things because neighbors helped each other... That is the case here with the added dimension that Jesus specifically mentions three times that these two are friends.

The situation seems unusual to us, but in hot climates it was common for travel to occur in the late evening, and Israel has hot dry summers on its western side and even hotter and dryer summers in the desert areas in the East and South... Since people then walked from place to place, it made sense to wait until the temperatures dropped in the evening and journey by moonlight, which is quite easy to do in such an arid and open country.

A dilemma is created when this man had an unexpected friend arrive from a long journey rather late at night and he had nothing to feed him... This indicates a poor family without extra food to share – or lacking the means to prepare something to eat at that late hour...

Hospitality was extremely important in that culture which left him with a choice of either being inhospitable and leaving the man hungry, or going out and seeing if he could borrow some food from another friend even though it was already late and past the time when people would have gone to bed.

In such cultures people usually went to bed fairly soon after dark. Oil lamps could provide low levels of light, but oil was relatively expensive so most people went to bed early and also got up early when it became light again near daybreak.

The man goes to a friend's house to borrow three loaves. These were not the large loaves of bread we buy in stores now – but closer to a roll or a flat bread three which would have been enough to feed his guest.

As could be expected, his friend had already shut the door and gone to bed with his family, but he calls out his request anyway. There is no anger expressed about being awakened, but his friend points out the obvious as a reason he could not fill the request... The description here indicates a poor family that shared a bed or at least the same room for sleeping. The home of the poor could be just one room and the bed would be a mat that the family would share... In this case, the man makes it clear that he could not get up to get the loaves for his friend without disturbing everyone so he tells him to leave and stop bothering him.

The man remains persistent, the word here means *shamelessness*, or even *audacity*. T

he man lacks sensitivity and keeps pestering his friend...

Jesus then points out that though the man would not get up to get the loaves out of friendship – he would get up and give what is needed because the man is so persistent.

From a pragmatic point of view, the friend might as well get up because the man was going to disturb the whole family if he doesn't... The man was not going to give up on his mission to get what he needed... Jesus used this to illustrate the need for perseverance in prayer which He immediately explained with several points in verses 9-13.

➤ An Authoritative Instruction :9-10

The Lord introduces this section with an emphatic statement that is literally translated as “I to you I say . . .”

He puts stress on that fact that He is the source of this teaching which explains the lesson of His story. ⁹“So I say to you, ask (*keep asking*), and it will be given to you; seek (*keep seeking*), and you will find; knock (*keep knocking*), and it will be opened to you. ¹⁰For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened.

Our English translations do not clearly bring out the idea in each of the verbs in verse 9.

If you are not careful it would be easy to wrongly conclude Jesus is saying that if you ask once then you will receive, and if you seek once then you will find, and if you knock once the door will be immediately opened. However, that would be contrary to context and the actual tenses of each of these verbs.

Ask, seek and knock are second person present imperatives. That means they are commands from Jesus to you that are to be continually carried out. You are to continue to ask, and then it shall be given... You are to continue to seek, and then you will find... You are to continue to knock, then the door will be opened.

The point of Jesus’ illustration was the pestering of the man trying to get bread from His friend. Jesus’ instructions here about prayer match. We are to persevere in prayer.

Many have made much about each particular element – **ask, seek, knock** – with commentators making gradations of them both ways... Some explain this that you knock first and get in the door, then seek out the Father, then once you find Him you ask of Him... Others explain it the opposite way saying you are to ask first, then you seek and finally you knock and the door is opened... Still others make them into different applications that sometimes you just have to ask, other times you have to seek out, and still other times you have to bang on the door.

I agree with Martyn Lloyd-Jones that each of these elements all stress the same point which is a boldness in prayer... God wants you to perseverance in prayer. The seeking and knocking are pictures of asking. All of them together stress the point of actively petitioning God very strongly.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones – “This holy boldness, this argumentation, this reasoning, this putting the case before God, this pleading His own promises, this is the whole secret of prayer.”

The Scriptures are full of instructions and examples concerning the importance of continuing to pray whether you see the results quickly or not. We are to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17), and devoted to and keeping alert in prayer with thanksgiving (Rom. 12:12; Col. 4:2). We are to “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God” (Phil. 4:6). We are to pray at all times and not lose heart (Luke 18:1).

David said in Psalm 55:16-17, “As for me, I shall call upon God, And the Lord will save me. Evening and morning and at noon, I will complain and murmur, And He will hear my voice.”

Paul explains his own practice and instructions for prayer in Eph. 6:18, “With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints ...”

A.W. Pink – “Prayer is the way and means God has appointed for the communication of the blessings of His goodness to His people.”

2. Promised Provision :11-13

➤ **An Unquestionable Trust Based on Relationship** :11-12

¹¹ Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? ¹² Or *if* he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he?

I want you to see another time Jesus gave this same teaching – only there, He used different metaphors and made a different application. It is found in the Sermon of the Mount, recorded in –

Matthew 7:7-11 (NASB)

... ⁹ Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? ¹¹ If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!

In the Sermon on the Mount the context is part of its message where we call called to pursue true righteousness... The context here in Luke is much more general. You can pray to God with confidence knowing that He is good and so will grant what is good and not bad or evil.

Jesus uses the goodness of a normal human father to argue from the lesser to the greater about the goodness of our heavenly Father and making an emphasis on that fact since human fathers are evil.

Any normal dad will not be so cruel as to give his son a snake if he asks for a fish nor would he give him a scorpion if he asks for an egg... Fish and snakes both have scales, but fish were clean and could be eaten and snakes were unclean and could not be eaten – and could be dangerous (Lev. 11:9, 40). I have read that some scorpions could curl up in a ball and look similar to an egg, but an egg is safe to eat and a scorpion is dangerous because of its poisonous sting...

Jesus is talking to His disciples, so His statement is even more emphatic, “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children ...”

It is possible that some dad could be so cruel as to play such a dangerous joke on his child, but the disciples were men who had already demonstrated that they were seeking to follow God and His laws, yet Jesus points out they were evil...

The Scriptures are clear that people are not born as a blank slate or have some inherent goodness. Man is evil by nature from birth and the expression of that only grows as an infant becomes a child and grows into adulthood (Rom. 3:10-18, 5:12, Eph. 2:1-3).

People need to be redeemed – but if even evil men know how to give good gifts to their children, then the rhetorical question is what will God who is holy and righteous give to His children? The answer is obvious.

David Jeremiah – “Do we approach God from a beggar's perspective or as His cherished child? If we have any difficulty seeing Him as our loving Father, we need to ask Him to help us develop a healthy Father/child relationship.”

➤ **A Divine Provision Based on Promise** :13

¹³ If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?”

Again – it is significant that Jesus does not state this the same way as He did in **Matt. 7:11** in which He said – “... how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!”

Here in **Luke 11:13** Jesus states this as “...how much more will *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?”

There is no good thing that a person could ask for, seek out, or a door that could be opened that can compare with the blessing of being given the Holy Spirit!

He is the solution to our greatest needs as a church!...

When you have the Holy Spirit, He will both prompt you to pray and to pray according to God's will!... Proper prayer is accomplished by the leading and power of the Holy Spirit!

A.W. Tozer – “If the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the church today, 95 percent of what we do would go on and no one would know the difference. If the Holy Spirit had been withdrawn from the New Testament church, 95 percent of what they did would stop, and everybody would know the difference.”

Jesus taught that proper prayer requires perseverance... God’s promises are true and He will always fulfill His part, but we must fulfill our part by asking so that we will receive, seeking so that we will find and knocking so that the door will be opened.