



WHAT JESUS SAYS ABOUT PRAYER

SPRING 2022

Growth Group Curriculum
May 8, 2022 – Luke 11:5-13

Growth groups are one of the best and easiest ways to find community at church. Thank you for loving and caring for each other.

In the first four verses of Luke 11, Jesus teaches the disciples “how” to pray. However, that does not conclude his teaching on prayer. He then moves to telling a parable about prayer, which is then followed by a discussion on being persistent in prayer and a reminder about the goodness of God when it comes to answering our prayers. He wraps up this teaching by talking about the Holy Spirit.

The parable revolves around three friends. A friend who is asleep when another friend shows up needing a place to stay, and finally a friend who is awakened in order to help provide hospitality for the unexpected guest. In first-century near-Eastern cultures, having no food to offer a guest was deeply shameful. Not providing hospitality was simply not an option. The friend would rather wake a sleeping friend than not have food on his table.

The man who is awakened really does not want to get out of bed even though the man asking for bread is a friend. Yet, as the NIV says, because of his shameless audacity he will get out of bed. We must remember that this parable, though, is not about hospitality, but about prayer. Jesus is telling the disciples that in their prayer lives they need to approach God as those who have nothing. We come to God empty handed, yet we can be bold in prayer and, in a sense, “shamelessly audacious.” This must have come as quite a surprise to his listeners.

Jesus also teaches that when you pray, you don't give up, and when you ask, you keep asking. Just because God is silent does not mean that you stop asking. Just because the door has not been opened does not mean that you stop knocking. There is something about persistent prayer that God honors. We may not fully understand it, but Jesus tells us to boldly and persistently approach God.

Jesus tells a final story about a father and compares an earthly father to our heavenly Father. Jesus tells the disciples that God always wants the best for his children so God either gives us what we pray for, or God gives us what we should have asked for, if we knew what God knew. Finally, Jesus says God will give you more than you could ever imagine because God will give you the Holy Spirit. This is the greatest of gifts because the apostle Paul reminds us in Romans 8:26 that the Spirit helps us in our weakness and intercedes for us.

Page 1 of 2



Exploring the Text

Luke 11:5-13

⁵Then Jesus said to them, “Suppose you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; ⁶a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.’ ⁷And suppose the one inside answers, ‘Don’t bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can’t get up and give you anything.’ ⁸I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity he will surely get up and give you as much as you need. ⁹“So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ¹⁰For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. ¹¹“Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? ¹²Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

Questions

If you are answering these questions alone, we would urge you to try journaling. Rather than just pondering the answers, try writing them out along with a prayer to the Lord.

- 1) Have you ever asked a neighbor for a favor? Or to borrow something? How did that go?
- 2) Vs. 5 says the man asked for 3 loaves of bread. This meant his visitor was “important”. Are you more generous and bold when trying to please the “important” people in your life? How can this carry over to those not as “important”?
- 3) In this parable Jesus sets up the story with an extreme example of need – a midnight plea for a generous portion of bread for an unexpected but important guest. The surprised host now stands at front of his friend’s house empty handed. He has nothing to offer and is begging for help. What does this image have to say to us about prayer and about how we approach God?
- 4) The parable that Jesus tells is really about prayer more than hospitality. How does this idea of shameless audacity connect to our prayer life? What is Jesus trying to teach us about prayer in this parable that he tells in verses 5-8?
- 5) In verses 9 and 10 Jesus makes some very specific promises in the context of praying to God, that our prayers will be answered. The only condition is that we are to keep on asking, seeking, and knocking – much like the person with the extreme need. What difficulties or obstacles have you encountered in living up to the requirement to “keep on?” How have you met and overcome those impediments? Has it been easy, difficult, impossible?
- 6) God tells us that he wants us to ask him, to knock, to seek for our needs. Do you remember to go to God in prayer for your needs, or do you rely on yourself? Why don’t we ask God for everything?
- 7) In his sermon, Pastor Paul used this quote from Tim Keller. “*We must pray not only with shameless assertiveness but, at the same time, with a restful submissiveness, a confidence that God is wiser than we are and wants the best for us.*” How do we do this? Why is this important to remember?
- 8) Jesus concludes this teaching with the example of fathers giving their children good gifts when they are asked. He then says that our Heavenly Father gives us an even better gift – the Holy Spirit – when we ask. How do you understand this? Have you ever asked God for the gift of the Holy Spirit? What has been your experience receiving this gift from God? How does the Holy Spirit affect your prayer life?

Page 2 of 2

