



The Persistent Friend

Luke 11:5-13

What if you heard a knock at your door at midnight? Your neighbor needed some food to feed his guests. Would you get up to help him, or would you tell him to go away? Jesus uses this example to teach His followers about prayer and about how our loving Father answers us.



Day #1: In Contrast

In this week's parable, Jesus tells of a man who woke his friend in the middle of the night to borrow some bread. What do we know about the man who was awakened? We know he was tired and grumpy because it was the middle of the night. We can guess that he probably didn't have much bread to spare. He lived in a modest home where the whole family gathered together on mats to sleep near the home's fireplace.

Jesus is not telling us that our Heavenly Father is like this man! The entire Bible says the opposite. Jesus is "contrasting" the man with God. If a reluctant friend will eventually get out of bed to help, how much more will our loving Father give to us when we ask? God is perfect and generous, ready to bless His children.

God does not ever get weary like the man in the story. That is hard for us to imagine, but Psalm 121:2-4 says, "My help comes from the Lord. He is the Maker of heaven and earth... He who watches over you won't get tired. In fact, He who watches over Israel won't get tired or go to sleep."

Though the man in the house did not want the man outside to come knocking at midnight, God invites us to come to Him any time. In Luke 11:9, Jesus said, "So here is what I say to you. Ask, and it will be given to you. Search and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened to you." And Philippians 4:6 says, "Don't worry about anything. Instead, tell God about everything. Ask and pray. Give thanks to him."

God is never in short supply of good things for His children. Genesis 1 gives us all the details of how God created the earth and everything in it. That makes Him the owner of it all. In Psalm 50:12, the Lord says, "for the world is mine, and all that is in it."

God is not stingy and will not withhold anything from us. He gave His very Son to save us. (John 3:16) Every parent knows there is no greater gift than that.

Day #1 continued:



Pray and thank God for his generous love for you. Remember to go to Him in prayer every day. He longs for you to come to Him!

Day #2: His Will

God makes several promises concerning prayer in the Bible. One promise is:



There is one thing we can be sure of when we come to God in prayer. If we ask anything in keeping with what He wants, He hears us. If we know that God hears what we ask for, we know that we have it. - 1 John 5:14, 15

The key to this verse is the phrase **according to His will**. That means **the way God wants it**. How do we know if what we are asking is according God's will? (Adding the words "in Jesus' name" at the end of a prayer does not make it His will!) The best way to know is to study God's Word. The Bible is rich with God's truth. For example, God wants all people to be saved (Luke 24:46-47). Also, He hates violence (Proverbs 6:16,17) and He wants to take care of widows and orphans (James 1:27). Before you ask God for something, see what the Bible tells you about it. This will guide you in how to pray.



For example, you may want to pray for your best friend to be in all of your classes when the new school year starts. What does the Bible say about this? Of course, the Bible does not have a school schedule listed in it! Look, instead, for what God desires for you. He wants you to draw close to Him (Hebrews 10:22), He does not want you to be polluted by this world's values (James 1:27), and He wants you to share His truth with other people (Acts 1:8). So, adjust your prayer according to His will:

"Lord, Your Word says that you want me to draw near to You and that you don't want the world to influence me. I pray that You will place me in classes with friends that will help me keep my focus on You. I pray that you will not put anyone along side me that will distract me from You and influence me to do wrong things. I also ask that You will help me share your truth with at least one friend this fall."

Jesus promised: *If you remain joined to Me and My words remain in you, ask for anything you wish. And it will be given to you. - John 15:7*

If you remain close to Jesus every day, if the Bible is a daily part of your life, and if you hide God's Word in your heart, you will know what God's will is. Then you will naturally ask for things according to His will and He will be pleased to answer.

Day #3: Perfect Timing

Try this experiment sometime. When you sit down at the dinner table, ask your mom or dad for dessert first. Will they give it to you? Not likely. Why? Because they know it isn't good for you. They love you and they want you to have the chocolate chip cookies, but not before you eat supper. They know your stomach would get full of sweets and your body needs healthy food more. You would have to wait.

Have you ever prayed for something for a really long time? You may have thought that God had forgotten about you - or at least forgotten about your prayer. But nothing could be further from the truth! Psalm 115:12 says, "*God remembers us and will bless us...*"

God may not answer a prayer right away because we might not be ready for the answer. We might not appreciate the answer at that time, or the timing may not be what is best for us. Or it may be that He *is* answering, but we do not know it yet. Maybe the answer is a process. For example, an unmarried woman may pray for the perfect husband for herself. Maybe God is "creating" that perfect man for her. Maybe that man must face trials that will help his faith grow before he would be a good husband for her. Or you might pray for a family member to become a believer. God may be arranging things in that person's life so that they will believe one day, but it may take years. (This is sort of like asking for those chocolate chip cookies while they are still in the oven!)

Often, it is only when we have persisted in prayer that we recognize that God is the only one who is able to supply our needs. God wants us to realize that we are dependant on Him and that everything good comes from Him. James 1:17 says, "*Every good and perfect gift is from God. It comes down from the Father. He created the heavenly lights. He does not change like shadows that move.*"

Pray and thank God that He answers our prayers when it is best for us. We can trust God's perfect timing!

Day #4: To Know Him

Think of something that most people do not know about you. Maybe you want to be an astronaut, or maybe you cry over sentimental commercials on TV. Whatever it is, only the people closest to you know it. If you wanted to get close to a new friend, you would want them to know this little thing about you.

Why does God sometimes wait to answer our prayers? Sometimes He wants to teach us more about His character, so we will know Him better.

In John 11, we read the story of Jesus raising a man named Lazarus from the dead. Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha, were close friends of Jesus. While Jesus was in another town, Lazarus became very sick. Mary and Martha sent word to Jesus, but Jesus did not come. Lazarus died and his family placed his body in a tomb. Four days later, when Jesus arrived, Martha said, "*Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.*" (John 11:21) This was true. So why did Jesus stay away so long? Why didn't He come before Lazarus died?

Day #4 continued:

Jesus wanted to reveal how powerful God is. Many people had already seen Jesus heal sick people. If Jesus had made Lazarus well when he was sick, that would have been good, but no one would have found out that He was able to make a dead man alive again.

Jesus called for Lazarus to come out of the tomb and he did! He was alive! Jesus called it "seeing the glory of God" (John 11:40). He did this so all the people watching would know that God had sent Him. John 11:45 tells us, "*Many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary saw what Jesus did. So they put their faith in Him.*"

If you feel God is slow in answering your prayer, pray and ask if there is anything new He wants you to learn about Him.

Day #5: Jesus' Model

Did you know that the very act of praying shows that you have faith? You would not pray to someone you did not think was listening. And your faith pleases God! Hebrews 11:6 says, "*And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek Him.*" (NIV)

Have you ever wondered how God wants us to pray? The disciples wondered. One day one of them asked Jesus to teach them how to pray.

Jesus said to them, "*When you pray, this is what you should say. 'Father, may Your name be honored. May Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, as we also forgive everyone who sins against us. Keep us from falling into sin when we are tempted.'*" - Luke 11:2-4

This does not mean we are supposed to recite these exact words each time we pray. God does not want us to just repeat the same words over and over (Matthew 6:7). Instead, Jesus sets an *example* of how we should pray.

Father: Acknowledge who it is that you depend upon.
May Your name be honored: Praise God by telling God about His wonderful qualities.

May Your kingdom come: Ask for His will to be done.
Give us this day our daily bread: God wants us to ask for what we need each day. If we asked for a lifetime of needs at one time, we would feel no need to come back to Him. We need to spend time with God every day.

Forgive us our sins: Confess - Agree with God that your sins are wrong, and God will forgive - every time!

As we also forgive everyone who sins against us: Ask God to help you forgive those who have hurt you.

Keep us from falling into sin: Ask God to keep you away from things that tempt you and to show you a way out so you will not sin.

This model is much more than a list of "things" that we want. It honors God and reminds us that He is in control of every part of our life. Try it the next time you pray!