

The Persistent Friend

Luke 11:5-13

PPT Title

The Persistent Friend

Main Point: Keep on praying to God!

Key Verse: *The prayer of a godly person is powerful. It makes things happen.*
– James 5:16b

Props: A door knocker, A loaf of bread, a large rock, an egg, a toy fish (or picture of a fish), a toy snake (or picture of a snake), a toy scorpion (or picture of a scorpion).

BACKGROUND



Say: Parables are such a great way to learn more about the kingdom of God. But did you know that they are also a great way to get to know Jesus really well? Think about it. When all your relatives gather together for a family reunion or a Thanksgiving feast or a wonderful day at the beach, storytelling is sure to be a big part of your day. Maybe your grandfather likes to tell stories about fishing, or your aunt likes to tell stories about her world travels. You can learn a lot about people by the stories they tell and the way they tell them. You might even say that listening to people's stories is like looking into their hearts and minds. The things that are most important to them will show up in their stories.

Jesus loved to tell parables, because He loved stories and the way they helped people understand big truths about the kingdom of God. Today, we're going to look at a parable about prayer. It's called the Parable of the Persistent Friend. In this parable we're going to get to see a few things about Jesus that we might not have known before. For example, this parable is pretty funny. Did you know that Jesus had a sense of humor? And did you know that it's impossible to bother Jesus too much with our prayers? He never gets tired of hearing them! Let's turn in our Bibles to Luke 11 so we can learn about the Parable of the Persistent Friend together.

Teacher Note: This is not the only time that Jesus encouraged us to be bold and persistent in our prayers. On the night before His crucifixion, in the beautiful, intimate setting of the upper room, Jesus served his disciples by washing their feet and then comforted them with amazing teaching about how the world would look once He was no longer living among them. In John 15:7, Jesus said, "If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to My Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be My disciples."

As followers of Christ, we too are His disciples. And our mindset should be that persistent prayers are not the grown-up equivalent of a child asking repeatedly for a juice box on a hot day. They are our requests for kingdom fruit to be present in our lives, our petitions for God's glory to be shown, and the overflow of His words alive and active within us. On His final night, Jesus said to His disciples—and us—"ask, ask, ask."

"In the context of a relationship with Jesus in which His words fill us and His personality has mixed and melded with ours, we are given perhaps the world's most ex-

travagant promise outside of the promise of our salvation. We can ask anything in His name, for bearing fruit and glory, and expect Him to answer it." - Chris Tiegreen, *The One Year Worship the King Devotional*

JESUS TEACHES US HOW TO PRAY

Say: The Parable of the Persistent Friend is found in verses 5-13. But we're going to look at what happened right before Jesus told the parable, because it will help us to understand why he told it. Let's read together in Luke 11:1-4.

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples spoke to him. "Lord," he said, "teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

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 11:1-4

Teacher Note: The Parable of the Persistent Friend is presented against the backdrop of this pattern of prayer. Jesus teaches us to pray for the coming of God's kingdom on earth, and then for basic physical and spiritual needs. We can see that the structure of the parable also follows this pattern. First, the persistent friend seeks what he needs to do the work of the kingdom by serving someone in need. Then, Jesus confirms that when our loving Father hears petitions for good, basic things—be they physical or spiritual—He will not play a dirty trick on us and give bad things instead.

Say: Jesus knew the importance of prayer. It is how we talk to God and tell Him we love Him and want more of Him in our lives. It is also the way we tell God what we need. Even though He already knows our needs before we ever speak them in prayer, God loves to hear us ask Him to be involved in our lives. God is our heavenly Father. In fact, when Jesus taught the disciples to pray in Luke 11, He told them to call God "Abba," which is like our word "Daddy." So just like we should always feel comfortable coming to an earthly Mommy or Daddy with our needs, we can come to God in the same way when we pray.

In this prayer, Jesus said that the first and most important thing we should pray to God is for His kingdom to come. From the very beginning of His ministry, Jesus talked about the kingdom of God, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." And many of his parables started with the words, "The kingdom of God is like..." So it is not surprising that He wants us to pray for God's kingdom to grow and grow on earth.

Then Jesus said to pray for our basic physical needs, or "our daily bread." What are some basic needs we might ask God to provide when we pray to Him? *Food. A warm house. Good health.*

And finally, Jesus told us to come to God with our spiritual needs. He said to ask forgiveness for our sins, and to ask God to help us be forgiving toward others. He told us to ask God to strengthen us so that we won't sin when we're tempted.

So that is how Jesus taught us to pray. It's pretty simple, isn't it? Jesus didn't say we had to pray long, complicated, fancy prayers. He didn't say we need to say every single thing that pops into our heads. He just said to think of God as our loving Father and to ask Him to increase His kingdom on earth and to meet our basic physical and spiritual needs. Now that we've reviewed how Jesus wants us to pray, we can look at the Parable of the Persistent Friend in Luke 11:5-13.



BOLDNESS AND PERSISTENCE PAY OFF



Say: *Then Jesus said to them, "Suppose someone has a friend. He goes to him at midnight. He says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread. A friend of mine on a journey has come to stay with me. I have nothing for him to eat.'*

"Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked. My children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.'

"I tell you, that person will not get up. And he won't give the man bread just because he is his friend. But because the man keeps on asking, he will get up. He will give him as much as he needs.

"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. Everyone who asks will receive. He who searches will find. And the door will be opened to the one who knocks.

- Luke 11:5-10

Say: This is a pretty funny situation when you think about it. It's midnight. Everyone in the neighborhood is asleep and dreaming. Suddenly, someone is knocking on the door at the little brown house on the corner. **Knock two times with the door knocker.** A sleepy man comes to the door in his pajamas carrying an oil lamp. We'll call him Fred. Fred calls out, "Who is it?" And the person knocking on the door calls back, "It's Moisha, your friend from Hebrew school. Remember me? I'm on a long trip and need somewhere to spend the night. Please can I stay with you?"

Fred opens the door wide and gives Moisha a great big hug. Then Moisha says, "Got anything to eat? Some nice bread, maybe?" Fred goes to his pantry and finds nothing but crumbs. Oh no! How is he going to feed Moisha? Then Fred remembers that his next door neighbor in the big grey house has the most amazing bread in his pantry ALL THE TIME! He tells Moisha to sit down at the table and runs next door.

Knock three times with the door knocker. Say: "Hershel, wake up! It's Fred from next door. My friend Moisha is on a trip and needs something to eat, but my bread is all gone. Please can I have three of your loaves?"

But Hershel is snug in his bed. In fact, his whole family is tucked into his bed and if he gets up, they'll all wake up and the baby will start crying and his wife will be grumpy in the morning. So Hershel says, "No. Go away."

Did Fred give up? No! **Knock four times with the door knocker. Say:** "Hershel, please give me some bread." **Wait a short time, then knock five times with the door knocker. Say:** "Hershel, please be my friend and give me three loaves. **Wait a short time, then knock six times with the door knocker. Say:** "Hershel, I really, really need that bread. My friend is tired and hungry and I need to help him because he doesn't have anywhere else to stay or anyone else to feed him. I REALLY NEED THAT BREAD. PLEEEEE-ASE?"



What do you think happened next? *Hershel got up and gave him the bread.* That's right, Hershel eventually realized that Fred was not going to stop asking for the bread until he got it! So he got out of bed, grabbed his three best loaves of bread, unlocked the door and gave them to Fred with a smile. Even in the middle of the night, Hershel could see that Fred had an important need. He respected Fred's boldness in asking for the bread. And eventually he gave Fred exactly what he needed.

Application: Sometimes we might feel like Fred when we pray. We have a really important need, so we pray to God and tell Him all about it. Maybe someone you love is really sick and you ask God to heal them. Maybe a friend's family is having a hard



time because their dad lost his job, so you pray that God will help him find a new job soon. Maybe you are arguing with your little brother too much and you want God to help you be nicer. You pray really, really hard.

Now let me ask you a big question. What do you do when it seems like there is no answer to your prayer? When this happens you might be tempted to give up and stop praying. But what did we learn from the Parable of the Persistent Friend? *Never give up. Don't stop praying.* That's right. Jesus says, even if it seems to be taking a while, don't give up. Keep asking God for what you need. God ALWAYS answers our prayers at the perfect time. Sometimes we are not quite ready for the answer; sometimes God is waiting for all the circumstances to be just right to answer our prayer. But while we wait, Jesus wants us to keep our focus on God.

Jesus wants us to be BOLD when we pray. He wants us to SHAMELESSLY keep praying. To pray shamelessly means to pray without being embarrassed about how often we ask God to answer our prayer. It means to pray without worrying whether God is annoyed by our persistent prayers, because God is NEVER annoyed by our prayers. He loves for us to rely on Him.

Think about Fred knocking on Hershel's door in the middle of the night. He was bold wasn't he? And he knocked shamelessly. He wasn't worried about making Hershel angry, and he wasn't embarrassed to be pounding on the door over and over and over in the middle of the night.

Say: Jesus said, *"Ask, and it will be given to you. Search, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened to you. Everyone who asks will receive. He who searches will find. And the door will be opened to the one who knocks."*

A LOVING FATHER GIVES GOOD GIFTS

Say: If we read Luke 11:11-13, we see something else really interesting that Jesus said about prayer. He said,

"Fathers, suppose your son asks for a fish. Which of you will give him a snake instead? Or suppose he asks for an egg. Which of you will give him a scorpion? Even though you are evil, you know how to give good gifts to your children. How much more will your Father who is in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"

Who remembers the name Jesus told us to use when we pray to God? Father. Abba. That's right. Jesus told us to ask God for what we need in the same way we would ask a kind and loving earthly Father. From the story about the man who kept knocking on his neighbor's door, we learned that God will answer persistent prayers. Now Jesus is telling us that he will always answer those prayers in the way that is best for us.



Hold up the large rock. Say: When Hershel finally opened the door that Fred had been pounding on, did he hand him a rock? No! Fred asked for bread and that's what Hershel gave him. Hold up the loaf of bread. Fred wanted the kingdom of God to be present in his kitchen. He wanted to feed his tired, hungry friend Moisha. A rock wouldn't have helped Fred show love, would it? But bread would. So that's what he received.



Hold up the fish and the snake. Say: Jesus asked what would happen if a hungry little child tugged on his daddy's sleeve and asked if he could have fish for lunch. Would he play a trick on his son and put a snake in his lunch box? No way! His boy would be sad and might even get bitten by the snake. Plus, he would still be hungry!



Hold up the egg and the scorpion. Say: Then Jesus asked what would happen if a son asked his daddy to make scrambled eggs for breakfast. Would the daddy put a live scorpion on a plate and serve it to his son instead? No! Scorpions are not breakfast

food! They probably taste really, awful and might hurt you with their stinger, too. A loving daddy would make scrambled eggs for his little boy.

Then Jesus said something really interesting in verse 13. He said,

"Even though you are evil, you know how to give good gifts to your children. How much more will your Father who is in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"

Say: Jesus said that even sinners like us know how to show kindness to people we love. How much more kindness will our perfect and holy heavenly Father show to us? If a sinner can give good gifts to his children, God will give even more to those who ask him to meet their needs in prayer.



Application: Jesus wants us to keep praying for what we need, even if it seems to be taking a long time for that prayer to be answered. He wants us to view God as a loving Father, "Abba," who will always do what is best for his children.

God will always answer our prayers in the way that is best for us, at just the perfect time. So if the answer we get is different from what we have asked, or not as soon as we hoped, we can be sure that God has given us his kindest, wisest, most loving answer.



Hold up the egg and the scorpion again. Say: So what do you think would happen if you prayed to God and asked him for a scorpion to eat? I think that in His wisdom and kindness, He is going to give you an egg instead. He will answer your prayer for something to eat by giving you something even better than what you asked for. I know the example I just gave is silly. Of course you would never pray for a scorpion to eat, but sometimes you might pray for the wrong things, and God may not give you those wrong things because He knows what is best for you.

Teacher Note: In 1 Kings 18, we see a beautiful illustration of persistent prayer answered. For many years, famine had ravaged the land. Cattle were dying, crops were destroyed, wells were dry. Elijah, who had just defeated the prophets of Baal, began to pray for rain. On top of Mt. Carmel, Elijah got on his face to petition God for rain. After the first prayer, he sent his servant to look toward to sea to see if rain was coming. It wasn't. Elijah kept praying. Seven times he told his servant to go back and look again. The seventh time, his servant brought the news of answered prayer. A cloud no bigger than a man's fist was rising from the sea. Elijah was not disappointed in the size of the cloud. He knew God's plan was better than anything he might have imagined as he prayed. In the end, God sent a massive storm. His answer to Elijah's persistent prayers was perfect in substance and in timing.

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