

Parable Of The Persistent Friend

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Jesus taught by example, and this is particularly true in terms of prayer. Once, after He was finished praying, His disciples asked Him to show them how to pray (Luke 11:1-4). He responded by giving them an outline of what to include in a typical prayer. Then, after having taught His disciples to pray, Jesus furthers His instruction through the Parable of the Persistent Friend (verses 5-13), which pictures persistence and perseverance in prayer.

The parable includes three friends. A *visiting friend* had traveled for many hours to where he thought he would be offered food and shelter, but he had none, since his host's family had already eaten and retired to bed for the evening. Custom, however, dictated that the weary traveler be provided food. Not wanting to neglect his friend even though it was late, the host, a *persistent friend*, went to a *sleeping friend's* house nearby to ask for bread.

1. Who is the ultimate source of help? Luke 11:5-7; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; Psalm 121:1-8; 86:15; Ephesians 3:20; I Timothy 1:14-16.

Comment: The sleeping friend, awakened by his persistent friend, was irritated to be bothered so late at night. He flat out refused to give him any bread for his visiting friend, lest his sleeping wife and children be disturbed. He probably reasoned it would be better for one person to fast until morning than for his whole family to be disturbed at midnight. However, the persistent friend continued knocking, threatening to wake not only the whole family, but the whole neighborhood as well! So he got out of bed and gave his friend some bread—but not out of friendship. He gave in to persistence. A friend is a fine source of aid, but God the Father and Jesus Christ are our spiritual friends—our greatest friends. They give grace, mercy, and truth abundantly.

2. How often should we go to God in prayer for something? Luke 11:8; 18:1-8; Romans 15:30; II Corinthians 12:8-10.

Comment: People often give up because a request is "repeated." The requester cannot allow himself to become discouraged merely because his first or second request is denied. He must be persistent. The Greek word translated as "persistence" means "shameless," suggesting freedom from the bashfulness that would stop a person from asking a second time. Knocking once does not indicate perseverance, but "continued" knocking does.

God often answers us after long and persevering requests. He hears prayers and grants blessings long after they appear to be unanswered or withheld. He does not promise to give blessings immediately. He promises only that He will do it according to His will and plan. Although He promises to answer the prayer of the faithful, often He requires us to wait a long time to try our faith. He may allow us to persevere for months or years, until we are completely dependent on Him, until we see that there is no other way to receive the blessing, and until we are prepared to receive it. Sometimes, we are not ready to receive a blessing when we first ask. We may be too proud, or we may not

comprehend our dependence upon Him. Maybe we would not value it, or the timing for it may simply be wrong. If what we ask for is good and accords with God's will, He will give it at the best time possible.

3. What must we persistently do in prayer? Luke 11:9-10; Hebrews 4:16; 11:6; James 1:5-8; 4:3; 5:15-17; I John 3:22; 5:14-15.

Comment: First, we must humbly *ask* according to His will, not our own pleasures. If something we ask for is contrary to God's plan, no amount of persistence will force Him to give in. When requesting anything of God, most people often stop asking when He does not immediately intervene. Human nature is easily discouraged because it thinks on a physical plane, but with God all things are possible. We need to be optimistic that God has heard and will respond in a good and faithful manner.

Second, we must *seek* to know our true motives and God's will regarding the request. We seek to find out what we must do to bolster our faith with works. Do God's promises include the blessing we ask for?

Third, we must *knock*. We must persevere, be persistent, pressing the matter until we receive it. We should faithfully go to God repeatedly, until He responds to our prayers and grants what we ask of Him—if it is according to His will.

4. Does God answer our prayers reluctantly? Luke 11:11-13; Psalm 86:1-7, 15-17; 103:13; Isaiah 49:15; Jonah 4:2; Matthew 6:30-33; II John 3.

Comment: The sleeping friend had to be awakened and pestered into lending the bread, but God does not sleep and is never disturbed when we approach Him. We do not have to force Him into giving because He never gives reluctantly; giving is a major part of His nature. Although God is generous, we should pray perseveringly as David did, not being afraid to ask repeatedly according to His will.

The intensity God desires in our prayers is emphasized by the admonishment to "ask, seek, knock." All asking is not considered seeking, but only patient and persistent asking. All seeking is not considered looking in the right place, but only seeking the truth. All knocking is not considered attention getting, but only energetic and persistent knocking. The threefold admonition is in itself an admonition to ask diligently, repeatedly, and long-sufferingly. By this parable Christ exhorts us to be patient, persevering, and persistent in prayer. If the persistent friend who sought the bread for his visiting friend was not discouraged by a negative response but continued to ask earnestly, how much more diligent should we be in beseeching God who willingly and abundantly gives? God does not answer our diligent prayers to be rid of us but because He loves us.