

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

A Message of Hope and Fulfillment For Those Longing For God

Effective Fervent Prayer

Luke 11: 5-10

I had been out of college about a year and was a novice, ministering in Birmingham, Alabama as an associate pastor. At a local pastors' meeting I mentioned that I was about to begin a study on the subject of prayer. One of the much older pastors present said to me, "That is a very deep study; prayer is a mystery." At the time I wasn't sure what he meant...now I think I might.

I. Jesus tells a story to illustrate effective prayer

- A. What is effective prayer? It is prayer that gets answered! (see v 10)
- B. It is not the mere asking that gets results, it is the persistence
- C. Consider the similar story of the arrogant judge (Luke 18:1-8)

II. Understanding parables and their purpose

- A. A parable is a story told to illustrate a point, *A SINGLE POINT*
- B. God is not a sleepy neighbor nor an arrogant judge; the point of the stories is to underscore the value of persistence in determined prayer
- C. If you leave the time of prayer, personal or group, and you can't remember what you asked of God, chances are it was not very important to you. If it really matters to you, it matters to God, and you will bring it up until you get answers
- D. What is the difference between persistent prayer (which we are encouraged to practice) and vain repetitions (which Jesus prohibits) — Mat 6:7

III. Asking, Seeking, Knocking—The trilogy of persistent prayer

- A. Present active imperative: it's those Greek verbs again
- B. All petitionary prayer begins with a request, "What do I want God to do?"
- C. If it is persistent prayer that will not quit without getting an answer, it will involve seeking, probing, investigating, coming again and again to refine the desire as God uncovers our motives, our real needs, His perfect will, and so forth...
- D. In the pursuit of our desire we may knock on various apparent doors, perhaps more than once, before we find the one that God wishes to open, but Jesus promises that ONE of them will open to us
- E. Prayer is a process, a conversation God invites us into. He cares about our every need and concern, He has an eternal purpose into which it all fits, both to bless us and to accomplish the purposes of His infinite wisdom

As we will see in our next study (vv. 11-13) God will never give us something that is harmful to us. The biggest problem that we often have is that we start out by actually asking for snakes and scorpions thinking they are fish and eggs. We are promised answers to every prayer that matters to us, but refinement may be required.

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; for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; 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.' 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. "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. For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened.

Luke 11: 5-10

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does the timing of our requests and God's answers fit together? Are our answers seemingly delayed because God needs to fit circumstances together before He can reveal His plans, purposes, or answers?
2. Is there a perceptible difference between asking, seeking, and knocking? If so, what do you think that is? How does your understanding of these terms affect your praying?

NOTES

Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.

James 5: 16-16

Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church in order to mistreat them. And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword. When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. Now it was during the days of Unleavened Bread. When he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out before the people. So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God.

Acts 12: 1-5

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