

Persistence in Prayer

How Do I Pray

Luke 11:5-13

September 2, 2018

Welcome again to worship. Thank you for being here.

Today is the conclusion of our 4-week series, “How Do I Pray?” We have treated this series like a practical course on prayer, one that will help your spiritual life and Christian witness. It like being told, “Buy this stock for a dollar, and by next week, it’s guaranteed to be worth \$100 dollars.”

We talked about the five P’s of prayer: the Place (or Importance) of Prayer, the Plea (or earnestness) of Prayer, the Prerequisite of Prayer (confession and forgiveness), the Productive Prayer (and that happens when we are earnest, when we are specific, and when we are righteous), and the Power of Prayer (which comes from being prayed up with the Lord).

We talked about the different types of prayer. We also talked about the 7 hindrances. If you missed any of these messages, you can go to our website germantownchurch.com and listen or read any of our messages.

Today, I want to conclude this series by talking about Persistence in Prayer, so I invite you to turn to page 6 in your bulletin. I want us to look at an interesting passage of Scripture. It is a parable from Jesus from Luke 11:5-13:

Then, teaching them more about prayer, he used this story: “Suppose you went to a friend’s house at midnight, wanting to borrow three loaves of bread. You say to him, ‘A friend of mine has just arrived for a visit, and I have nothing for him to eat.’ And suppose he calls out from his bedroom, ‘Don’t bother me. The door is locked for the night, and my family and I are all in bed. I can’t help you.’ But I tell you this—though he won’t do it for friendship’s sake, if you keep knocking long enough, he will get up and give you whatever you need because of your shameless persistence. “And so, I tell you, keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. “You fathers—if your children ask for a fish, do you give them a snake instead? Or if they ask for an egg, do you give them a scorpion? Of course not! So, if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.”¹

Let me explain this parable, for it is set in a society that is pretty foreign to us.

Travelers often journeyed late in the evening to avoid the heat of the midday sun. In Jesus’ story, just such a traveler had arrived towards midnight at this friend’s house.

In the east hospitality is a sacred duty; it was not enough to set before someone a bare sufficiency; the guest had to be given ample abundance.

In the villages, bread was baked at home. Only enough for the day’s needs was baked because, if it was kept and became stale, no one would wish to eat it.

The late arrival of the traveler confronted the householder with an embarrassing situation, because his cupboard was empty, and he could not fulfil the sacred obligations of hospitality. Late as it was, he went out to borrow from a friend, only to find

¹ Luke 11:5-13 (NLT2)

the friend's door was shut. In the east, no one would knock on a shut door unless the need was imperative. In the morning, the door was opened and remained open all day, for there was little privacy; but if the door was shut, that was a definite sign that the householder did not wish to be disturbed. But the seeking householder was not deterred. He knocked and kept on knocking.

A poor Palestinian house consisted of one room with only one little window. The floor was simply of beaten earth covered with dried reeds and rushes. The room was divided into two parts, not by a partition but by a low platform. Two-thirds of it were on ground level. The other third was slightly raised. On the raised part the charcoal stove burned all night, and round it the whole family slept, not on raised beds but on sleeping mats. Families were large and they slept close together for warmth. For one to rise was inevitably to disturb the whole family. Furthermore, in the villages, it was the custom to bring the livestock, the hens and the cocks and the goats, into the house at night.

Is there any wonder that the man who was in bed did not want to get up? But the determined borrower knocked on with shameless persistence – that is what the Greek word means – until at last the householder, knowing that by this time, the whole family was disturbed anyway, arose and gave him what he needed.

“That story,” said Jesus, “will tell you about prayer.” The point here is based, not on likeness, but on contrast. What Jesus says is, “If an unwilling householder can in the end be coerced by a friend's shameless persistence into giving him what he needs, how much more will God who is a loving Father supply all his children's needs?” “If you,” he says, “who are evil, know that you are bound to supply your children's needs, how much more will God?”

This does not absolve us from intensity and persistence in prayer. After all, we can guarantee the reality and sincerity of our desire only by the passion with which we pray. But it does mean this, that we are not wringing gifts from an unwilling God, but going to One who knows our needs better than we know them ourselves and whose heart towards us is the heart of generous love. If we do not receive what we pray for, it is not because God grudgingly refuses to give it, but because He has some better thing for us.

Like I said last week, there is no such thing as unanswered prayer. The answer given may not be the answer we desired or expected; but even when it is a refusal it is the answer of the love and the wisdom of God.

Persistence in prayer also overcomes our insensitivity, not God's. To practice persistence does more to change our heart and mind than His, and it helps us understand and express the intensity of our need. Persistence in prayer helps us recognize God's work.²

And to persist in prayer and not give up does not mean endless repetition or painfully long prayer sessions. Constant prayer means keeping our requests continually before God as we live for him day by day, believing He will answer. When we live by faith, we are not to give up. God may delay answering, but His delays always have good reasons. As we persist in prayer, we grow in character, faith, and hope.³

So, for the remainder of the time together, I want to give you practical ways to be persistent and faithful in prayer. Here are 8 suggestions for prayer:

² Life Application Study Bible, Luke 11:8

³ Life Application Study Bible, Luke 18:1

1. **Practice Prayer:** The best way to develop a prayer life is to practice a prayer life. Walking. Medical “practice”, Legal “practice”.
2. **Prayer List:** Make sure you are on the weekly prayer list here at the church. Pray for those requests during the week.
3. **Prayer Focus:** Designate each day of the week for special prayer focus:
 - Sunday- Churches
 - Monday- Missionaries
 - Tuesday- Elected leaders
 - Wednesday- Family members
 - Thursday- Pastors. Friends, God, in the order of his grace and providence, has made even the success of His Gospel dependent, in a certain measure, on the prayers of His followers. Why He should do so we cannot tell, but that He has done so we know; and they are not a little criminal who neglect to make fervent supplications for the prosperity of the cause of God.⁴
 - Friday- Children
 - Saturday- The unsaved
4. **Birthdays and Anniversary Prayers:** Keep your bulletin and pray for the persons listed who are having a birthday or anniversary.
5. **Pray a Psalm.** Pick a Psalm and pray it.
For example, Psalm 5:
*O LORD, hear me as I pray; pay attention to my groaning. Listen to my cry for help, my King and my God, for I pray to no one but you. Listen to my voice in the morning, LORD. Each morning I bring my requests to you and wait expectantly.*⁵
Or take Psalm 116 as a meditative association with your past history. Write or pray your own psalm of thanksgiving.
6. **Specific Prayer:** Pray for a particular concern (child, family, etc.) every day.
7. **Prayer by Association:** Every time you do a particular task, say a prayer. Like when you:
 - Wash your hands
 - Taking your medication
8. **“Drive by Prayer”-** as you go by someone’s room, “shoot” a prayer for them; try to tune in with a spiritual ear or eye to any needs around you. Then secretly shoot these people with prayer. It will bless you.

Billy Graham once noted, “Prayer is not about using God it is more often about getting us in a position where God can use us.” He said he watched the deck hands on an ocean liner as they docked that ship in New York Harbor. First, they threw out a rope to the men on the dock. Then, inside the boat, the great motors went to work and pulled on the great cable. But, oddly enough, the pier wasn’t pulled out to the ship; the ship was pulled snugly up to the pier. Graham then said, “Prayer is the rope that pulls God and us together. But it doesn’t pull God down to us... it pulls us to God. We must learn to say with Christ, the master of the art of praying: ‘Not my will; but Thine be done.’”

⁴ Adam Clarke’s Commentary, 2 Thessalonians 3:1

⁵ Psalm 5:1-3 (NLT2)