

David Carter

Summer of Seeking / Prayer / Luke 11:5–13

You ever watch a movie or television show where the main character gets arrested and they say I want my phone call. Now I don't know if it's true or not, but according to the movies you get one phone call if you find yourself in jail.

Have you ever wondered who you'd call with that one phone call. Like everything hangs on the balance of one phone call. You're not going to call that person in your life who's going to do nothing but lecture you, right, no time for that. You might need a lecture, but that's not the time.

You're probably got that friend or relative who is going to laugh at you, call you an idiot and post it online, they're probably not you're first call either. And we've all got those who always go to voicemail.

No you're going to call someone who's actually going to answer and do something to help you. The power isn't in the phone call, the power is in the one who answers, the one on the other end of the call. It's a bold call that we have to make, an act of faith that we are placing in the other end, but the power is in the one who answers.

I think that's what Jesus is trying to show us in our passage this morning. Last week we started to look at what Jesus taught us about prayer, Jesus taught us what prayer looked like, what prayer is. This morning Jesus shows us how to pray; He shows us how to pray powerfully.

Here's what Jesus shows us, that powerful prayer is bold, persistent, and it finds its power in the God who answers.

Jesus calls us to be bold and persistent in our prayers, but to place our trust in the power of the God who answers.

Look with me this morning at our passage.

This whole passage starts with the disciples asking Jesus to teach them to pray. We see that back in verse 1 of this chapter...

Luke 11:1 ESV

¹ Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.”

I find that interesting. Do you know that’s the only thing we hear the disciples ask Jesus to teach them in the gospels.

We don’t see them asking him to teach them to heal people or Lord teach us to lead or Lord teach us to cast out demons, teach us to evangelize or even Lord teach us to preach the gospel. The only thing they ask him is to teach them to pray.

Could it be that they saw something different in the way that Jesus prayed? We know that they would often be close by as Jesus was praying, and here in chapter 11 of Luke, Jesus is praying and when He is done, it’s almost as though His disciples ask Him, Lord teach us to pray like you pray.

Maybe because after spending so much time with Jesus day in and day out, after watching and listening to Him pray day after day what they realized is that all those other things flowed out of His prayer life and were fueled by His prayer life.

All the healing, preaching, teaching, all the miracles and the casting out of demons all those aspects of His ministry were fueled and flowed from His powerful prayer life and so they said, we want to, we need to pray like He prays.

I’ve noticed that in my own prayer life. Maybe it won’t come as a surprise to you that as most Christians, I confess I don’t pray as often as I’d like to. I go through seasons where my prayer life is fruitful and active and constant, and then to my shame I go through seasons where other things get in the way. And good things, ministry things, family things, health things, life things, marriage things.

But what I have found is that my fruitfulness and effectiveness in every other area of my life is fueled by and deeply connected to my prayer life. I want to be a loving and supportive husband, I want to be a great dad, I want to be a faithful pastor and preacher, but I have found that there is a direct connection to my fruitfulness in all those areas to the depth and consistency of my prayer life.

And when I prioritize other life things in place of prayer, the other life things seem to suffer.

Maybe the disciples recognized the same thing in Jesus, that He was able to be used so powerfully by God because He prayed powerfully. How often would Jesus rise early in the morning to spend time in prayer before the day began, how often did He spend time praying before major decision and major events in His lifetime? If the Saviour of the world, God in human form relied on the power of prayer for His life and ministry surely the same can be said of you and I.

He prayed passionately and personally, powerfully. So they say Lord teach us to pray.

That's exactly what we are asking this summer, "Lord teach us to pray and what it is to seek after You." We started last week where Jesus starts here with them. Teaching them the Lord's prayer.

And it shouldn't surprise us to see Jesus teaching this prayer at different times in His ministry, like any good teacher Jesus taught things repeatedly and to different audiences.

Jesus taught us, He taught His disciples to what to pray, but then He moves into our passage this morning, and He teaches us how to pray.

And what the first thing we need to see from Jesus' teaching here is that He teaches us that praying powerfully is praying shamelessly.

SHAMELESSLY

And He does this by telling them a story.

We read it in verses 5-8.

Luke 11:5-8 ESV

⁵ And he said to them, “Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves, ⁶ for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; ⁷ and he will answer from within, ‘Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything’? ⁸ I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs.

The audacity of this friend, the shamelessness of it, think about this for a minute.

Just picture in your mind, it's midnight, you are in your bed, everything is shut down, lights all out, doors all locked. You just close your eyes and you're drifting between that point of sleeping and awake and all of a sudden, you hear, knock, knock, knock.

You think this person must be out of their mind knocking at my door this late, you hope they would go away, but they don't, they knock again. And at this point you think man, they are about to wake up the kids, and no one wants that, any parent knows that the golden time of day is when the kids are sleeping right?

So you go to the door, bat in your hand cause you don't know who it is and you open the door and you realize it's your friend that just lives a few blocks away and immediately you wonder this must be some kind of emergency, he comes to me at midnight, surely, surely something is wrong, but he simply says, hey, can I borrow a few loaves of bread, we've just had some guests come from outside of town and I got nothing to feed them.

In your mind you'd be like bruh... are you kidding me, are you serious right now? Did you just wake me up in the middle of the night to ask me to borrow some bread?

But notice what Jesus says, what He says in verse 8.

[Luke 11:8](#) ESV

I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs.

Impudence or his shamelessness. The NIV translates that word as his shameless audacity. This guy had the audacity to knock on his neighbour's door in the middle of the night, and he was shameless enough to ask for something as simple as bread.

And here's what Jesus is showing us — if we want to learn to pray powerfully, we have to learn what it means to pray shamelessly.

Jesus' point to you and I, is that's how you and I can come to God in prayer, with the same shameless audacity. I mean imagine for a moment if the roles were reversed in this scenario. Like you had a house full of family that came for a visit suddenly, and you realized you had nothing to feed them, and no grocery stores open.

But you would think to yourself my neighbour, my friend just around the corner I can go and ask them, but you realize it's after midnight. So you look at your spouse, and you say you go and ask them. But the point is that there would be this hesitancy wouldn't there? We don't want to bother, we don't want to be a burden, we don't want to inconvenience someone.

And we kind of take that mindset into prayer. You know, Lord if you have some time, I know you got a lot of things going on, but if you wouldn't mind could you please bring your attention to my needs?

But Jesus is saying go boldly, ask with no shame, ask for bold, audacious things. Pray to the Lord for your healing, pray to Him for the salvation of your loved ones, pray for that miraculous need, pray for that job that seems out of your

reach, pray for that financial need to be met, pray for big things... audacious things, pray and seek Him without shame!

Come to Him and bring your issues, your concerns, and come any time! Come early in the morning, come late at night when you can't sleep, come in the middle of the night. Come to Him any time and pray unashamedly.

Sometimes, sometimes we're just too timid with God, you know... Oh father God, heavenly, all powerful, wouldst thou bend thy ear to my request and harken to me... no, no, pray unashamedly, bare your heart before the Lord, lay it all out there.

Lord I'm scared, Lord I'm hurt, Lord I'm in desperate need of your attention, your help. God hear my prayer, turn your eyes towards me. Cry out to Him in your time of need, be bold, be unashamed in your prayers.

Read the prayers of the saints of the Old Testament in the Psalms and see their shamelessness, their boldness in asking, how they would lay prostrate before the Lord, calling on Him saying, "How long, oh Lord, will you turn your ear to me, hear my prayer, grant my request, let heaven and earth be moved." That's boldness, shamelessness, audacious... Is that how we pray?

And here's why we can come to Him with such confidence, there's a word here that pops up a few times in these verses, that word friend. Suppose you have a friend and you go to that friend and ask them.

Notice this isn't a stranger at the door knocking, this is a friend, someone close, someone you have a relationship with, someone you know personally.

See, the power of that midnight knock wasn't in the knocking — it was in the friendship behind the door.

Listen, we all have those people don't we? Those people who only seem to come around, who only seem to call when they want something from us. Not those kinds of friends.

This is a friend who you know personally, you have a relationship with them. The reason he could knock at midnight is because the friendship didn't start at midnight.

See there are some who see prayer as a last-ditch effort, some who treat prayer as just that: I have a desperate need in my life, and I've tried everything else and so why not pray. Or maybe the only time we pray is when we need something, but we don't seek after God any other time.

No this is a friend, someone you talk to, you seek after, you spend time with, and not just when you need something. We have those people and how often do we avoid them?

Prayer is about relationship and if you don't have a relationship with God this morning I want you to know that Jesus Christ has opened up the way, He has made it possible for you to have that kind of relationship, that kind of crying out in the middle of the night relationship.

He makes that kind of relationship with God possible because He deals with what hinders that relationship, our sin.

Our sin, our rebellion against God has separated us from Him, disconnected us from a relationship with God, but Jesus Christ came and He took on your sin and my sin, and He laid His life down so that we might be forgiven and our relationship with God restored.

Because of what Jesus accomplished at the cross we can come to God as a friend, we can have the kind of relationship with God that we can seek Him and pray to Him unashamedly.

Jesus Christ is the one who has made it possible for you and I to come boldly before God's throne, to pray to Him shamelessly.

But it isn't just shamelessness that this friend had, this guy was persistent, wasn't he?

In this passage there is this calling to be persistent in our prayers.

PERSISTENT

Jesus is showing us that if we are going to pray powerfully, we need to pray persistently.

The guy didn't just knock once; he knocked until he got an answer.

And Jesus is saying it's the same thing in our prayers isn't it, we need to be persistent.

It's what He means in verses 9-10 when He says.

[Luke 11:9-10](#) ESV

9 And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 10 For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.

The key to seeing this call to persistence, is in the present active tense of these verbs.

You can't see it so readily in the English, but in the original language it's as though Jesus is saying ask and keep on asking, seek and keep on seeking, knock and keep on knocking...

It's as if Jesus first gives us a story about persistence, and then the teaching behind it: praying powerfully is praying persistently, those who don't give up asking, seeking, knocking.

Why, though? Is it because God can't hear us, is it because we have to pester Him and pester Him until He gives us what we want? Maybe sometimes you feel like that child who just keeps asking for the same thing over and over until their parents tell them yes.

But that's not what Jesus is getting at. Persistence isn't pestering. Pestering tries to change a parent's mind — persistence trusts a Father's heart.

Our persistence in prayer is an expression of our faith.

Persistence is not wearing God down, waking Him up, or changing His mind after the hundredth time. Persistence is an expression of trust.

Kent Hughes: "Persistence is an indication of our soul's confidence." We keep asking because we know He'll answer.

If we give up, it's kind of like saying well, He's not going to answer anyways so why bother asking Him. We keep on asking because we know God's going to answer. It's like saying Lord I know that you're a faithful God, I know that you know what's best for me, I know that you will never fail me or let me down and so I'm going to keep on asking you.

We don't keep knocking because the answer depends on our knocking. We keep knocking because we know who's behind the door — the God who answers.

[Psalm 88](#) ***O Lord, God of my salvation; I cry out day and night before you. 2 Let my prayer come before you; incline your ear to my cry!***

3 For my soul is full of troubles, and my life draws near to Sheol.

Day and night he cries out and calls on God to hear, shameless persistence.

Some of us know what that feels like, some of us can identify with the psalmist in his crying out to the Lord day and night, because there are things that we have been praying for, some of us for years.

Some of us, maybe we give up too easily in our seeking after the Lord. We pray for something once, maybe twice and there doesn't seem to be any movement and we think maybe God isn't listening.

But Jesus is saying pray with persistence, don't give up. That loved one that you've been praying for to come to know the Lord, you've been praying for years, don't give up, don't take silence as a no. That job that you've been looking for, don't give up, keep on asking. That healing that you've been praying for, that

deliverance, that restoration, your marriage, children; Jesus is saying our prayers are powerful when we pray with persistence. Don't give up.

But here's the thing about persistent prayer, persistence is more than just sitting in a room and asking God for things. If we are persistent in prayer, we actually take steps in faith, trusting that God is going to answer.

Notice the increase in intensity. Ask, but don't just ask, get up and seek after what you're asking for, and don't just seek after it, but knock on doors to get it.

That's interesting isn't it? It's as though Jesus is saying that praying and action go together, that faith and action go hand in hand.

It isn't just sitting praying, "Lord will you provide a job for me? No it's asking, then it's seeking and applying for roles, and knocking on doors.

It's praying and then taking action, trusting that the Lord is going to bless your effort, it's praying that your marriage is going to get better and then taking steps to healing and health in your marriage.

It's praying for the Lord to deliver you from temptation and then putting boundaries in place, having friends you are accountable to when you go astray.

It's praying that the Lord will help you out of a situation, and then taking steps to change the situation, trusting that the Lord is going to bless your effort.

Do you see, praying persistently is more than just sitting in a room praying, it's prayer accompanied by action.

Tell me who is it that had more faith, is it the farmer who prayed for rain and then went to bed or is it the farmer that prayed for rain and then went and plowed his fields preparing for the rain to come... there is a difference.

But maybe you're sitting there thinking, wait a minute. Are you telling me I've got a blank cheque with God? That if I just ask boldly enough, persistently enough, keep on knocking long enough — God will give me anything I want?

Because verse 10 says everyone who asks receives. But receives what? That's exactly the question Jesus answers next.

Here's the third thing Jesus teaches us about praying powerfully.

Pray expectantly.

EXPECTANTLY

Read His words in verse 11 and 12.

[Luke 11:11-12](#) ESV

11 What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; 12 or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?

Notice what the son is asking for, the son is asking for good things, things that he needs, he's asking for a fish, he's asking for an egg. Those are both things a son needs for sustenance, for survival. Notice he's not asking for riches or treasures or power or prestige, he's asking for good things that he needs.

And I think that's the key, when we come to God and ask Him for good things, we can expect that our good and faithful heavenly Father is going to provide the good things we need.

It's what we talked about last week,

[1 John 5:14](#) ESV

14 And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.

No good father would withhold good things from their child and if fallen fathers like me can recognize that, surely our good heavenly Father can recognize that.

No good father would give their son something that harms them, you wouldn't give them a scorpion, you wouldn't give them a snake. Do you see the point that Jesus is making?

He will freely give us good things when we ask, seek, knock, but He will never give us something that will harm us and folks sometimes we're asking for scorpions and snakes, and we don't even realize it.

Because God is a good, good father, He doesn't give us what we want all the time, but He gives us what we need. And it may seem so important to us that He answers this prayer, and it seems so urgent, but God knows our hearts and He knows what's best for us.

I want to share with you a secret. I actually love saying yes to my kids, I hate saying no. I want to say yes as much as possible, because I love seeing my kids happy, I do.

But as much as I hate saying no, sometimes, sometimes I have to because what they want is harmful for them, what they want is to watch TV and play video games and stay on their devices until their brain rots out, what they want is to eat cake, and candy, and chips until their bellies hang over their belts or their teeth rot. What they want may not be helpful for them; what they are asking for may be harmful for them, and they don't realize it.

And they can ask and seek and knock, all they want, as much as they want, but because I love them, because it's not good for them, the answer may be no.

I remember when I was looking for a job, just bought a new house, Ally was pregnant with Kyla, and I was panicking looking for a job. And I would go for an interview praying so hard that this one would be the one I would get, and I would think it was a slam dunk only to be denied the job. And I would get so angry with God and I'd say, "Don't you understand my situation, don't you see how desperate I am? I pray every day to you about the same thing and still no answer."

But then a few years later I'd find out that the company went bankrupt or the job I was going for was eliminated about a year later and I just would have been back out looking for a new job. Sometimes we're asking for scorpions, and we don't even realize it.

Could you imagine for a moment what a disaster it would be if God answered every prayer we brought to Him, if He just gave us everything we desire?

Praying expectantly doesn't mean expecting the outcome I scripted. It means expecting the God who answers to answer with what's good.

I think of Paul. In [2 Corinthians 12](#) Paul tells us about a thorn in his flesh, something that was causing him pain, hindering his life and his ministry. We don't know exactly what it was, and I think that's on purpose — because we all have our own thorn.

And Paul pleaded with the Lord to take it away. Not once, not twice, three times he went before the Lord and said deliver me from this.

Now think about that. This is Paul. The guy who wrote a third of the New Testament, who planted churches across the Roman empire, who saw the risen Christ with his own eyes. If anybody could get a prayer through to heaven, surely it's him. And what did God say?

2 Corinthians 12:8–9 ESV

8 *Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. 9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."*

God said no. But notice — the no was not a non-answer. Paul asked for the thorn to be removed, and God gave him something better. My grace is sufficient for you.

Do you see what God gave Paul instead of what he asked for? Not a thing at all. He gave him more of Himself.

And that's exactly where Jesus lands this whole teaching on prayer. Because the Father's best answer to prayer isn't a gift. It's the Giver.

Jesus closes by saying, in order to pray powerfully, we need to pray for the Holy Spirit.

HOLY SPIRIT

Read verse 13.

Luke 11:13 ESV

¹³ *If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!*

Praying for the Holy Spirit and you say wait now, Pastor Dave, have you gone Pentecostal on us? Well, believe it or not, we Baptist believe in the power of the Holy Spirit too.

Let me be clear, that if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you have the fullness of the Holy Spirit and His power living in you. You are fully indwelt with the Holy Spirit the moment you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, there is no second filling of the Holy Spirit, only one, there is no second baptism of the Holy Spirit only one.

That being said, there are times and seasons where we as believers are more filled with the Holy Spirit than others, there are seasons where the work of the Holy Spirit is more evident in our lives than others.

And the greatest answer to prayer that God can give us is to give us more of His Holy Spirit... it's why Jesus says what He says as He ends this section.

If you and I as sinful parents know how to give good gifts to our children how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him.

Why would Jesus say that at the end of this teaching on prayer? Well, because the Holy Spirit is the one who brings to life the reality of the Christian life, the Holy Spirit is the answer to every request, every prayer that we could bring to the Lord.

Think about it, who is it that brings about new life in the heart of the unbeliever, the Holy Spirit. If you don't know Jesus this morning, and you are praying for

salvation, well salvation happens the moment the Holy Spirit comes into your heart and makes you a new creation, you need the Holy Spirit.

And if you are praying before the Lord this morning and you don't know what to pray, [Romans 8](#) tells us who intercedes in our groanings to help us pray when we don't know what to say, the Holy Spirit.

If you are here this morning and you need comfort and strength, who is the comforter? The Holy Spirit. Who gives us strength? The Holy Spirit.

And if you are here seeking wisdom and understanding, who is it that is called the Spirit of Wisdom?

If you are here this morning and you are battling sin and temptation, who is it that gives us power to put to death the deeds of the flesh, the Holy Spirit.

Who is it that cleanses us, empowers us, gives us the gifts of ministry, equips us, teaches us, who is that seals us for salvation until the day of Christ, who is it that is at work within us to glorify Christ in this world, who is it that convicts us of sin and draws us back unto the Father?

I'll tell you! The Holy Spirit!

Do you see why Jesus would end this section the way He does? If we are going to pray boldly, if we are going to do anything of any worth in this life for the glory of Christ and if we are going to see any victory it is because we have been indwelt and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

And so pray, pray this morning in all your prayers, "Lord, would you stir up the work of the Holy Spirit within me this morning." The greatest answer to prayer that Jesus could give you is more of His presence, the greatest gift is the Holy Spirit.

Remember that one phone call? Everything hangs on who's on the other end.

Well, here's the good news of this passage: you don't get one call. You have a Father who picks up every time — at midnight, at 2:00 am, in your worst moment, with your weakest words.

So come to Him boldly. Keep on knocking. Trust Him with the answer. And ask Him for the best gift of all — more of Himself.

Because powerful prayer is bold, persistent, and finds its power in the God who answers.

Church — the line is open. Pray.