

Motivations to Keep Praying

Luke 11:5–13 (ESV)

INTRODUCTION: Last week, we saw the disciples make a request of Jesus that he teach them to pray, as John also taught his disciples. Jesus responded with what has commonly been called “**The Lord’s Prayer**.” This week, he follows up on that teaching with three key motivations for prayer.

CONTEXT: I have found that people don’t pray mainly because they lack motivation. They are not convinced that it would do any good. If they get in a situation that is entirely beyond their control, they will give prayer a shot as a last resort.

JOKE: You’ve heard of the group of people who had used up all other options, and finally, someone says, “I guess we should pray,” to which another said, “Has it come to that?”

Prayer can be that way - ***a last resort rather than a primary resource***.

ILLUSTRATION: I’ve explained it this way. Suppose I said this morning that we are going to dedicate this entire hour to prayer in groups of 4 or 5. How would you feel? Excited? Pumped? Let’s be honest; maybe I’m a little frustrated and uncomfortable. But suppose that the ground beneath us suddenly started to shake, and we found ourselves in the middle of a massive earthquake. The ceiling begins to fall - suddenly. Does prayer suddenly become much easier? Of course. Why? Motivation.

Well, that’s **negative motivation**...today, our Lord is going to provide us with **positive motivation** to pray.

- You see - if you know how to read but do not read, for all practical purposes you are **illiterate**. Most men never read a single book after they graduate high school. For all practical purposes, they are illiterate.
- In the same way - I would say to you that if you know how to pray but never actually practice prayer, **for all practical purposes, you are AGNOSTIC**.

That is, you believe God is up there somewhere, BUT he has a lot on his plate, so why bother Him? He is likely to do what he was going to do anyway - your words will change things very little.

Now, whether or not it is deliberate or unintentional, that is precisely where the enemy has some of you. Today’s text holds the potential of changing that.

Last week, we saw that Jesus taught them “**HOW to pray**.” He gave the example prayer commonly known as the Lord’s prayer. Today, he is teaching them **WHY to pray**. In other words, he is speaking to the motivation to pray.

The first reason He gives is that we are to...

1. Pray, because you know God as friend.

He begins with an illustration.

TEXT: Luke 11:5–13 (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, ⁶for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; ⁷and 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’? ⁸I 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.”

So, there are **three characters** in this parable...the guest, the host, and the annoyed friend.

- **The Guest** - We don't know who he is; we assumed he was unannounced since the host wasn't prepared AND he had arrived at midnight. I imagine Cousin Eddie from *Christmas Vacation* pulling up in the RV.
- **The Host** - The Middle East is a hospitality culture - it was customary that if you had a guest, no matter when they arrived, you were to arise and prepare a meal for them. But, the host had no bread to set before him. He is entirely unprepared.
- **The Annoyed Friend** - So as the *guest* is settling in, the host slips out and goes next door to his friend's house... AFTER MIDNIGHT...and begins to knock on the door.

Have you ever had a knock on your door after midnight? At first, you think you are dreaming... but it continues...What do you assume? It is usually not good news.... KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK. In that day, the entire family would sleep on a mat with pillows together, typically around a small oven to keep warm. But this night, he is startled awake. *“Shalom, the friend calls out... it's me, your neighbor... I was wondering... could you loan me a few pieces of bread? We've had company arrive, and I am completely out”*.

Imagine what this guy was thinking... NO... tell your company to go to bed, and he will forget that he is hungry. KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK... come on man, I really need that bread, and you borrowed my hammer last week, and I still haven't gotten it back...KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK.

Jesus says, 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.”

Impudence - lack of sensitivity to what is proper, zero decorum, carelessness about the good opinion of others, *shamelessness, impertinence, ignoring of convention*¹.

Jesus says - that ***impudence opened doors that friendship would not.***

WHAT IS THE MORAL OF THE STORY? He is NOT suggesting that the purpose of prayer is to annoy the stew out of God. He is not suggesting that God is not inclined to answer your prayers, but if you ask Him enough, He will come around.

ARGUMENTUM A PRIORI - This is one of Jesus' favorite modes of teaching - it is what is called "**Argumentum A Priori**".

That is - if we can all agree that exhibit A is self evidently true, **HOW MUCH MORE should** exhibit B be true?

EXAMPLES:

- **LILIES OF THE FIELD** - It is the same approach he took in his teaching about worry - consider the lilies of the field, they neither toil nor spin... but even Solomon in all of his glory was not clothed like them. If God cares so for the flowers of the field that are here today and gone tomorrow... HOW MUCH MORE will he care for you?
- **SPARROWS**
Matthew 10:29 (ESV)
²⁹ "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny?"
Luke 12:6 (ESV)
⁶ "Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies?"

That extra sparrow is just thrown in - it's the ODD sparrow. Ever heard someone called an odd bird? That's where it comes from. Think about that 5th sparrow....he is about the least valuable thing on the planet, I suppose.

Then Jesus says, "Yet not one of them falls to the ground without your heavenly father knowing it... if He cares so for the sparrow... **how much more does he care for you?**"

NOW BACK TO THE ILLUSTRATION ABOUT PRAYER -

So Jesus is saying - if impudent persistence in the request eventually moved this annoyed friend to give the man some bread... HOW MUCH MORE will God be moved if you persist in prayer? He DELIGHTS in answering your prayer.

¹ William Arndt et al., [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 63.

2 Chronicles 16:9 (ESV)

“⁹ For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him.”

God wants to support you! You don't have to twist His arm. He is your friend!

1. *Pray, because you know God as friend.*

2. Pray, because you know God's format.

In other words, pray, because you understand something of God's design for how things work.

⁹ “And I tell you, **ask**, and it will be given to you;”

Let that sink it - Jesus Christ said, “ASK!” Well, I don't know... ASK! Err on the side of asking!

9b. “**seek**, and you will find;”

This implies that something is elusive, uncertain...SEEK!

9c. “**knock**, and it will be opened to you.”

Listen, some doors are closed... just to see if you will knock.

HOW DO YOU KNOCK? Once? No, a series of knocks...

¹⁰ “For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.”

Now take that at face value - Jesus is saying, ASK! God wants to answer!

THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT - The same God who *ordains the end* also *ordains the means* to that end.

Let me explain - God can do and will do anything He ultimately desires to do. He has all authority, all power; there is not a demon in all of hell that can keep God's will from being accomplished. YET, God has ordained just as sure as water is wet that **PRAYER is ALWAYS the means to His decreed end. ALWAYS.**

In other words, when God gets ready to do something, the first thing he does is prompt someone to pray.

You say, well, Pastor, He never prompts me to pray. Perhaps not, perhaps you've ignored him so many times that he has moved on to another...OR PERHAPS, you misinterpret the prompt.

But, that is how God has formatted this planet - His Kingdom comes, His will is done through the auspices of faithful, believing, fervent prayer.

THE PROPHET ISAIAH - Isaiah 62:6–7 (ESV)

⁶ “On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have set watchmen; all the day and all the night they shall never be silent. You who put the Lord in remembrance, take no rest, ⁷ **and give him no rest until he establishes Jerusalem and makes it a praise in the earth.**”

Give God NO REST. Do you have a child that is wandering from the faith... give God no rest! Cry out day and night on their behalf.

ILLUSTRATION: Monica was the mother of Augustine. She was a godly woman, but Augustine had not come to faith in Christ. In fact he was far from the things of God. She went one day to her pastor, Bishop Ambrose and asked for counsel. Ambrose said, “I’m not only certain that your son will come to faith, but I am certain God will use him mightily”. How can you be so sure, she replied...because God has burdened you to pray. You see, God always tips His hand - you can know exactly what God is going to do by the prayer burden of His people.

Don’t give up, accept the burden!

WHAT ABOUT ABRAHAM PRAYING FOR SODOM?

Genesis 18:23–26 (ESV)

²³ “Then Abraham drew near and said, “Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? ²⁴ Suppose there are **fifty righteous** within the city. Will you then sweep away the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous who are in it? ²⁵ Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?” ²⁶ And the Lord said, “If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city, I will spare the whole place for their sake.”

Then he continues, 45, 40, 20, 10...every time God complies, you wonder what would have happened if he continued down to ONE.

HOW ABOUT JACOB WRESTLING WITH GOD?

One like unto the son of God wrestled with Jacob all night...

Genesis 32:26 (ESV)

²⁶ Then he said, “Let me go, for the day has broken.” But Jacob said, “I will not let you go unless you bless me.”

Sometimes I think we let go far too soon. God has formatted things so that you must persist.

THINK OF THE SYROPHOENICIAN WOMAN - Matthew 15:22–28 (ESV)

²² “And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, ‘Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon’.”

²³ But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, “Send her away, for she is crying out after us.” ²⁴ He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” ²⁵ But she came and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, help me.” ²⁶ And he answered, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.” ²⁷ She said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.” ²⁸ Then Jesus answered her, “O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.” And her daughter was healed instantly.

Remember the acronym PUSH - Pray Until Something Happens. God is honored by your persistence.

Pray because you know God as a friend; pray because you know God’s format...

3. Pray, because you know God as father.

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? 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!”

ILLUSTRATION: Once, when our kids were little, we were eating grapes, and Caitlyn wanted one, but I slipped in an olive instead. Oh the look on her face...

While I may have played a joke, I would have never actually harmed her.

No father would do such a thing - if a child asks for fish what father would give them a viper? If the child asks for an egg, would you give him a scorpion?

NO, John Gotti wouldn’t do that. Hitler wouldn’t do that. And you wouldn’t do that.

Again, this is that Argumentum A Prior - The point is...HOW MUCH MORE. If you, being a fallen sinner, still delight in taking care of your kids... HOW MUCH MORE will a perfect Heavenly Father do the same?

Don’t you see - God is not trying to hold out on you! He is for you! He delights in blessing you! All you have to do is ASK!

Ephesians 3:20 (ESV)

“²⁰ Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us.”

You say Pastor - I have prayed, but my prayers are not being answered. Why is that?

7 REASONS WHY OUR PRAYERS ARE NOT ANSWERED:

1. **Lack of Faith** - James declares that we must pray “in faith, nothing doubting”. (Jas. 1:6).
2. **Lack of Obedience** - **Isaiah 59:2 (ESV)**

² “but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.”

3. Lack of Marital Order - 1 Peter 3:7 (ESV)

“⁷ Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.”

4. **Lack of Persistence** - I’m convinced many of us give up just before the breakthrough.
5. **Lack of Forgiveness** - We saw this last week. Sometimes, we harbor a grudge against others, and it can hinder our prayer.
6. **Lack of Timing** - Sometimes, God’s answer is, “Not yet... but keep asking”.
7. **Lack of Perspective** - Sometimes, James says our prayers are not answered because we are simply praying selfishly. We are failing to get connected to the heart of God first.

Manly Beasley said it this way - *you get with God, and God will get with you.* The goal in prayer is to be so attuned to the Holy Spirit that you are praying in HIS will.

If we don’t know His will, we are to cast all of our cares upon Him and say with Christ, “Not my will, but thy will be done”.

CONCLUSION/INVITATION:

Adrian Rogers said it this way -

*The devil cannot keep God from answering
Therefore, he must keep you from asking!*

Jesus says to you today - ASK! You will receive... SEEK! You will find....KNOCK! It will be opened unto you.

Remember the words of Paul in Romans 8:32 (ESV)

“³² He who did not spare his own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things?”