



THE PERSISTENT WIDOW
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The Crossing Church
Las Vegas, Nevada

OPENING

This week we are continuing our study called **79 Miles With Jesus**. This is the distance from the Sea of Galilee, where Jesus conducted the majority of His ministry, to Jerusalem. He had traveled this road many times, but this would be the last one -- He was literally walking toward the Cross. This series leads up to Easter as we journey with Jesus and His followers during which stories about the people they encounter teach us lessons about the priorities of Jesus' Kingdom. This week's study is about the power of prayer.

SCRIPTURE¹

Luke 18:1-8a Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said, "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with a plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary'. For some time, he refused. But finally, he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care what people think, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!' And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly."

Luke 11:9-13 So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?

Luke 18:8b However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?

GOD'S PROMISES

Luke 22:42 Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.

Hebrews 13:5 Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.

Philippians 4:19 And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:31 If God is for us, who can be against us?

1 John 4-4b The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

Romans 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture referenced here is NIV

Philippians 1:6b He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

OBSERVATION

We are again following along as Jesus and His disciples traveled toward Jerusalem for the Passover Feast. But this time, Jesus knew He would not be going back home. Within days He would be arrested – put on trial – and crucified. The temperature was being turned up and the intensity was growing. Events were going to change for the worse and Jesus wanted to be sure His disciples were prepared. Luke reports that Jesus told His followers to **always pray and not give up**. This statement is for us, too. They were facing the greatest disappointment they had ever experienced when their Messiah died and it rocked their faith. They wondered if they had just wasted three years of their lives following Jesus. So, He was talking to His disciples about what really matters and was calling them to die to themselves and become passionate, faithful and prayerful followers.

QUESTION: When have you been so disappointed by God that you couldn't even pray?

QUESTION: When have you wondered if God hears your prayers or even cares about your struggles?

The two characters in this parable are an unjust judge and a persistent widow. Judges were often corrupt in this society, so trying to get justice in this environment was difficult, but the woman persisted until the judge agreed to help her in order to make her go away! This parable is a little confusing as it is representing us as the persistent widow and God as the judge who doesn't care about people, but that isn't our God at all, is it? But this is not a parable of **comparison** -- it is a parable of **contrast**.

APPLICATION

We are facing unsettled times after a year of isolation and illness and it would not be unusual if we experienced disappointment or doubt that God is good. Sometimes we feel like we are in a crisis and God doesn't seem to be responding or we can't get His attention. Most of us would agree that God is **great** and that He is all powerful and all knowing. After all, He created the world. So, then, we would agree that God is good, too. Yet we ask ourselves, "Why doesn't He answer our prayers sometimes?" Jesus wants to talk to us about all of this. He says, if the unjust judge will give in because of persistence how much more will a loving father grant the requests of his children. The point is not that we pester God with prayer until He gives in -- instead, it is that we **aren't** pestering God at all when we pray -- so we should **never give up!!** God tells us to ask, seek and knock without ceasing for our God is a Father we can call on as Abba or Daddy. We can view Him as a father who wants to give his children only good things. God is not bothered by our persistence -- He is honored by it.

QUESTION: When you think of your father's love, in what ways can his be compared to God's love for you?

QUESTION: If God answered "yes" to everything you prayed for, what would be different in your world today?

Praying with persistence changes our perspective of God. It is not just praying for something, it is praying through something. Many of us have a list we are praying **for**, but God wants us to pray **through** our situations. He does more in us during the waiting than He could ever do in the delivering. That's the kind of prayer Jesus prayed in Gethsemane when He was just hours away from the Cross – "yet not my will but yours, Father." When we see Him as a loving Father, our perspective changes. We don't need to be afraid to share our desires or needs with Him – it won't make Him mad at us – but praying for His will as we wait upon Him gives Him joy.

QUESTION: When have you been afraid to approach God with your needs, fears, or disappointments because you thought He would be mad at you?

QUESTION: How does your perspective of Him as Abba Father change the way you approach Him?

The purpose of prayer is to surrender our will, not impose it. It is not about moving God, but to be moved by Him. It is not to convince Him to do our bidding, but getting to the place where we are willing to do His will. We can learn to do this by linking our prayers to God's promises – to take the promises of God and pray through them. (See page #1)

QUESTION: When have you prayed the promises of God over your family? If you haven't yet done this, how do you think they will respond if you do?

Remember, it is God's work not ours. He promises to complete the good work that He started in us and will continue to direct our lives. All He asks is our submission and obedience in return for His holy guidance and protection.

QUESTION: How has this study changed your prayer life? Have you set aside time every day to pray?

QUESTION: In Luke 18, Jesus asks if He will find faith when He returns. He's speaking to you personally. When you introspectively think about this question, what is your response?

QUESTION: How does the Holy Spirit influence your prayers?

Our persistence in prayer has the potential to move the heart of God.

PRAYER

Abba Father, we want to have a conversation with You and be completely honest about our disappointments, sins and fears. Help us to ask, seek and knock as we pray for Your will to be done in our lives. You are the Almighty God of Creation, to be held in awe, worthy to be worshiped and revered, and yet we are so grateful to be able to speak to You as Abba Father and know You love us as Your children and will never leave us or forsake us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

QUESTIONS

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