

The Parables of Jesus #21
The Parable of the Friend at Midnight
(Lk. 11:1-13)
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INTRODUCTION

A. Do you know how to pray?

1. Most Christians would probably say, "Well, sure. I know how to pray."
2. Much of the time we question whether we pray enough, but not whether we know "how" to pray.
3. Would it surprise you to learn that praying enough is directly related to knowing "how" to pray?

B. Again, we find that the parable of the friend who comes at midnight is a story best understood within the context

1. Luke 11:1-13 (read)
2. The context is one in which Jesus teaches how to pray

C. There is an extremely important point made here about prayer

1. The point is that prayer involves more than just saying words
2. Prayer has some unique qualities that we often neglect
3. We will see that frequency, persistence and determination are essential to knowing "how" to pray

I. BACKGROUND TO THE PARABLE (Lk. 11:1-4)

A. The disciple's request (11:1)

1. Jesus had been praying in a certain place
 - a. the gospels are replete with examples of Jesus praying
 - b. alone and with others
 - c. in the wilderness
 - d. on a mountain
 - e. early in the morning
 - f. late at night
 - g. all night
2. Obviously his disciples had been watching him pray
3. One of the disciples made a very specific request
 - a. he did not ask for Jesus to teach him "how" to pray
 - b. he asked that Jesus teach him "to pray"
4. This disciple had seen John the baptist teach his disciples to pray

B. Jesus gives a model prayer as a guideline (Lk 11:2-4)

1. Note the similarity to Mt 6:9-13
2. Two basic elements
 - a. praise and thanks
 - b. petitions

C. Because of the brevity of this instruction, we might conclude:

1. Prayer shouldn't be something that's difficult to do
2. Prayer doesn't depend on a formula
3. Prayer isn't effective because we use technical or poetic language
4. Prayer is designed to be simple and easy
5. Prayer is designed to promote confident communication with God
6. The most important element to prayer is praying!

II. THE PARABLE OF THE MIDNIGHT FRIEND (Lk 11:5-8)

A. Story summary

1. You have had company show up late at night
2. You're unprepared -- you don't have food to serve
3. But you've got a friend who lives close by, so you go to his house to borrow some bread
4. You knock on the door and he asks who it is and what you want
5. You tell him you want to borrow three loaves of bread to feed your guests
6. He complains that it's late, the kids are in bed, and so is he -- he wants you to leave him alone
7. But you know that if you persist, he will eventually get up and lend you the bread
8. More than that -- he knows if you persist that he will get up and help

B. Simple story, but the message is based on the relationship involved

1. He is a friend
 - a. not an enemy or even a mere acquaintance
 - b. this is a person you know, trust, and love
2. He is someone you believe can and will help you
 - a. that's why you go in the first place
 - b. it's also why you don't give up when he first refuses
3. He is someone who will still be a friend after he responds
 - a. that's what friendship is all about
 - b. friends go beyond the norm for us
4. As a friend, he is someone you trust and depend on

III. THE PARABLE EXPLAINED (Lk 11:9-13)

A. Jesus states a conclusion about prayer from the story

1. Luke 11:9 -- 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. (NKJ)
2. Look at the three important words
 - a. ask
 - b. seek
 - c. knock
3. There is something important about these words
 - a. they do not instruct on the "how"
 - b. they instruct on the doing

B. Jesus' reasoning (based on the story)

1. Luke 11:10 -- For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. (NKJ)
2. This is consistent with the many passages that simply tell us that God wants us to pray

C. Note the following

1. 2 Chr 7:14
if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. (NKJ)
2. Isa 41:17
The poor and needy seek water, but there is none, their tongues fail for thirst. I, the LORD, will hear them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them. (NKJ)
3. Zech 13:9
I will bring the one-third through the fire, will refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them. I will say, "This is My people"; and each one will say, "The LORD is my God." (NKJ)
4. Matt 21:22
And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive." (NKJ)
5. John 15:7
If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. (NKJ)
6. I Jn 5:14-15
Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him. (NKJ)

D. This is one of our greatest needs -- to pray

1. We used to be a more praying people than we are now
 - a. mid-week services used to be "prayer meetings" but now they are mostly "study meetings"
 - b. many of us have abandoned the daily practice of prayer
 - c. for some, prayer has become a fearful exercise, rather than communication with a friend
2. We need for Jesus to teach us to pray
 - a. not "how" to pray
 - b. we need once again to be taught the most important lesson of all
 - c. we need to learn the power of asking, seeking, knocking
 - d. there is where answers to prayer are found

CONCLUSION

A. Too many are concerned with saying the right words

1. Jesus was more concerned with saying words!
2. God is more interested in the act of prayer than he is with how the prayer is worded

B. Besides, God even promises to help us pray

1. Rom 8:26 -- Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. (NKJ)
2. But the Holy Spirit cannot help you with the expression of your prayer if there is no prayer to begin with

C. Invitation