

## Is Your Theology of Prayer Biblical? (Luke 11:5-13)

*Summary (v.1-4):* Jesus teaches His disciples how to pray. While this is not a mantra, it is a model of principles that should be reflected in all the disciples of Jesus throughout history.

*Forgiveness (v.4):* this prayer assumes the regular need to confess sin (1 Jn. 1:9). This issue is not justification but cleansing from sin. The scene is not a courtroom where the final judgment is being pronounced, but a family setting where a son or daughter is to confess his or her sin, not to remain part of the family (adoption) but so that nothing will spoil the relationship between God and His children of the faith.

### 1. The Petition of Prayer (v.5-7)

- After teaching His disciples the principles of prayer, He then illustrates:
  - “Which one of you...?” (v.5) sets the “stage” for Jesus to say something blatantly evident and rhetorical. This story is intended to be absurd.

The unexpected friend, reasonable request at an unreasonable hour, and quadruple rejection (v.5):

- The setting is a village where all the houses are near one another.
- A friend has “showed up” unexpectedly at midnight. We are not informed why.
- Hospitality is culturally valued during this time. It was considered a “duty.” A visitor, especially a friend, was to be welcomed and cared for, regardless of the hour of arrival. This includes being “fed.” This man has no bread left over, as bread is baked daily and typically consumed the same day it is made. He is in a bind.
- The demands of hospitality and friendship necessitated him to act. He had to find some bread, so he went to his neighbor, whom he calls “friend.” He makes a reasonable request at an unreasonable hour. The request was not for himself but for his guest.

*The quadruple refusal:* The neighbor provides four excuses for why he cannot meet the man’s need: “(1) Do not bother me, (2) the door is shut, (3) the children are asleep, (4) I cannot get up.”

- First-century Palestinian houses typically had one room where the parents and children slept on mats.
- The “friend” did not return the salutation, demonstrating the man’s agitation. It is not the man’s inability but unwillingness. If he gets out of bed, he can go back to bed. If he wakes the children, they can go back to sleep. If he opens the door, he can shut it.

### 2. The Provision of Prayer (v.8-12)

The reason why the grouchy neighbor will grant this man’s request:

A. *Because of the requester’s “impudence.”*

- The Greek word is translated as: “persistence” or “shameless audacity” (NIV), “importunity” (KJV), “shameless persistence” (NLT), “persistence” (NASB), “persistence” (Holman), or “impudence” (ESV).
- To be impudent is to be “shamelessly presumptuous.” This is someone who acts without any sensibility of disgrace. It is often used in a pejorative manner.

B. *To avoid shame.*

- While the grumpy neighbor is not getting up because he loves the man in need, he will meet the need because of the cultural context of hospitality and honor of the family’s name.
- If this “shamelessly, persistent and audacious” man keeps talking and making the request, the neighbors will eventually be disturbed, or the man in need will go to another neighbor’s house.

Ultimately, the grouchy neighbor did not meet the need because he loved the man but because of the man’s audacity and fear of dishonor in the village.

The Father is not grouchy (v.9):

- God does not have to be awakened, for He does not sleep nor slumber (Ps. 121:4).
- He is not cajoled into giving us what we ask for.
- He gives gifts to the ungodly and ungrateful without their asking, seeking, or knocking. He loves to help people in need (Ps. 34:15).
- Jesus uses an ascending intensity and intention of prayer and petition: ask (requesting assistance), seek (asking and action), and knock (acting plus perseverance).
- Asking, seeking, and knocking are synonymous terms that do not necessarily reflect prayer’s intensity, persistence, and frequency.

Beware of a “water-bucket” theology that argues intensity, persistence, and frequency in prayer will “move” God to “shower” blessings on those who ask. God does not factor in “thresholds.” Jesus is not making distinctions between asking, seeking, and knocking. God already knows. We pray because God wills to use prayer as a vehicle for His will.

Prayer has efficacy not in the intensity, persistence, or frequency but in how God chooses to hallow His name (v.2) and further His agenda and kingdom through you (v.2-4). God promises to: give us what we need when we need it (v.3), order our lives for His glory (v.2), forgive (cleanse) us from our sins (v.4; 1 Jn. 1:9), sanctify us as we forgive others (v.4), deliver us from temptation as we exercise His grace in us (Jas. 1:3-17), be merciful to the contrite of heart (Ps. 51:17), save, sanctify, and preserve His people (Eph. 1; Jn. 10), give wisdom to those who ask (Jas. 1:5), etc.

Why pray?

- God uses prayer to shape, mold, fashion, and align our wills to His. He can respond in three ways: (1) Yes (immediately), (2) No, wait (not yet), or (3) no, never (for reasons known to Him alone). Our prayer must not be selfish (Jas. 4:2) but kingdom-oriented according to His will.

### 3. The Promise of Prayer (v.13)

*God’s greatest gift is Himself: Jesus → Holy Spirit (v.13)*

- Pre-Pentecost: The Spirit was with them during the ministry of Jesus (Jn. 14:17) but will be in them following His death, resurrection, and ascension.
- Post-Pentecost: The pouring out of the Holy Spirit in the first century in the gospel’s spread (Acts 1:5-9; 2:1-41; Acts 4:8-13, 31; 6:3-5, 8-10; 7:54-60; Ezek. 36:26-27; Joel 2:28, 29, 32).
- Church Age (Post First-Century): His people possess His Spirit in His entirety. While they possess the Spirit in His fulness, they do not walk in His fulness. How does the Holy Spirit operate today? The Spirit’s resource in His fulness can be accessed as He fills us (Eph. 5:18), which primarily encompasses the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23), as God works His will in us (Phil. 2:12-13; Col. 1:29). The Spirit provides enablement and interpretation of prayer (Rom. 8:23-27) and grants wisdom and knowledge of Christ (Jn. 16:14; Eph. 1:17).

For an unbeliever, it would include the Spirit’s coming in the experience of salvation (Acts 2:38; 11:15-18). The theology of Luke-Acts is that the Holy Spirit will come upon the disciples after the ascension of Jesus (24:49; Acts 1:4, 7-8; 2:1-21). Luke’s understanding of the Holy Spirit is not flat and merely dispensational, but robust as the Spirit permeates the ministry of Jesus and the apostolic cohort both before and after Pentecost.

God promises that His will is done and is named hallowed as His children seek His kingdom and righteousness first (Matt. 6:8, 32; Jas. 4:2). They can be persistent without presuming and audacious without assuming in areas that do not concern His kingdom. Water-bucket theology must be rejected.

v.5-8 and 11-13 revolve around what is expected in relationships defined by friendships and family relations. The Father is not like the cranky neighbor. He loves His children.