

Luke 11:5-13

Luke 11:5(NASB) Then He said to them, “Suppose one of you has a friend, and goes to him at midnight and says to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves; ⁶ for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; ⁷ and from inside he answers and says, ‘Do not bother me; the door has already been shut and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.’ ⁸ “I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs. 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. ¹⁰ “For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened. ¹¹ “Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? ¹² “Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he? ¹³ “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?”

Jesus gives this parable in response to His disciples’ request. They had correctly noted that His power and effectiveness in ministry was connected to His prayer life, so they asked Him for instruction on how to pray (vs. 1).

In every service situation there are three parties, just as in this parable – the person (or persons) in need (the “friend” in need, arriving at midnight), the person called upon to meet the spiritual need (“one of you” – the man visited at midnight), and God who alone has the resources to meet the spiritual need through us (the “friend” awakened, as will become clear in the following verses). Jesus is saying: “You will be able to effectively serve other people by praying to God – not in some



religious way, but with three heart-attitudes – *willingness to serve*, *helplessness*, and *shameless audacity*.

Willingness to serve

In the ancient world, there were very few inns, and predictable travel schedules were non-existent. This is one reason why hospitality was a solemn duty. “A visitor was to be welcomed and cared for, regardless of the hour of his arrival.”* This man who was visited at midnight could have put a pillow over his ears, but he acknowledged his responsibility to help, and got out of bed and opened the door.

God is daily sending us people who have spiritual needs. Some we already anticipate and have scheduled time for, but some are unexpected “interruptions” – like this man who came at midnight. Some are obviously “spiritually important,” but some are less obvious though just as important. Some come to us and ask for help, but some require our notice and initiative toward them.

God wants to serve them through us, and this is our greatest privilege and responsibility in life. Will I get out of bed, or will I put a pillow over my ears? This is the attitude of *willingness* – to open myself to serve the person in need. There are lots of ways to put a pillow over our ears.

- We can fundamentally reject serving others as a life-style responsibility.
- We can decide that we will not serve today, that today is a “me” day.
- We can decide to serve only those we expect, but not those who “interrupt” us.

* Darrell L. Bock, *The NIV Application Commentary: Luke* (Zondervan, 1996), p. 310.



- We can decide to serve only those who are in our tribe, but not those who are different from us.
- We can decide to serve only those whom we feel competent to serve, not those who are “over my head.”

So this kind of prayer begins with the choice before God to be willing to serve others, but it doesn't end there . . .

Helplessness

When the visited man goes to his neighbor friend, he says “I have *nothing* to set before him.” He not only doesn't have any extra bread; he doesn't even have the flour to make bread! He goes to his neighbor because he knows he is *helpless* to provide what is needed, and he *expresses this helplessness* to his neighbor friend.

This is our position in *every* serving situation. Whether it is sharing our faith with a neighbor, or spending quality time with our grandchildren or spouse, or preparing for and/or giving a teaching, or visiting a friend who is facing a health challenge, etc. – whatever the situation, we have *nothing* to set before them. This is what Jesus means when He says, “Apart from Me, you can do nothing (Jn. 15:4,5; see also 2 Cor. 2:16; 3:5,6a).” We do not have the love or the wisdom or the power or the patience or the courage or the clarity of speech. Only God has the spiritual life that they need. Our part is to acknowledge our utter helplessness *to ourselves* and *express this helplessness to Him*. Sometimes we can stop and do this out loud and/or with a brother or sister. More often, we express this silently to the Lord.

Some of us pray rarely or never in these situations because we don't believe we are helpless. Jack Miller says: “Increasingly I saw myself as a desperately needy person, like the man who goes to his friend at midnight and says, ‘I have nothing.’ Before this, my problem in praying was that I had something – namely, reliance on myself, my training, my



study, and my work. But the man at midnight has *no* bread for himself or for others.”†

Some of us know we have nothing, but we let our inadequacy paralyze us from going to God. Andrew Murray says, “Do not become (discouraged) because of your helplessness. Above all, don’t let it prevent you from praying. Helplessness is the real secret and impelling power of prayer . . . For it is only when we are helpless that we open our hearts to Jesus and let Him help us . . . according to His grace and mercy.”‡

So let us turn to God in every serving situation, both affirming our willingness to serve and admitting our helplessness. To these, add one additional attitude . . .

Shameless audacity

Why did the neighbor agree to get up and give the man as much as he needed for his guest? Jesus uses the Greek word *anaideia* – the only time this word is used in the New Testament. The NASB wrongly translates it “persistence.” The NIV is closer with “shameless audacity.” *Anaideia* means “shamelessness,” “impudence,” “without regard for etiquette.” Stated simply, this man won’t take “No” for an answer. He insists: “This guest has come to my door, and I don’t have anything to give to him. You have what he needs, so it doesn’t matter what time it is. You must give it to me so I can give it to him!”

Jesus says we should pray like this in every serving situation, expecting to receive what we ask for: “So . . . ask, and it *will* be given to you” (vs. 9,10). On what basis can we ask in this way? *Not* because we’ve been so morally awesome lately, or because we are important people, or because we feel confident, or even because the need is urgent. We can ask with shameless audacity because God is our Father.

† Jack Miller, *Outgrowing the Ingrown Church* (Zondervan, 1986), p. 96.

‡ O. Hallesby, *Prayer* (Augsburg, 1975), p. 21.



¹¹ “Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? ¹² “Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he?”

Unlike the neighbor, God is *not* a reluctant helper. He is our Father who is gracious and generous, who has promised to give His children everything we need to serve others, and who is delighted when we ask on this basis. It is this *contrast* between the reluctant neighbor and God as our Father that Jesus emphasizes.

And what will our Father give us when we ask with willingness to serve and helplessness and shameless audacity?

¹³ “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?”

The Greek reads: “How much more will He give Holy Spirit to those who ask Him.” This lack of the definite article emphasizes the Spirit’s *provision* rather than His Person. That is, He will give whatever provision of the Holy Spirit is needed to enable us to serve in this situation. It may be courage, or wisdom, or discernment, or patience, or compassion, or forgiveness, or clear speech, or mercy, or spiritual authority, or endurance. We don’t even have to know exactly what we need; we just need to ask and He will give us what He knows we need. This was the key to how Jesus served God so effectively – He asked for a fresh enablement from the Holy Spirit. And this is the key for our effective service!

And so, after asking Him, we can plunge into the situation and count on the Holy Spirit coming through. We shouldn’t wait until we *feel* He has answered; we should pray, and then step out knowing that He *will* give what He has promised. As Andrew Murray says: “As we pray to be filled with the Spirit, let us not seek for the answer in our feelings . . . (Rather) let (us) believe, the Father gives the Holy Spirit’s (help) to His praying child . . . (In this way) the blessing, which has already been



given us, and which we hold in faith, may break through and fill our whole being.”[§]

God wants to work powerfully through us as His agents of loving and serving people whom He dearly loves. Ask God to help you view each day as a series of such service opportunities. Ask Him to remind you to pray to Him in each situation with willingness, helplessness, and shameless audacity. And then thank Him by faith as you move into the situation. This kind of prayer will enable you to embrace a lifestyle that experiences the Holy Spirit and gives you true joy!

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[§] Andrew Murray, *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, chapter 7 (cited in Oswald Sanders, *The Holy Spirit and His Gifts*, pp. 142,143).

