

6

The Friend At Midnight

Luke 11:5-13

In ancient Roman mythology, there is an interesting story concerning Aurora, the goddess of dawn. As the tale goes, the goddess fell in love with a mortal youth named Tithonus. Jupiter, the king of the gods, offered Aurora her choice of a gift for her young lover. Aurora chose that the mortal Tithonus might live forever. Unfortunately, she forgot to ask that he might also remain young forever. Consequently, Tithonus grew older and older, yet he could never die. The gift became a curse.

God doesn't answer our requests in that manner. This passage gives us assurance in approaching God; in it, Jesus assures His hearers that the Father in Heaven bestows only good gifts upon His children, and the best gift of all is His very presence in the person of the Holy Spirit.

As God's children, we can have full confidence when we approach His throne. He is not a deceiver or trickster. He will never grant a request that will become a burden to us. I wonder how many of our prayers it has seemed to us God has ignored, when, in reality, He knew that to grant our request would bring us harm.

1. What are children like when they want a certain toy?

2. How do you react to someone's relentless requests for something?

3. What are some areas of life where persistence pays off?

4. When Jesus told his disciples this parable, what request was He responding to? (See 11:1). Why is it necessary that men be *taught* to pray?

5. Read verses 5 & 6. Name the three characters involved in this parable. Describe the respective difficulty of each of them. Who or what does each of them represent?

6. Read verse 7. Do you think the host's neighbor was justified in refusing to get up and give him bread at midnight? Why or why not?

7. Read verses 8-10. What was it that finally caused the desperate host to get his request? Since this is a parable told to teach men how to pray, what is the lesson? Why do you suppose God wants us to pray *persistently*? Is God a grouchy neighbor who must be badgered into answering our prayers? Why or why not?

8. The verbs “ask, seek, knock” are in a continuous tense in Greek (i.e. “*keep* asking, *keep* seeking,” etc.) Obviously, persistence in prayer isn’t something we do naturally, otherwise there would be no need for this instruction. What are some things that might keep us from asking, seeking, and knocking with persistence?

9. Are verses 9 & 10 to be interpreted as a “blank check” for getting anything we might desire? Why or why not?

10. Read verses 11-13. Note the comparison between an earthly father’s giving to the needs of his children and the Heavenly Father’s answering our requests. What is being taught here? In what way might this answer the last two questions we posed in number 7 above?

11. If you went home this week and concentrated on applying the truth of this parable, how would it change the way you pray?

12. How might this passage change your *expectations* about answered prayer?