

Ask Your Willing Heavenly Friend

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[0 : 00] Take your Bibles again to the book of Luke. The book of Luke, chapter 11. I'll read verses 1 through 13.

Luke chapter 11, verses 1 through 13. This is the word of God. One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.

He said to them, Then he said to them, Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.

Then the one inside answers, Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything. I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness, he will get up and give him as much as he needs.

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.

[1 : 38] He who seeks finds. And to him 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?

Amen. Let's hear the word of God preached. Please keep your Bibles open there to our text this morning.

John Owen has said, and I believe he hits the nail on the head, that most of our troubles in the Christian life are the result of not living up to our privileges as children of God.

Now, we have many privileges, but none are higher than the privilege of prayer. And oh, what peace we often forfeit. And oh, what needless pain we bear.

[2 : 54] All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer. We do not live up to this glorious privilege. Brothers and sisters, what is our privilege?

To speak personally to the Creator and Redeemer, knowing Him to be our perfect friend and perfect Father.

And to know that He is listening to us with the attentiveness as if we were His only child to care for. His only friend to help.

And to know that He has everything that we need. Especially these important things that Jesus has been teaching us to pray for.

Our daily bread. Everything we need to sustain our life today. Forgiveness of our daily sins against Him. To blot it out from the record books forever.

[3 : 54] And to deliver us and protect us from the temptations and sin of the evil one. Our best and perfect friend.

Our best and perfect Father has all this and more. And to know that He not only listens to us when we ask, but He answers our prayers.

And delights to do so. For the prayer of the upright is His delight. Proverbs 15, 8. And in answering, He does immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine.

Somebody pinch me. Can this be true of me, a hell-deserving sinner, lifted to such heights as to have this privilege of personal prayer with the living God?

Well, we've come to the end of the Lord's Prayer that He taught us to pray. But you notice in the text, He's far from done teaching us to pray. You see, He knows our backwardness to prayer.

[5 : 03] He knows our failure to carry everything to God in prayer. He knows how many of our troubles stem from not living up to this sweet privilege. And so having taught us what to pray, He now sets out to move us, to stir us, to actually pray, to make better use of this wonderful privilege.

And I think it's instructive just looking at the amount of ink spilled in these points, that Jesus spends five times the words motivating us to pray than He does teaching us what to pray.

As if to say our greater need is not knowing what to pray for, but it's having a heart to actually pray. So let's notice how Jesus motivates His disciples to pray here in our text. Luke 11, verses 5 to 13. The main point held before us in different ways is the willingness of our God to answer prayer. That's how He motivates us to pray.

[6 : 16] And the fact that Jesus would spend so much time on this seems to clearly imply that our thoughts of God's goodness are far less than His actual desires to do us good.

Let me say that again. Our thoughts of God's goodness are actually less than His desire to do us good and to answer our prayers.

Our backwardness to prayer reveals a problem in our theology. Our view of God. What we think about God.

That we have wrong thoughts about Him that need correcting. Small thoughts. Unworthy thoughts that need to be fixed. Doubtful thoughts about His willingness to answer our prayers.

As if He's reluctant to do so. Now that is the work of the evil one that we just prayed against.

[7 : 21] It's the work of the devil to plant doubts in our heart about God's heart toward us. He hooked Eve with this lie, didn't he?

And it led to the first sin in the world. He got her to doubt the goodness of God's heart toward her. By focusing her attention on the one tree in the middle of the garden that she was not free to eat from.

And in so doing, to ignore all the other trees that she was free to eat from because of the goodness of God. And from that suspicion that God was not out for her good, Satan quickly got her to eat the forbidden fruit.

And so in this passage, Jesus is out to convince us of our Father's willing heart to bless us in answering prayer. And when that reality grips us, He knows we'll run to His throne of grace in prayer.

So that's the main point of the passage. Now, notice with me the structure of the passage. The layout of the text. Think of a sandwich. There's a bun on top and a bun on the bottom.

[8 : 34] And there's the meat in between. That's the way this passage is presented to us. And the key part of the passage is that meat.

Where's the beef? It's right in there. And there's nine quarter pounders in there. Three commands and three or six promises to prayer.

Making up the meat of this passage. And then on either side is a parable. A parable of God's willingness to answer prayer.

So let's look briefly at the meat of the passage. It's verses 9 and 10. Notice our Lord gives us, first of all, three commands. Ask, seek, and knock.

They're all in the imperative mood in the Greek. That means they're clear commands of Jesus. This is not merely an invitation. These are commands.

[9 : 37] As much as you shall have no other God before me. You're commanded to ask, to seek, and to knock. Three commands. If you have trouble remembering them, here's a little help.

Take the first one. Ask. Kids, how do you spell ask? A-S-K. Ask. Ask. S-S-K.

K-K. Knock. There you have all three in that first one. Ask. Now that works in English. It's not in the Greek, but it's a help to us.

Just to remember, what are these three commands? Ask. Ask. Seek. Knock. All right? Second thing we need to notice is that these are three commands to pray.

Oh, in other words, they're teaching us something about prayer. These three words, these three commands. Prayer is asking something from God. Prayer is seeking something from God.

[10 : 45] Prayer is knocking on the door of heaven to gain something from God. Ask. Seek. Knock. And the third thing I want to point out is that all three are in the present tense, which in the Greek means a continuous activity.

Not something that happens once and it's over. No, this is, these are three continuous activities that we're being commanded to. So it's ask and keep on asking.

Seek and keep on seeking. Knock and keep on knocking. So that's the, the meat. That's the meat. No, no, or at least the first part of it.

Let's pause long enough to see how does this advance the main point of God's willingness to answer our prayers. Well, just in, in this fact, the Lord Jesus would not command us to ask if God was not willing to give.

He wouldn't waste his time telling us and our time asking if it weren't true that God is willing to give. He wouldn't command us to seek if God didn't want to give us something.

[12:01] And he wouldn't command us to knock if he didn't intend to open the door and to respond to our request. Otherwise he'd say, don't bother me. Don't, don't bother knocking, wasting your knuckles and, and my door.

No, the willingness of God to answer prayer can be seen in the very commands to pray. And notice not once, not twice, but three times back to back.

He's got a point to make with us. God wants to give you something. So ask, so seek, so find, and don't quit.

But then notice the three commands to pray are followed by six promises to answer our prayer. Promise number one, ask, this is in verse nine, ask and it will be given to you.

Seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you. Now three is a good number, isn't it? That, that should be enough. It matches the three commands that have just been given us to pray.

[13:12] But no, our unbelief runs deeper and God's willingness is so much greater that we need three more promises on top of that.

So he continues, continues in verse 10. Promise number four, for everyone who asks, receives. And he who seeks, finds. And to him who knocks, the door will be opened. So kids, when your mother wants to be sure you don't forget something, she may repeat it.

Don't forget to look both ways. And then don't forget to look both ways. Yes. This truth about God is so important to Jesus that he repeats it six times in a row.

It's like a battering ram on the door of a castle. He's wanting to get this truth into your heart. Truth about God, about his big heart to answer your prayers.

[14:15] You may knock on other doors for nothing, but never this door. So you see how powerful, how powerfully the meat of this sandwich makes the main point.

Three commands, six promises, all driving home God's willingness to answer our prayers. But now we have two buns, don't we?

Two parables. Two parables. One going before the meat and the other coming after. First about a friend and then a parable about a father.

And here's the important thing to see about these parables. The same main point is now being made by the parables. They're not teaching something different.

They're just reinforcing the main point. They shed further light on God's willingness to answer your prayers.

[15:25] So this morning, let's look at the parable of a friend. Next week, the parable of the father, Lord willing. Verse five begins the parable.

Suppose one of you has a friend. Perhaps a better translation is which of you has a friend like this? Well, let's consider this so-called friend.

Here's the situation. You have a visitor. He suddenly shows up at your home. And it's midnight, no less. And this is before iPhones and texts to let you know he's on the way.

He's coming. And so you're just into dreamland and you hear a knock at the door. And you scurry about and shuffle to the door. And there he is, your friend from afar.

And he's on a journey. And he stopped by to spend the night at your house. Again, there weren't as many hotels in that day. This was not something unexpected.

[16:26] But what was unexpected was his arrival at this time of the night, even at this day, perhaps. And worse, you're caught totally unprepared to feed your guest.

The cupboard is empty. Oh, there's maybe some dough rising for bread in the morning to be baked. But he's hungry now. And it's midnight.

And you have nothing. There's no 24-hour mire nearby. You are up a creek without a paddle. Now, that was a terrible predicament to be in, in Jewish society that made such an emphasis about hospitality to guests.

You can remember that when the three angels came as men to Abraham. Abraham just scurried into activity. Sarah, go do this.

Servants, go get this. Go get that. And fixed a meal for these strangers who were just stopping by. Well, this isn't a stranger. This is your friend. And you have nothing to feed him.

[17 : 33] That's disaster. So you get dressed. You go to a friend's house. And you knock at the door at midnight. And there's no answer.

So you just keep knocking. And then you start calling through the closed door. Friend, lend me three loaves of bread. Because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me and I have nothing to give him.

And only then comes the voice back from the inside. Don't bother me. Literally, stop bothering me. The door's already locked. And my children are within, are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything. Now, what friend tells his friend in need to get lost when he comes knocking and seeking his help at midnight?

And his excuses give him away. That he's no real friend at all. The door, it's already locked.

[18 : 45] And surely, the locks on those doors were a little more complicated than our locks. But, nonetheless, if you locked it, that means it can be unlocked, right?

But my children are with me here in bed. Okay. Homes were usually one big room. And so everybody's in the same room, the same bed.

But, you can rejoin them in just three minutes. But I can't get up and give you anything.

Oh, you mean you won't get up and give me anything. You see, his cannot is really will not. And the point Jesus is making is that he is not willing to get up and give you anything at that inconvenient hour.

And so now Jesus makes a comment on the parable. He says in verse 8, I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness, he will get up and give him as much as he needs.

[20 : 04] It will not be given willingly because of their friendship, out of a heart, of a relationship.

This is my friend, and he's treating me as a friend by coming to me at midnight and asking, I'm going to help him. No, not because he's your friend, but rather because of his boldness.

There are other better translations than that. This is the only time this word is used in the New Testament, in the Greek. And so, but from other sources, it means his impudence, his impudence, his cheekiness.

He will get up and give you what you want because of your shameless asking, the audacity to seek me at this hour with persistent knocking.

And so, truth to be told, he gave to get rid of him, to send him on his way. It was so that he'd stop troubling him that he reluctantly got up and gave him the bread.

[21 : 16] What he would not do for love, he did for his own convenience. And Jesus, the question Jesus is asking is, who of you has a friend like that?

An enemy maybe, but not much of a friend. Friends don't treat friends that way. Proverbs 17, 17, 17, 17.

A friend loves at all times. That includes midnight. Especially midnight.

We have a proverb that says a friend in need is a friend indeed. When I'm in need and I have a friend in the midst of my need, oh, that's a friend indeed.

And if friends are not for you in your time of need, what kind of friend are they? And that is especially, that is when they're especially needed and appreciated and proven to be true friends.

[22 : 23] This was a time of need. This was a time of need and he proves to be no real friend at all. But because of his unwillingness to get up and to help him when he most needed him.

So, what's the lesson? Well, the lesson is not that your heavenly friend's reluctance can likewise be overcome.

If you'll just keep on asking, keep on seeking, and keep on knocking, persevering prayer. You'll finally wear him out and he'll give you what you want. No, not at all.

That's not the message at all. There is no reluctance to give in your heavenly friend. Jesus is using this so-called friend as a foil.

A foil. You know what a foil is? Not aluminum foil. But to take something and use it as a foil is to contrast something or someone with it.

[23 : 26] So as to emphasize and enhance the wonder and beauty of the other thing. And so, Jesus brings this friend into the story in such a way that by contrasting your heavenly friend with him, you might come away with a greater amazement and wonder of just how wonderful your heavenly friend is.

A comparison is being made of how unlike each other they are. So that seeing your earthly friend's unwillingness to help will enhance the beauty of your best friend in heaven.

Because with him there is no reluctance whatsoever. There is only willingness of heart to help. The contrast could not be greater.

This so-called friend is saying, Don't come asking me for bread. You're bothering me. Your heavenly father, your heavenly friend is encouraging you to come saying, Ask and you will receive. Your so-called friend says, Don't seek anything from me at this hour. And your heavenly friend says, Seek from me whatever you need and you will find I have it for you.

[24 : 45] Your so-called friend says, Don't come knocking at my door at midnight. And your heavenly friend says, Knock at my door anytime. And it will be opened to you.

Do you see the connection between the meat and this first parable? We're talking about knocking on a door. We're talking about seeking something. Asking for something. And now we see how the parable of the friend matches the same lesson as the meat of the sandwich.

The one friend gives willingly. The other gives very reluctantly. And so what Jesus is wanting us to know is that you have a far greater friend in heaven.

If your friends on earth who are less than perfect and feel inconvenienced at time, yet if even they would give you whatever you need when you come knocking at midnight, oh, then knock on the door of heaven's friend.

And it will be open to you all the more. And never think for a moment your best and heavenly friend would send you away empty. He never tires of giving.

[25 : 56] No time is ever inconvenient for him. And if you treat him as a friend in your asking, he will treat you as a friend in his giving. Well, it's that argument then from the lesser to the greater.

There's your friend on earth. Yeah. Well, even he'll get up and unlock that door and slip out of bed from the children and get the three loaves and give it to you just out of the inconvenience to get rid of you.

Oh, how much more. Your friend in heaven. John Newton, one of his prayer meeting hymns says, Come, my soul, thy suit prepare.

Jesus loves to answer prayer. He himself has bid thee pray. Therefore, cannot say thee nay. Well, you see then, why I said this was a theological problem.

We too easily think that God is like us. To be honest, there are times when we too struggle with the reluctance to give freely at all times. And we too can be less than cheerful and willing givers at midnight at an inconvenient season.

[27 : 15] Whether it's our time, our money, our bread, whatever. And sadly, we can make God out to be in our own image and project our own unwillingness upon him.

I guess I know what it feels like to be imposed upon, and he probably feels the same way. And our Lord Jesus is out to annihilate that thought from our minds.

And to show us that the God in heaven is not like this with his friends. And that's what you are, brothers and sisters.

You're friends of God. Isaiah 41.10, God calls Abraham, my friend. No, that's what you are. If you have put faith in the Lord Jesus, you have become a friend of God.

No longer an enemy of God, but now a friend of God. James 2.23, the scripture was fulfilled that says, Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness, and he was called God's friend.

[28 : 23] If you quit trusting in your own righteousness, you quit going your own way and turn and trust in Jesus' righteousness, you become a friend of God forever.

And as such, you're to know that you're welcome to come to him 24-7, day or night, because you're his friend, and he will always treat you as such.

The certainty of God's answers to prayer rests upon the relationship you have now with God as his friend. His friend. His friend. Joel Beakey retells the time of his godly father, sitting him down when he was a young boy, and telling him, Son, one of the best things about being a Christian is that no matter what situation you get in in life, there's always someone to go to.

Always someone to go to. Wherever you are, whatever the trouble, you're not alone in this world anymore.

And Jesus is telling us that that someone is your very best friend. And he counts you as his friend.

[29 : 56] And when you come to him, you can know that there is no reluctance in his answers to your prayers. He wants to hear from you. He loves to answer your prayers willingly, cheerfully, without grudging.

And he's promised to answer your prayers. Six times in this one little section. And he will either give you what you asked for, or better, he will give you what you should have asked for.

But it's always better. Always better. He's your friend. He cares more about you than you care about yourself.

So when you pray, remember who you're talking to. The best, the heavenly friend. And in this context, we've just been taught what we ought to ask for when we come to him, haven't we?

It's not like we just come with a blank slate and we just ask for anything. No, we've just been told.

When you pray, say. Father, may your name be hallowed, exalted, magnified.

[31 : 18] May your kingdom come and your will be done. And give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our sins against you and protect us from the temptations of the evil one.

Lead us not into temptation. And asking for what he tells us to ask, you see, puts you immediately on praying ground, as the old writers used to speak.

It enables you to ask with the greatest confidence that what you've asked, you will receive. 1 John 5, 14 and 15. This is the confidence we have in approaching God.

That if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know he hears us, we know that we have the things that we have asked of him.

So let's make use of this prayer. These requests that he's given us are according to the Father's will that he will delight to give, that he promises to give.

[32 : 22] You see what Jesus is doing in our text? He's stirring up your heart to pray by opening up to you the heart of your heavenly friend on the other end of your prayer, the one who's listening with all of his heart engaged.

He's out to convince you. Jesus is out to convince you of God's willingness to answer prayer. And if we just believe that, oh, we'd be found knocking at his door far more than we do.

We'd be found asking with much more faith and confidence and seeking and receiving. It's yet to be seen how much God will do for the man or woman, boy or girl, who will simply take him at his word and treat him as your best friend in your asking.

So are you convinced of God's willing heart to answer your prayers? If even a friend will reluctantly give bread, how much more your heavenly friend?

He's so willing that he commands you to ask. He's so willing that he promises repeatedly to give.

He's so willing that he says to his redeemed ones in Psalm 81, 10, open wide your mouth and I will fill it.

[33 : 48] It's like a loving mother spoon feeding her little girl. And she says, now open wide, honey. Because if you only open a little, I'll only be able to give you a little.

But open wide. Does the airplane thing? Has her mouth wide open? Because if that child will open her mouth wide, she will get plenty from mother.

And how sad it is that our God is sometimes having, as it were, to coax us, John, wider, wider.

Open up wide. And I'll fill it.

I'll fill it. Ask and you will receive. Oh, if we just could hold on to right theology in our hearts and minds. If we could just believe the greatness of the willing heart of our friend in heaven, how it would send us running to him, asking greater things of him.

Hebrews 11, 6 says, whoever comes to God is the language again of prayer, coming to God.

Whoever comes to God must believe two things. Number one, that he exists.

[34 : 56] That this God of the Bible is not a figment of somebody's imagination. He's there. He's real. And secondly, that he is the rewarder of those who seek him.

That none come knocking at his door, but that he rewards. You've got to believe that. By faith, believe him to be the God that Jesus says he is.

He is more willing to give than we are to ask. Well, let me give you two examples of God's willingness to give and we'll be done. One from the Old Testament, one from the New.

In the Old Testament, we're in 2 Kings chapter 4. There's a God-fearing man from the company of the prophets and he's died and he's left a widow and her two boys with a debt she could not pay. And the creditor was coming to take the two boys as his slaves as exchange for the debt that she could not pay. And so she comes and she pours out her heart to God's prophet, Elisha.

[36 : 03] And Elisha says, how can I help you? Tell me, what do you have in your house? Oh, your servant has nothing there at all, she said, except a little oil.

Elisha says, go around and ask all your neighbors for empty jars and don't ask for just a few. And then go inside and shut the door behind you and your sons and pour oil into all the jars and as each jar is filled, put it to one side.

And so by faith, this woman goes out and knocks on the doors in her neighborhood with her boys. Do you have any empty jars that we could borrow? And they must have pitied her because she came back with quite a collection of jars.

And they came into the house and laid out all the jars on one side and shut the door behind them and as her sons brought her the jars, she would pour the oil until they were full.

And then they'd set them on the other side. And when all the jars were full, she said to her son, bring me another one. And he replied, there's not a jar left, mom.

[37 : 20] And then we read in scripture, then the oil stopped flowing. And she went and sold the oil, paid their debts and had money to live on besides.

Immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine. Now, what do you think? What do you think, kids? If they had gathered five more jars, empty jars, do you think the oil would have kept pouring?

Well, of course. It only stopped when the jars, all the jars collected, were full. And that's why Elisha told her, don't ask for just a few.

What are you asking for? Just a few little things? Or are you asking big things of the big-hearted and generous God who's your friend in heaven?

Thou art coming to a king. Large petitions with thee bring for his grace and power are such. None can ever ask too much.

[38 : 43] You see, the rule in God's kingdom is according to your faith, be it unto you. Or as wide as you open, be it unto you. Or as many as jars you bring, be it unto you.

How wide can you open your mouth in asking? Will you open it wide and I'll fill it, God says.

You bring me the empty jars and I'll fill them. The willingness of the Father's heart, you see. what will you ask for this week?

Take the Lord's prayer and ask big. Ask him to save sinners right here among us for the honor of his name.

Ask for the kingdoms of this world that are in turmoil to be made the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. Ask him for a heart that beats to do his will instead of your own will.

[39 : 54] Ask for daily bread for yourself and the thousand orphans over in Myanmar in the Oinsgrove. Ask him to forgive our pride and selfishness and the duties left undone.

Ask him to not lead us into temptation but to lead us in paths of righteousness for his namesake.

Ask him to deliver us from stubborn sins that have long plagued us.

Bring your empty jars to the Heavenly Father and don't just bring a few. He's just that good. One other example from the New Testament because the New Testament takes us to the pinnacle of God's heart, doesn't it?

The New Testament opens up the heart of God in a way that we find nowhere else even as we saw in Scripture that redemption and revelation work together and now the New Testament is the fullest revelation of this work of redemption and in that we have the fullest revelation of the heart of God.

And what do we see in the New Testament about the willingness of God to give? we see that when we needed a Savior he did not spare his own son but gave him up to the hellish cross to save us.

[41 : 25] I don't know about you but I know if I had the power to save others at the cost of my own son I'm sorry I could not give him up but he did he did he gave us the most valuable the MVP of heaven heaven's most valuable person the treasure of his own son the son he delighted in for all eternity he sent him to save us there's the heart of this friend in heaven and Romans 8 32 says let that be the measure of his heart to answer your prayers and to give to you as his friend that he who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all how shall he not along with him freely give us all things the lesser things if he gave the greatest thing will he not give us the lesser things all that we need for life and godliness all that we need to make it home to heaven children of

God here's your high privilege is it not true that most of our problems in the Christian life are the result of not living up to this sweet privilege of prayer may we be encouraged then this morning to come to this god and show by our asking that we really believe him to be the god of the bible the god that the bible says he is willing friend in heaven and if you're outside of christ this morning then you don't have someone to go to at all times you don't have a midnight friend you're alone in this world it's just you and your problems and your biggest problem is your sin against god and the only help for that is found in this friend in heaven this is love not that we loved him but that he loved us and sent his own son to be the sacrifice to turn the wrath of god away from us so that we could now move from being his enemies to his friends that's the heart of god and he's inviting you this morning to come to him and and if you do and you knock on his door and you you say god i'm a sinner i i've sinned against you more than i can count and and because of it i deserve damnation you would be right and just to damn me but i have heard that you are merciful and that all who come to your son will never be sent away that that that you are able to save completely all who come unto god through him i'm coming with all my trust in jesus save me and if you do that you'll find that he's good to his promise you will not be the first one in all history to not be treated according to the promise whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life come the first time for the thousandth time whatever your need this morning come to this heavenly friend he's laden with mercy and grace and you know if you ever have a question about what's the heart of the father toward me christian you have that question ever you look at your your life and what's happening in your life seems to be coming apart by the seams around you you begin to wonder what's the father's heart the father's heart is revealed in the son that's why he came to reveal the unseen father he became one of us and lived among us and died for us and rose again to reveal the father to us to exegete him you want to know what the father's heart is like it's like the son's heart one there is above all others well deserves the name of friend now may the grace of our lord jesus christ and the love of god our father and the fellowship of the holy spirit be with you all amen a one a we