

Confidence - Will We Trust Him

by David Platt

David Platt emphasizes the importance of boldness and shamelessness in prayer, encouraging believers to trust in God's ability and sovereignty.

Duration: 56:47

Scripture: Matthew 7:7, Philippians 4:6

Topics: "Effective Prayer", "Trusting God"

Description

This sermon focuses on the power and importance of prayer, emphasizing that prayer is more than just asking for things from God. It delves into the depth of prayer, highlighting the primary purpose of expressing our need for God, exploring intimacy with Him, and experiencing His power. The sermon also touches on the Lord's Prayer, emphasizing the need to align our desires with God's will before making our requests. The story in Luke chapter 11 about a man seeking bread at midnight is used to illustrate the boldness, shamelessness, and persistence we should have in prayer, trusting in God's ability, approachability, and activity in our lives.

Transcript

Good morning. If you've got a Bible, and I hope you do, let me invite you to open with me to Luke chapter 11. This is where we've been the last couple of weeks.

Pull out those notes that are in your celebration guide, they'll help guide our time together. We're doing things a little different in this series. Looking at the Word up front in the service and having a time to respond in prayer after we've looked at the Word over the last couple of weeks.

We've been looking at prayer, a subject that if we're really honest with each other, we've got a lot of questions about. How in the world does prayer really work? We talked two weeks ago about how prayer really is more, is designed to be more than just this thing where we ask for things from God or we get things from God. That maybe what we've grown up thinking about prayer as may be just a small room in an entire house of prayer.

We need to explore some of the depths of what prayer is instead of just settling for that. We talked about how the primary purpose of prayer is to express the depth of our need for God, to explore the mystery of intimacy with Him and to experience the power of being used by Him. We talked about how the power of prayer in and of itself is useless, but power of people who connect with Almighty God is unstoppable.

And then last week we looked at the Lord's Prayer, you know that prayer that we sing at weddings and we recite at a couple of different points in our lives and we sometimes add parts that aren't really there. We talked about that prayer and what does it really mean to pray the Lord's Prayer and what is God telling us to do, what is Christ teaching us to do. We talked about how desire is the secret to prayer.

Talked about two steps. First, make your wants God's wants and then, number two, ask for whatever you want. That's how prayer works.

Make your wants God's wants, then you've got the freedom and confidence to ask for whatever you want and know that you have it. And we talked about how the Lord's Prayer teaches us to ask for His glory, to ask for His gifts and His grace, ask for His guidance. And all that leads us to verse 5 in Luke chapter 11 where Jesus tells a story that to be quite honest with you is pretty downright confusing on a variety of different levels.

I think it confused the disciples. I can almost picture the frustration on their faces when they come to Jesus and they say, Jesus teaches us to pray and He looks at them and He says, well let me tell you a parable. Can you just picture them rolling their eyes at this point, kind of putting their hands in their hair like, don't give us another parable.

Just give it to us straight. We don't have to figure out these quirky stories, just tell us how to pray. But that's what He does.

He gives them a story. And it perplexed them then and 2,000 years later it's still perplexing Bible scholars. There's a lot of people who believe a lot of different things about what this story means.

And I don't want to be so bold this morning as to stand in front of you and say that I'm going to answer all the questions that people have had for 2,000 years since Jesus said this about the story. But I do want to say this, during the last week my time studying this text that to be frank with you up until this last week I would read over this story and just kind of think I'm not sure what that means but we'll just go with it because it's in the Bible. But studying it this last week, it's just opened my eyes in an entirely new, fresh and really exciting perspective on what Jesus may be trying to teach us in this passage.

So again, I don't want to be so bold as to think that I've got the answer now after 2,000 years of discussion. But I do want us to look at this story and just invite us as a faith family, let's try to see what Jesus is trying to teach us here. We'll get down to verse 5, let's read the first four verses though just to make sure we've got the context of the story that's given in.

Luke chapter 11 verse 1, 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, when you pray, say, Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come.

Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.

Now here's the story, verse 5. 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 you.

Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives.

He who seeks, finds. And to him who knocks, the door will be opened. All right, let's make sure we got the picture here.

Journey back to first century Palestine. You don't have a stockpile of food every day. You don't have pantries.

You make enough food every day for that day's needs and then you go to the next day. And so this guy has somebody, comes to visit him at midnight, late at night, and he doesn't have any food for him. Unfortunately, there's no grocery stores to go to.

There's no late night Taco Bell in first century Palestine. So he doesn't have anything to give him, but he wants to provide for him in first century Palestine, especially this picture here. Hospitality was huge.

It wasn't just a social duty to be hospitable, it was a religious duty to be hospitable. And so basically, this guy, when his friend comes to him at midnight, he's got two options. Either number one, he can be a poor host and tell the guy, sorry, I don't have any bread.

Just go to sleep hungry. He can be a poor host or second, he can be a poor neighbor and he can go to his friend down the street and wake him up and get some bread. So we've got poor host or poor neighbor and this guy decides to take what's behind door number two.

He says, I'm going to be a poor neighbor. And he goes down the street and he knocks on his buddy's door. This is when it gets really good or not so good for the guy inside.

First century Palestine, this house is not this many roomed house. It's a one room house in first century Palestine, which means everybody sleeps where? You got it in the same room. So you got your wife and kids all sleeping on the same mat, same bed in the same room.

So the way it works is you put kid number one down and kid number two down and kid number three down and then you get your wife settled in there and then you go and you bolt the door and then you kind of crawl in bed there and everything's got to be still. There ain't nobody getting up to go to the bathroom without making some major commotion now in this scene. And it's so funny that I was studying this text this week and I've been out of town all week preaching at a conference and Heather and Caleb and I were all in one hotel room together.

So we were all kind of crammed into this little hotel room and I was coming in late at night or leaving early in the morning and Heather gave me that ultimatum. She said, you better not wake Caleb up when you come in or when you leave. And so at first night I came in late and opened the door and got in bed as quiet as I could and then got up early the next morning before he was up and did the best I could.

I mean I took shower, got dressed, everything. I mean granted I was brushing my teeth. I didn't even want to turn on the faucet so just like a little drop of water that I was trying to brush my teeth with but Caleb was right next to the bathroom and so I'm sitting there trying to be as quiet as I can.

I sneak out of the room and he had not moved an inch and not woken up. I was successful. The really funny thing though is that Heather tells me right after I left she got up and went toward his little crib, pack and play over there and she was trying to be quiet but she actually rammed right into the pack and play.

So Caleb is now jarred awake and I had done it successfully though and that's all that mattered. Okay. I had not failed my duty as a dad.

And so you can imagine you're a dad. You got kid one, two, three, they're in. Wife's in.

You lock the door. You close. You're sleeping soundly.

Everything's good. And all of a sudden this dude shows up at the door and he starts banging on the door. He says I want some bread.

Now, I love how he starts the conversation. He actually bangs on the door and says friend, which is a good way to begin a conversation if you're waking somebody up at midnight because this whole friendship thing is now walking a very tight line. You see, it's one thing to wake up dad in the middle of the night.

It's a whole other ball game to wake up all the kids in the middle of the night and that's what he has done. You can imagine yourself in that dad's position. You wake up.

This guy's banging on your door outside and you look around you and all these little eyes are popping open. You're like oh no. He says don't bother me.

Go away basically. I'm not going to give up and give you anything. But Jesus says that this guy will get up and he'll give him something.

Not because he's his friend because that whole thing is up for question at this point. He'll get up and give him something because of his boldness. So, what does this mean? You know, whenever you hear Jesus tell a story or a parable, you're always thinking okay I know somebody in this parable is me and I know somebody in this parable is God.

That's why we love Luke chapter 15, a couple of chapters later, you have the parable of the prodigal son. You're like okay I know I'm the son. I wander away and I'm coming back and God's the father and he comes running after me and he wraps his arm around me and he gives me all these things.

I love that story. And so the disciples are sitting there listening to Jesus tell this story and it's like okay, I think we're the guy who's going and asking for something because he's talking about prayer so we're that guy but who's God? Grumpy old guy on the inside yelling don't bother me? Is that God in this story? Something's not adding up here and it's the same thing when you get over to Luke chapter 18. Jesus tells another story about an unrighteous judge.

Jesus says a judge who really doesn't care about anybody and a poor widow comes to him and is looking for justice and he tries to ignore her and time after time she keeps coming back and keeps coming back and keeps coming back and finally the judge just because he's fed up with this lady decides to give in just to get her out of his hair. She's driving him nuts and so okay I think I'm the woman who's asking for things but who's God? I mean is it this point that I'm supposed to preach this text and say alright the point of Luke chapter 11 is you go to the door of heaven and you just keep banging on it as loud as you can and finally God will get up and do something for you not because he loves you but because he's sick and tired of you.

Now let's pray.

What in the world is this story all about? And people discuss different things about this story. Some people think that it's designed to be this contrast between the guy who's irritated inside and God. The only problem with that is there's some things that are similar about the guy inside and God like the supply that they have, what they have to give.

There's some things that are similar and so we put ourselves in the situation of deciding which characteristics of God we think this guy's like and which characteristics of God we don't think and we're in the position of deciding that. I don't think that's the point. Other people and some of you have in your translations instead of because of the man's boldness some of you have because of the man's persistence.

People believe that the point here is that he was persistent in knocking on the door and it's implied there that he was so persistent that's why he got up. But when you think about it, you know it doesn't matter if you knock one time or twenty times. When you knock on the door in the middle of midnight so you can get a couple of pieces of bread you've crossed the line.

So maybe persistence is not the point. It's at that point that many sermons are preached on this text that basically say if you just keep asking God he'll finally answer you. Just keep bothering him over and over and over again and one day he'll actually get up and do something for you.

I don't think that's the point. I think it all comes back to this word. It all hinges on because of this man's boldness.

And this word in the original language of the New Testament is really difficult to decipher, to translate into English. It really is kind of a combination between boldness and shamelessness. It's this picture of someone who's annoyingly relentless, bold, shameless, no shame.

And so it's at this point I'm sitting there over and over again this week, God what does this mean? And it's at that point that things started to open up. And then you've got in your notes there the key to the parable. And here's what I want to encourage us to do as we think about this parable.

Here's what I think, I believe is the key to understanding this story. Put yourself, look through the perspective, put yourself in the mind of the man in need. Look through the perspective of the man in need.

What I want to invite you to do is I want to invite you to put yourself in the shoes of this guy who's going looking for bread for his friend who's come to visit him. Put yourself in his shoes, resist the temptation to try to compare or contrast the guy inside to God. Let's just leave that to the side.

Let's simply put ourselves in the mind, the mindset, the attitude of the guy who's looking for bread, the man in need. Put yourself in his shoes because I think, I mean from the very beginning Jesus tells the story from his perspective. Suppose one of you, it's almost like saying imagine you had this guy come to you at midnight, you needed some food so you had the nerve.

Imagine if you had the nerve to go to your friend at midnight to try to get a couple pieces of bread. And I think he's basically giving us a picture of a guy who's, well in some ways just plain rude. A guy who somewhere along the way socially has not gotten the hint that it's not the most appropriate thing to do, to go to your friend at midnight and knock on the door and ask for bread.

This is one of those guys that just doesn't know which social lines to cross and which social lines not to cross. I don't know if you've ever been around somebody like that or if you are somebody like that. I don't know, but there's some social things that say, you know it's not the most appropriate thing to go in the middle of the night.

That takes a lot of nerve, a lot of gall to go and just ask for a piece of bread while the whole family is asleep. But in this guy's mindset, however shameless, even rude that might be, this guy's thinking, my friend who's inside that house, he's got food, I know he's got bread, he won't mind if I come and knock on his door, in fact he'll be delighted to get up and get something for me. That kind of shamelessness, that kind of boldness, if you could just put yourself in that mindset, I think that's exactly what Jesus is teaching us about prayer.

I believe he's teaching us that we can be that bold, that shameless with the God of the universe. I want you to think about it with me. Three characteristics that at least in this guy's mindset, he was thinking about the guy inside.

Whether they're true or not, that's not what we're looking at, but at least this guy thought about it, that I think help us understand what we need to think about God when we come to him in prayer. First characteristic that leads to shameless, bold praying is this, God is able. God is able.

This guy, think about it with me, if you put yourself in his shoes, he knows that this guy inside, he knows two things about him. Number one, he knows he's got bread and he'll be able to help him because this guy keeps his stash of bread. And number two, he knows that he can do something about it and he'll help him out with it.

I think that picture is all over the pages of scripture when it comes to prayer. This picture of God, this attitude about God. First of all, number one, you got it in the notes there, he has the supply.

We know he has the supply. He has what we need. Hold your place here in Luke chapter 11.

Go back with me to Psalm chapter 50. I want you to see this. I want you to do a little bit of turning here at the start.

Go to the middle of your Bible, just kind of open up right to the middle, it should come close to Psalms. Go to Psalm chapter 50. I want you to look at Psalm chapter 50 verse 7 through 12.

This is God speaking to his people about his supply, what he has. I love these verses. They're not underlined in your Bible, they'd be good verses to underline in your Bible.

They give us a picture of the supply that God has. Listen to this. Psalm chapter 50 verse 7, hear O my people and I will speak.

This is God speaking to his people, O Israel, and I will testify against you. I am God, you're God. I do not rebuke you for your sacrifices or your burnt offerings which are ever before me.

Now listen to verse 9. I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens, for every animal of the forest is mine and the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird in the mountains and the creatures of the field are mine. This is really good.

If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world is mine and all that is in it. Isn't that great? This is God saying, just in case you've forgotten, I've got everything. I mean everything.

Cattle on a thousand hills, every bird that you see in the sky, I actually know personally. The world is mine and all that is in it. I have all the supply.

Now that's key for praying. Why do we pray to God? Because we know he has the supply, but not just the supply, number two, he has the sovereignty. Now sovereignty, this is a word we use a good bit to talk about how God is in control.

Not only, don't miss it, not only does he have the supply, but he's got the authority to do whatever he wants with the supply. He's got the authority to use everything in all of creation to accomplish his purposes and his plans. Now this is all over Scripture too.

Take a left from Psalms and go back to the end of Job. It's the very next book, the book right before Psalm, Job chapter 42. Look at this with me.

Let me show you just a couple of verses you might underline in your Bible to talk about the sovereignty of God. How everything in all creation is under his control and his authority and his plans and his purposes direct everything. Listen to Job chapter 42.

Look at verse two. He says, this is Job talking to God after he's gone through some major trials, confusing time in his life. It says in Job 42 too, I know God that you can do all things.

Now underline this, no plan of yours can be thwarted. No plan of yours can be thwarted, can't be changed at all. Now go back to Psalms.

Look at Psalm chapter 33. Just take you on a little tour, just a couple of books here in the middle of your Bible that show the sovereignty of God. Look at Psalms chapter 33, verse 10 and 11.

Job 42 says no plan of God, absolutely no plan of God can be thwarted, can be changed, can be augmented. Listen to Psalm 33, verse 10 and 11. It says, the Lord foils the plans of the nations.

He thwarts the purposes of the peoples, but the plans of the Lord, listen to this, stand firm forever. The purposes of His heart through all generations. His plans, His purposes are fixed from generation to generation.

His plans are not changing. Get to Proverbs. Go to the very next book, Proverbs chapter 19.

Let me show you just two more. Proverbs chapter 19, very next book to the right of Psalms, we'll come to Proverbs chapter 19. Look with me at verse 21.

This verse contrasts our plans, the way we make plans with God's plans and the way He makes plans. Listen to Proverbs chapter 19, verse 21. It says, many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that what? That prevails.

His purpose prevails. What Proverbs is telling us is that, you know, our plans might change. Sometimes we get more information or new circumstances happen and we change our plans.

There's never any new information for God, never any new circumstances that He was surprised to see happen. His purpose never fails. It never changes.

Let me show you one more. Keep going to the right and you'll come to Isaiah. Go past Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, you go to Isaiah chapter 14.

Look at this one more verse. Look at Isaiah chapter 14, verse 24. This is huge for us to understand the picture of the God we're praying to.

Isaiah chapter 14, verse 24. This is God speaking to His people and He's reminding them of His sovereignty. Listen to what He says.

The Lord Almighty has sworn, Isaiah 14, verse 24, surely as I have planned, so it will be. And as I have purposed, so it will stand. God says, I plan this and it happens.

I purpose this and it happens. So here's the picture the Old Testament is giving us, especially in these books, especially Psalms that teaches us so much about prayer. It's giving us a picture of the sovereignty of God who, yes, He has all the supply in the world, but He also has the authority to do with it whatever He wants, to accomplish His purposes and His plans.

He is sovereign. He is in control. Now if we're really honest, it's at this point that we start to wonder, well, Dave, if God is sovereign over all the universe and He's running this universe to accomplish His purposes and His plans, then why do I even need to pray? You feel the weight of that question? Why is it even necessary for me to pray? I mean, it's almost kind of presumptuous, isn't it, for me to come to this sovereign God and say, hey, I know you've got a universe you're running and all, but I've got just a couple things in my life.

I'll make it quick. Just bring this before you and then I'll be out. It's almost embarrassing in a sense when you see the greatness of God all over Scripture and you really think about it, prayer seems like something that is almost inappropriate.

And I think, I think this is something Jesus knew in Luke chapter 11, that He knew that in the minds and hearts of His people that there would be a question, well, why do I even need to pray? If God is so great, then why should I even go to Him? Doesn't that seem a bit presumptuous? And here's the beauty of what He's saying. He's saying with this picture, yes, God does have the supply. He is able.

And this guy knew that about his friend inside. He knew he was able. God is, yes, He is in control.

And this is a good thing. Just as a side note, this is a really good thing. We sometimes think that prayer should work where we are controlling the agenda of God and we are telling God what to do.

The only problem is when you're telling God what to do over here and you're praying, somebody else is telling what to God to do and they're praying, then all of a sudden you've got this guy that's running around beckoning to all of His people trying to figure out what to do and has no clue how it's going to end ultimately. That's not the God we pray to. Pray to a God who is in control and that's a good thing.

But here's the beauty of it. Not only is He able, is He fully able, but here's the second characteristic which this guy knew about his friend inside. God is able and second, God is approachable.

This guy, regardless of what the guy inside is really thinking, this guy is thinking, you know, old Frank in there, he doesn't mind me coming to him at midnight. In fact, I think Frank would want me to come to him at midnight. He wouldn't mind at all for me to wake up him and his family because he wants to give me bread.

That's what this guy is thinking. Whether it's true of Frank or not, it doesn't matter at this point. What we're thinking about is from this guy's perspective, he thinks, that guy is approachable.

He will not mind me coming. And that's what Jesus is trying to communicate to us. Yes, God is sovereign.

Yes, He has all the supply. Yes, He is in control and He's running this whole universe for His purposes and His plans. But the beauty of it is this God has invited you to come to His presence.

That God has said, I am approachable to my people. I want my people to come to me. Here's what, you got it in your notes there, and I want to make this sentence very, very carefully.

God, I think what Jesus is teaching us here is that God delights in revealing Himself to those who are bold enough to bother Him. God delights in revealing Himself to those who are just plain bold enough to bother Him. Now, I hesitate to use that term because bother is obviously not the most positive of words, the negative word.

Nobody wants to be a bother to anybody else. But think about it this way with me. Give you a little illustration.

Imagine there was a time in my life when I was really busy and traveling all over the place and the weight of things at church just was really heavy. And so I'm just feeling crowded in all around. And Heather, my wife, comes to me and she says something along the lines of, David, I know that you are really busy and I know that you've got a lot on your plate, but I've got some things going on in my life that I'm struggling with and I don't want to bother you with them, but I do want to share them with you.

And she's hesitant to do that because she doesn't want to bother me amidst all that I'm doing. Now, when that happens, what am I going to say to my wife? I'm going to say something along the lines of, Heather, yeah, there is a lot going on, but I want you to bother me with the hurts and the burdens in your life. In fact, I delight in the fact that I'm the one you come to to bother with those things.

And the only thing that would really bother me is if you went to somebody else instead of coming to me with those things. That's why I'm here. I want to be bothered by the things in your life.

Now, get the picture here. Yes, God is sovereign. Yes, He is in control of the whole universe and He is carrying out His purpose and His plans, but here's the beauty of it.

He delights. He absolutely delights in being the one that you come to with your hurts and your cares and your struggles. Please let this soak in.

Not just the person beside you, in front of you, behind you, right where you are sitting. God delights in revealing Himself to you when you're bold enough to bother Him. In fact, I think He would say that the only thing that bothers Him is when you don't come to Him with those things and you go to someone else or something else in this world.

Do you get the picture here? The beauty of a God who delights in being bothered. It almost seems presumptuous, doesn't it, to say to this God, I know you're running a universe here and I know you're accomplishing the plans and purposes of all nations, but I've got a couple little things going on in my life that I just need you to give your attention to and I need you to sit here and listen to me, put your focus on me, and deal with some of these things in my life. Doesn't that seem presumptuous? But that's exactly what Jesus is saying to do.

He's saying go to Him and He's not saying don't badger the Father with all the trifling things that are going on in your life. Instead He's saying be as invasive as you want. Ask and it will be given you.

Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened to you. You come to Him boldly, shamelessly, and it may not make sense to anybody else, but you have the privilege of approaching the throne of grace with confidence, Hebrews chapter 4 says, because God delights, He invites you to approach Him.

This is incredible. Think about it with me. God invites us to bother Him anytime.

That's what this story is telling us, anytime. It's at midnight for a reason. This guy inside is thinking, you know, I mean I could do this at noon or midnight, doesn't really matter.

This guy wants to help me. Time is not a factor in this guy's mind. That's what God is saying.

That's what Christ is teaching us. Folks, it is never too late to come before God. It is never proper for us to say in the presence of God, God I know that I should have started praying earlier about this and it might be too late.

It's never too late. And it's never too early. We don't need to say to God, I know that this is a ways off in the distance and you might not be concerned with this right now.

He is concerned with this right now. It's never too early. God invites us to come to Him anytime.

Not only anytime, but God invites us to come to Him in everything. In everything. Do not be anxious about anything, but in what? Everything and everything Philippians 4 says, present your request to God.

In the Greek, everything there in Philippians chapter 4 means everything. Everything. No exceptions.

I mean, think about it in this story. Is this really an emergency? Is this really that important? I mean, come on, it's not like somebody is dying or the wife is having a baby or the kid has broken his leg or there is a robber in the house and he is coming to get some help at midnight. All he wants is a couple of biscuits.

It's not that, I mean, if you are the guy inside, you are, you are thinking, give me a break. I mean, a couple of pieces of bread. Tell your friend to go to sleep, he will forget he is hungry and he will wake up in the morning and have breakfast.

The guy's life is not dependent on him getting a piece of bread tonight. But somehow in this guy's frame of mind, he is thinking, this guy, he is approachable with anything. It doesn't have to be a big deal to come to him.

That's what Jesus is teaching us about prayer. There is nothing too small to bring before this God. Ladies and gentlemen, there is nothing in your life that is insignificant to bring before the God of the universe.

That is an amazing thought. Just that sentence, there is nothing in your life that is too small to bring before the God of the whole universe. Nothing too small.

Nothing that is not that big a deal. Look at Nehemiah chapter 6 verse 9 sometime, where Nehemiah prays, amidst all these mammoth things God is doing in Jerusalem at that point, he prays that God would strengthen his hands. God did.

He said, God, I really need some strength in these ten fingers right now. And God does it. There is nothing too small.

And there is nothing too great. The Bible never cautions us against the magnitude of what we pray for. In fact, the Bible does the opposite.

It prays for mountains to be moved. So you pray for colds and you pray for cancers and everything in between. There is nothing too great.

I would even ask you, I would ask you this morning, what is in your life or what couple of things in your life are you praying for that are so big, that are so great, that if the person next to you right now knew that you were praying for those things, they would say you are out of your mind. Just that could never happen. I have got a couple of those things that I am praying for in my life, in my ministry.

I am not going to tell you what they are. The things that, if I did tell you what they are, you would think, there you go on your little idealistic rampages again. It will never happen.

There is nothing too great though to bring before my God. He delights in taking big things that we ask, showing His power, His glory, His greatness. He says, come to me any time in everything.

Now, He is able and He is approachable, but here, that is still not enough to cause this guy to go banging on the door. I want you to see this next characteristic of God that I think is in the mind of this guy as he is thinking about his friend inside the room. He is able, he is approachable, and third, God is active.

He is active. Think about it with me. You put yourself in this guy's shoes in this story.

You wonder, this guy almost thinks that his buddy is probably inside, awake, just waiting for him to come knock on the door. Hey, my buddy, I mean, he and his family might be up baking bread for all I know. I am going to go knock on their door.

You know, they don't want to go to sleep. They are staying up late tonight. They are probably having a midnight snack themselves, so I am going to get one for my buddy over here.

It is not a matter of whether or not this guy is asleep in there or not. Apparently, this guy who is coming to the door is bold enough to think that either he is awake or he is just falling asleep, or he would be glad to get up and go running over to the table and pick some bread and bring it to the door. Here you go.

Have a great night. That is what is in this guy's mind, and that is what Jesus is telling us to do, how to approach God in prayer, like he is active. Here is the picture we need to see in this story.

God is not asleep. He is not asleep. He does not sleep, nor does he slumber, Isaiah says.

Now I am guessing, I am guessing that most of us in this room at least believe that. Okay, yeah, I know God is not asleep, that He is not snoozing, but let's be honest. Have you ever felt like God was asleep in your life? Have you ever felt like He was not listening, that He was ignoring some of your needs, that He checked out on you and He was going on doing other stuff in the universe apart from you? If we are really, really honest, you know a lot of times we pray like we are trying to wake up God.

We pray like God is just sitting there and we are saying, God would you please just get up and do this. And I want to remind you based on Luke chapter 11 that your God is not asleep. Your God is active before you even say a word to Him.

He is already moving. We are not arousing a sleeping giant when we pray. We are praying to a God who is constantly at work in your life, in the lives of people that we pray for, around the world.

He is constantly at work. He is not asleep. Not only is He not asleep, but here is the picture here in Luke chapter 11.

This guy is not just asking for bread for himself, he is asking for bread for somebody else. And what we have got in this story is a picture of asking, literally interceding on behalf of somebody else's need, not even his own need, but interceding on behalf of somebody else's need. And this leads us not just to the picture, but the privilege in Luke chapter 11 that Jesus is highlighting here, that we have the privilege of interceding.

That's the term the Bible uses to talk about how we stand in the gap for others' needs. We pray on behalf of others' needs. What Luke 11 is showing us is that intercession is the means by which we have the privilege of participating with God in all that He is doing in the world.

Intercession is the means by which we participate in the activity of God, especially in other people's lives. That we have the privilege of coming to Him, not just for ourselves, but we have the privilege of coming to Him for people around us, for their needs, interceding. Now at this point we even go back to that question we started wrestling with a little bit earlier, well Dave, if God has His sovereign plans and His sovereign purposes, then why do I need to ask Him to do this or that in somebody else's life? He's just going to do it anyway, whatever He thinks is best, so why do I need to pray? These are the questions that we wrestle with, but think about it with me.

Think about it with me. We have the privilege of coming before God on behalf of others, and in that process we actually have the privilege of participating with what God is doing in those people's lives. And prayer is the means by which God takes us with our inadequate view of where life is headed, and our inept view of the future.

He knows it all, and He has chosen to allow us and our praying to be a part of the means by which He moves in other people's lives. And this is a privilege that we cannot leave to somebody else. We pray because we have the opportunity to come before God on behalf of those who are poor, and those who are hurting, and those who are unreached with the gospel, and we have the privilege from our knees of being involved in what He is doing all over the world.

What an incredible honor that we as a faith family must take advantage of on behalf of each other. Think about it. You go in your room this week, and you close the door, and you pray for the Dijng people group in the northern provinces of China that has not heard about the gospel yet.

You pray, and you plead, God, pray that they would come to know your grace, and pray that they would come to know Christ. Then God is using your prayers, using you on your knees to be a part of His plan to make His gospel known among the Dijing people group in the northern provinces of China. What an amazing picture.

Not just in needs around the world, but right here. I'm guessing that we have people on our minds and our hearts right here in this room that live right around us here in Birmingham. We've come to the conclusion, I can't, we just can't open their eyes to see Christ.

We try, and we try, and we try, and we can't do it, and so we go before God. We fall on our faces and say, God, we can't open their eyes to see your glory, but you can, so I pray that you would do it. I pray that you would open their eyes to see your grace, and your mercy, and your love.

We pray for people who are hurting around us, who are going through all kinds of trials and valleys, and we say, God, I can't give this person that I love the strength that I need, but you can, and so I'm going to come to you, and I'm going to call out to you, and I'm going to ask you to show your strength and your power in their lives, and I'm going to let my prayers be the means by which you show your greatness to them. What an incredible honor. This is the privilege of intercession, to come before God, and to fast, and to weep, and to plead, and in the process to participate with what the God of the universe is doing around the world, and right around us.

Not only the picture and the privilege, but look at this. Here's the promise we've got to remember that it all leads to, prayer to God on behalf of others, and this could go for prayer to God as a whole, but we're talking specifically here in this story about prayer to God on behalf of others. Prayer to God on behalf of others is never, never in vain.

I want this to be a reminder to us today, because we've all thought it. Let's be honest. We've all thought it.

You know, Dave, I've prayed for this over, and over, and over again, and it still hasn't happened. So, it wasn't worth me praying altogether. We've all thought it.

I even shared a story a couple of weeks ago, praying every night as a kid for God to bring a cure for AIDS so that Mr. Mike wouldn't die, and he died, and there's still not a cure for AIDS. So, Dave, did you just waste your prayers as a kid? What's that about? Well, next week, we're going to talk about a picture of trust in prayer that far exceeds what many times we think about, but for the time being, I want to remind you that when you pray to this God, and especially when you pray on behalf of others, it is never in vain, because God in His wisdom and His infinite glory is working in your life as you pray, and He's working in the life of the people that you're praying for. He is active, and we don't need to worry that He hasn't heard us, He doesn't know what's going on.

He does. He does. And prayer is the means by which we're participating with Him, sometimes in things that we can't even see.

So, Jesus says, on my authority, He knows this will be a struggle for us. He knows it. And so He says, I say to you, ask.

He's already told us what to ask for. Ask for His glory. Ask for His grace.

Ask for His gifts. Ask for His guidance. Ask, and it will be given to you.

Trust me on this, Jesus is saying, seek. You will find Him. He is approachable.

So, knock on the door of heaven, and He will open it up, and you will experience and enjoy His presence. Take my word for it. Everyone who asks, receives.

He who seeks, finds. And him who knocks the door will be opened. Your prayers to this God, to the Father, are never, never in vain.

So, I want us to take the position of a really bold, really shameless, almost annoyingly relentless guy who just doesn't seem to have a clue in this story in Luke chapter 11, that it might be kind of weird for him to go to his friend at midnight. I want us to take that approach in our lives with God right now. What we're going to do is, well, I say it's a little different, but I say that every week, and so it's just kind of the norm here.

But I'm doing the best I can to try to debunk the idea that worship is a spectator sport. Worship is a participant's activity that we have the privilege of encountering God in. So what we're going to do is we're going to spend some time praying like this, praying like God is able, like God is approachable, and like God is active.

And what we're going to do is, in just a minute, I'm going to invite us to stand, and we're going to pray, and we're going to sing a song that's going to fix our eyes on the God that we pray to. We're going to sing out to him just to fix our minds and our hearts on who he is. That's key.

And then once we've done that, then we're going to go into a time where we have an opportunity to intercede for each other in a way that I hope, I hope is right in line with Luke chapter 11, and I hope that will draw us all into the beauty of this picture called prayer. So will you stand with me? I'm going to pray for us, and I want to invite us just in the next couple of minutes as we sing this song that is a prayer sung to God, that God would fix our eyes, our minds, our hearts on who he is. Father, I want to invite you to have a seat, and we're going to go into a time of prayer.

First of all, specifically to this God who never lets go, I want us to have a time where we pray for men and women across this room, boys and girls that are struggling physically. This is a little different, but in just a second I'm going to ask people who have some physical struggles in your life. Maybe it's sickness, maybe it's disease, maybe it's cancer.

Maybe it's pains, physical pains that you are dealing with now, maybe that happened recently, or maybe it's been going on for a long time. You define however that looks, but I know that across this faith family, there's some major physical struggles that are represented. There's some minor physical struggles that are represented that are affecting people's lives all across this room.

Nothing too small, nothing too great, but in just a minute I'm going to invite you, if you would be willing, to stand where you are, and with your standing say, I've got some physical struggles in my life, and you're not going to have to tell a person what they are. And I want to invite you to stand, and once people have stood across this room, then we're just going to simply surround these people and just put a hand on everybody's shoulder, and we're going to have some time where we pray for each other in the middle of physical struggles. We're going to intercede for each other.

I know it's going to be a little awkward for you to do, but I pray, I hope this will be a refreshing time for you to say, you know, I've got a need in my life physically, and I want some people to pray for me. Nothing too small, nothing too great. So, at this time, I want to invite you, if you fall into that category, and there's some

physical needs in your life that you'd be willing to say, I want somebody to pray for me, I want to invite you to stand with me where you are.

I want you to know this is a safe place for you to do that. Please don't be hesitant. We are a bold and shameless people today.

We're approaching our God and saying, we need you, God. Feel the freedom. Anybody else? I want to give people an opportunity to stand, and then we'll surround them.

Anybody else? Couldn't... Yeah, I was about to say, that's great, I'm glad you mentioned that. I actually said that in the first service. If there are people who are not here physically today because they can't be, I want to invite you to stand on their behalf.

If there are people in your family who are not able to be here and worship with you today, then feel free to stand on their behalf. Thanks. All right, I want to invite us to just get up all around this room, and let's surround these folks.

Let's make sure that everybody's got a hand on their shoulder. As we surround these folks, I just want to invite you in circles around this room just to pray for these people. You can pray silently.

You can pray aloud. You don't have to wait until somebody else is finished. Our God is actually able to hear more than one person at a time.

So you pray on behalf of these people. And after we prayed for a couple minutes, I'll lead us in prayer for them. You begin praying for them now.

I want us to have some time to intercede on behalf of each other when it comes to more emotional hurts. I hesitate to even put it that way because that may not express the depth of what that might be. I simply want us to have a time where we pray for the burdens that we're carrying all across this room in our lives.

I know that in this room there are representatives from families that have got some pretty heavy burdens. Some marriages feel pretty heavy right now. Some things going on with kids feel really heavy right now.

Maybe there's some hurts, some things that have happened recently or some hurts from a long time ago that's still creeping up in our lives that are heavy in our hearts. Maybe it's you and your family at a point where you're making a decision and you don't know what to do and you need His grace and His guidance because you've come to the end of yourselves and you just don't know what He wants to do. And so I want to invite people who've got just some especially heavy burdens on your heart this morning.

In just a second we're going to begin to sing a song about running to Christ and laying our burdens at the feet of Christ. And so when we begin singing that song and all throughout that song, I want to invite you, if you would like to, to come down here to the front. If you're able you can kneel here at the front of these steps or you can stand on the sides.

But I want to invite you to run to Christ with those burdens. And then after we've sung this song and we've had an opportunity to come down and pray for those things, then I'm going to invite people just to come and surround the group that's here at the front. And we're going to pray and we're going to intercede on behalf of those who are carrying some hurts in their lives and their families this morning.

Again, I hope this is a free place where you have the freedom to say, you know, I've got some hurts and I can be vulnerable with those. You don't have to again in any way share that, what that is with anybody else, but just the time to say I need God and I need some people to surround me in prayer. So would you stand with me? We're going to sing this song.

And Lord, I run to you. As soon as we begin singing, I want to invite you during the song, if you'd like to come down here to the front to kneel or stand here at the front. And then after we finish singing, laying our burdens down before Him, then we're going to surround each other.

We're going to pray for each other. You respond as God leads you. Play in the background.

There's a whole host of people up here at the front. I know it's kind of crowded, but it's good to be crowded as a faith family. I want to invite some folks, especially those who are closer to the front.

If you could come and let's just surround all these folks who are kneeling, standing here at the front. And we're going to intercede on behalf of them. As you come and you surround them, just try to get a hand on as many shoulders as possible down here at the front.

And just begin to pray for them. Either silently or aloud, you begin praying for them. And then I'll lead us in prayer after a couple of minutes.

Let's pray for these burdens that are so real across the front of this room. The glory of Christ, the picture of His glory sets the stage for the last group of people I want us to intercede for this morning. We've prayed for those who are physically hurting and emotionally hurting.

I want us to pray. Intercede on behalf. Those who are hurting spiritually.

And that might look a variety of different ways, a variety of different circumstances. But I want us to pray especially for people who do not know the love of a Father in heaven. People who don't know that He is approachable through Jesus Christ.

People who have not come to know His grace and His mercy up close and personal. And I'm guessing that all across this room, as Christ followers, there are people in our lives, whether in a family or friends, workplaces, neighborhoods, that we have in our hearts that we have the privilege of interceding for. God, open their eyes to the glory of Christ.

And I don't want us to leave out the people we don't know. The people in all nations. People who have yet to hear the name of Jesus.

I want us to intercede on their behalf and know that we have the privilege of participating in what God is doing around the world in the hearts of people who don't know Christ. And so, whether you stand or you sit, I'll leave the freedom of that up to you. But I do want us to figuratively stand in the gap right now on behalf of people who don't know Christ.

And you can call out their names loud. You can pray silently. But I want us to pray for people who don't know Christ.

And while we're doing that, here's the beauty. I know there are people in this room today who would say, well, that would mean that you're praying for me. Because I have not come to a personal relationship with Christ.

And if that's you, I want you to know, based on what we've seen in God's word today, that He is able. He is able to forgive you of all your sins. To wipe them completely clean.

And He is approachable. Yes, He is running this whole universe. But He delights in you coming to Him right here, right now and saying, I need you in my life.

I need you to forgive me of my sins. I need you to take the burdens of my life upon you. And know that He is active.

And if I am convinced, I believe with all my heart, that all across this room, He is seeking hearts. That you would know Him. And so as we're praying on behalf of people, as Christ followers around this room are praying on behalf of people who don't know Christ, I want to invite you to have the freedom to pray right now.

God, I need you to forgive me of my sins. I need you to come into my life. And right now, you can begin a relationship with Him.

And so whether you stand or you sit down in just a moment, I want to invite us to stand in the gap on behalf of people who are spiritually hurting. Call out to Him. And after we've prayed a couple of minutes, it will lead right into a prayer that we're going to sing to God that basically says, now that we've prayed this, take our lives and use us to be the answer to this prayer.

So let me invite you to begin praying with me now. Standing or sitting, all across this room, let's stand in the gap on behalf of those who are spiritually hurting. And then we'll begin to sing a prayer to God as we close out.

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