

The Discipline of Asking

by Todd Atkinson

The sermon highlights the importance of persistent prayer and understanding God's loving nature as a Father who invites us to continually seek Him.

Duration: 35:01

Scripture: Luke 11:1-13

Topics: "Spiritual Disciplines"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the second part of the text, specifically the story of the persistent friend that follows the Lord's prayer. The story illustrates the importance of hospitality in the culture and the willingness to help others, even at inconvenient times. The speaker then transitions to the verses that follow the story, emphasizing the importance of asking, seeking, and knocking in prayer. The sermon concludes with a reminder that God has hidden secrets and blessings for us to discover through spiritual adventure and seeking.

Transcript

Well, I want to turn my attention after that good-serving humble pie, I think I'm ready to turn my attention to the gospel of Luke and Chapter 11 To just a wonderful wonderful portion Of scripture I was gonna preach it last week and I just felt like I'm not ready not ready yet to preach it last week there's just So much riches in here now here we are this week and I still feel like oh boy dare I touch this this beautiful passage of Scripture This week, but well, we'll we'll have a go and do our best. So let's begin with a reading The longer reading from the gospel according to Luke chapter 11 verses 1 through 13 Well, let me let me I'll just read it out loud One day when 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 the Baptist taught his disciples to pray So Jesus said to them when you pray Say father Holy is your name or hallowed be thy name Your kingdom come Give us each day our daily bread you might think I'm missing phrases, but I'm not this is Luke's version of the Lord's Prayer is abbreviated compared to Matthew's 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 and then Jesus said to them suppose one of you has a friend and He goes to him at midnight and he 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 That doesn't sound like much of an existence.

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 verse 9. There it is somewhere there Half of it two-thirds of it for everyone who asks Nope verse 9. 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 unto you for everyone who asks receives He who seeks finds and to him who knocks the door will be opened Which of your you fathers if your son asks for a fish will give him a snake instead Or if he asked for an egg will give him a scorpion if you then though you were evil know how to give good gifts to Children how much more Will your father in heaven? Give the Holy Spirit To those that ask who asked this morning Lord That you would bless this wondrous passage of Scripture Lord, it's um It's just joy unspeakable to have the very words of Jesus transmitted through the Holy Apostles And to be able to read them any time day or night before us Thank you Thank you Lord for your words So Lord if you would just speak to us now In Jesus name Well, that's a fairly full passage of Scripture 13 verses I Think when we become acquainted with this text, we tend to focus on the earlier verses the father's prayer or the Lord's prayer And not so much what comes after it. I want to focus on the second part of this text this morning.

I Think it's so critical to even understanding what goes before to to the Lord's prayer And I I give a lot of time probably still not as much time as I ought to consider the Lord's prayer But um, but these verses that are to follow it I haven't always given them the same time. So I'd like to do that this morning It begins with this story right after the Lord's prayer verses 5 through 8 the story of a persistent friend a very simple story He says suppose one of you has a friend in other words it could be any one of you and everybody understood this who had goes to someone at midnight because In this culture hospitality is significant. It's primary and it it's kind of the measure of your household How much you can show? hospitality, so suppose that someone shows up at your house at midnight and They're asking to be fed and to be housed and you found yourself bereft of food in other words You don't even have the resources to be able to care for them in the way that you'd like So you go to a neighbor's house and that neighbor isn't Isn't unfamiliar with you.

They're actually also a close friend So you bang on their door until you finally wake them up and you get a response and you say something to them that you're sure They're gonna understand. I've had all these people they've showed up at my house I don't have anything to feed them, you know our culture as well as I do I want to show hospitality these people and I don't have the resources. Please help me out The man says go away.

Go. Yes. You're my friend, but still go away You sometimes you have to say that even to friends, don't you you are a good friend, but please leave me alone The door is locked so My children already in bed with me.

We've settled down for the night Please go away, but the man won't he just continues to bang on the door and persist and And so it kind of ends with this phrase is that even though he won't give the man what he asked because of the friendship He says he will give it Because of the man's boldness now the word boldness there I'm a little in two minds how well that's Translated because maybe boldness in this text is slightly different than what boldness would mean to us other translation used the word Importunity, which means to make persistent requests to make pressing requests upon someone the word persistence is the word That's probably most regularly used so it says he won't Give this man what he wants because of the friendship, but he will because of his persistence All right. So the word boldness is okay. As long as you understand, wherein was he being bold? There's lots of ways you can being both the boldness was in the fact that he was persistent and he wouldn't give up Even after the man had asked him to go away, which

raises the question.

What's the message of that story? Is this is the message of the story that God is like a grouchy neighbor Hardly is the message of the story that God considers our prayers a bother That's the word that's used in the story. He says even though he says go away. Do not bother me Other translations and say do not trouble me do not pester me So is that the message of the story that God's like a grouchy neighbor or if we come to him That he considers our prayers a bother But that if we persist in bothering him he'll eventually give us what we want if only to make us go away and The answer is no that couldn't be further further from the truth That's not the message of the story The message of the story is this is if this man in the story who considers his friends persistence a bother and Yet will still give him what he asks How much more will the Heavenly Father answer our prayers who does not consider our persistence a bother? He actually likes our persistence.

He even invites our persistence enjoys our persistence So if this man will give you what you want, even though he considers you a bother at night How much more will the Heavenly Father give you what you want? Who enjoys your persistence? Even finds affection in your persistence who loves your persistence who adores the sound of your voice and never gets tired of it Because he does not sleep or slumber. There's no time of the day when he finds you a bother He doesn't lock the doors and go to sleep. So there's no inconvenient moment for God There's no moment when he enjoys your voice and another moment when he doesn't For God the voice of his children is always special to him There's there's a contrast even in this text of Scripture between friendship and fatherhood You know God doesn't answer your prayers just because you're a friend.

You're more than a friend to God More than a persistent friend. You're a son You're a son or daughter of God. It's an altogether different study We're not just someone who happens to be living next to God's house.

We are in God's house We are his children and he never gets tired of our prayers How do I know that well the next verse says so I say to you ask So this isn't a God that's bothered by persistence. He even invites it. So I say to you I'm asking you to ask you don't ask enough So I say to you ask I say to you seek I say to you knock on the door and I'll give it to you Of course if we look more closely at those words to find two things One of them is that the Greek tense they're written in the present tense Means to ask and keep on asking So here's God saying ask and keep on asking don't stop because your voice is never a bother to me Seek and keep on seeking because I love your persistence and I am never troubled by knock and keep on knocking my door He says the door of heaven you can knock day and night because it never bothers me So I say to you I'm inviting you I want you to ask I want you to seek And I want you to knock because your prayers and your desires Mean so much to me, you know, this can raise mixed feelings in us It raises hope on one hand.

Wow, I didn't makes you want to go pray Makes you want to ask for something makes you want to go seek makes you want to go knock on the door of heaven and see What might come out of that? But it also raises some fundamental questions Like is this too good to be true? Like how do I square that with my experience? Because there are instances in the past where it might not have seemed to work for us In most instances we could probably say well, I I guess I really wasn't that persistent So those don't trouble us those instances I I think I asked once or twice and I didn't really ask and keep on asking There are other instances where we asked and we didn't receive But perhaps it really didn't matter all that much because what we were asking for wasn't life and death and We've long forgot that we ever asked But what

can stand out in our in our minds or at least sometimes in our our subconscious?

What can stand out as those one or two or three instances where we felt like we really were persistent as persistent as we knew? how to be and There one or two or three instances where the outcome really did matter to us There's probably nothing in life. We wanted more than that So the stakes were really really high And we'd so we did persist and we did want and we did believe that the father had really good things for us But still the end of the story didn't turn out Like we'd anticipated And it caused something to happen that we might not even be very aware of And That is a wounding In our relationship with our father that we hear the words that he's a loving father and answers our prayer But there's something in our heart that undermines it when we hear that there's some Unanswered question mark in our minds where we don't even dare to ask it But there's just the question mark said is that really true or is it true for me?

We could say maybe that our faith has been bruised we have faith, but it's in a bruised and State our faith feels a little beat up over those one or two or three instances And when we come to the text like this and we hear the words of Jesus It's okay for us to be very forthright and real about some of those feelings That's Why I want to take a look at those words In a little bit more detail because I think that they tell a story ask Seek and knock and here's the question I want to ask is What's inferred in those words if you have to ask and keep on asking what's inferred in that if you have to seek and keep? on seeking What's inferred in that and likewise if you have to knock and keep on knocking What is inferred in that so first one ask if you got to ask and keep on asking what's inferred in that is that?

The concept of delay that things really are delayed if you receive something When you first ask then you don't have to ask and keep on asking so here's a reality in the kingdom of God That something's that we ask for and that God even wants us to ask for invites us to ask for enjoys that we ask for still Those things can still suffer legitimate Delays Legitimate delays Remember Lazarus He's very ill his sisters come to To visit Jesus, and they say this our brother is ill Lord. Please come and see him Take a look at that chapter in John there is a divine delay.

That's Kurt in other words. He does not come immediately and That isn't that is not a haphazard delay It's a significant delay the father does not allow him to come immediately and and what happens in that delay is that the situation they're praying for goes from bad to worse and Their brother who they loved dearly Dies in the process I Wrote on the side of my Bible sometimes things go from bad to worse in the will of God You have to chew on that one for a while don't you I I have no other way of understanding the story of Lazarus So when Jesus does show up on the scene it feels a little bit late and Their hearts and their faith is a little bit bruised So, you know the first thing they said Lord if you had just been here This wouldn't have happened there's a bit of hurt than that There's a bit of disappointment in that and there's a reason why the Holy Spirit put that in Scripture, I Love that about the Bible. It doesn't have to shy away from those moments Pretend they don't happen Because they do happen and every one of our journey has those times And that's why Stories like that are included as a comfort and encouragement to every one of us Lord, have you only been here? Where were you? That's what it implies.

Where in the world have you been? And he says I tell you if you just believe even in the face of delay You will see the glory of God. Oh, there's so much we could talk about delay All I want to do is raise your eyes to see that in God's economy delay is not a punishment God wasn't punishing Lazarus Wasn't punishing his sisters wasn't withholding good He was making way for something's more great greater Was making way for a resurrection. Oh, we could go on and on and on about talking about delay I have a shortage of time.

So let's go on to the next one. What's implied in the word seek? If you go to seek for something it's implied that it is hidden. Hidden there is an entire study in the Bible on hiddenness things that God hides. And again, does he doesn't hide them to punish you? He doesn't hide them to play with you or toy with you or to torture you or to trouble you but he does. Hide things. Proverbs 25 verse 2 says this it is the glory of God To conceal a matter or to hide a matter. It's the glory of God To conceal a matter.

It's his glory. There's actually something glorious about it. When I grew up usually once a year. Usually at Easter. There was a very small. Fairly delectable objects chocolate in thin paper hit all through the house sometimes through the whole backyard. So the the purpose of it was that there was some joy. In seeking it out. There was some adventure in seeking out my parents didn't wake up that morning and go talk this is a great day to aggravate Todd. We could just give this to him but no, let's make him look for it. Let's let's really bother him and aggravate him and And see how much we can trouble him and bother him. No, they said we've got something for you and we've hit it everything in you when you're a little guy goes really and now it's fun. The game is on it's an adventure.

I'm gonna go look for this. And yet we don't see how that our Heavenly Father there are things he hides. It is the glory of God to conceal a matter. You know how the rest of the verse goes. It is the glory of Kings To seek it out. It's the glory of God to hide something it's the glory of a king To seek it out.

So here's this this this these twin truths. So it's the glory of God to hide a matter begs the question. Why would he hide it? The second half of the verse answers the first half to make you seek. To Heighten value title to heighten anticipation. I think that one of the things that most troubles Canadian Christianity is that people get plumb bored and I've lost the sense of spiritual adventure. So, you know what the Lord does he puts a little adventure back he says I tell you I got something for you. And I'm gonna hide it and you're gonna go seek for it.

I was asked to go speak at a at a movement a couple years ago national movement in Canada and This is where this text became so real to me because I felt the Lord gave me a prophetic word for this movement. And it was this the secrets that your movement need. The ingredients your movement need to become everything God Wants it to become. God has hidden those secrets. Where is he hidden them? He is hidden them in other youth movements. Why as you get to know them and honor what's in them. God is going to give you secrets some of the secret secrets of your success are hidden in those other movements and The Lord wants you to go and honor them and learn them and get them up and the secrets to some of their Successes hidden in yours you have things that they need to be everything God wants them to be. God hides things To make you seek a little bit ask a few questions and press into him. And to pray again so much more we can we can give a series on the things God hides and the invitation to our hearts To seek a little bit. Don't be haphazard. Don't be lazy. Go seek a little bit and know that he has something to give those. Who will seek it? thirdly Knock and Keep on knocking.

What is knocking infer that what you're asking for is blocked. It's like it's on the other side of a door. You ever feel like sometimes you ask and ask asking you're just like that's it. Is anybody even listening to me and it just feels like there's mountains between you and what you're asking for. We'll consider the call of John the Baptist. If you said to John the Baptist, how do you see your calling in life he says this I'm the voice of one calling in the desert. Prepare the way for the Lord. I make straight paths for him. I make every valley filled up and I and I make every mountain and hill made low. So one of his personal callings is that he says I speak to mountains. I make them come low. It's prophetic language, especially in the language in the prophet Isaiah this idea of there be mountains between you and God. But that the prophetic anointing

would enable you to speak to mountain speak to those obstacles speak to those impediments And to see them removed and so sometimes There is a mountain between you and what you're asking for.

It doesn't just seem like there's something blocking you there really is It is there but it isn't there without a cause and it is not there as a subtle form of punishment Is because knocking Knocking on that door knocking on that obstacle Is something that the Lord uses to make us everything he wants us to be The real key to ask seek and knock is found in verses 11 to 13 And it's found in a true understanding of the Heavenly Father Which of you fathers if your son asks you for some for a fish Will give him a snake and said so which a human father you said would do that son Comes to you. I need something to eat. I'd like a fish and Instead would give him something that would harm him Give him a snake instead something that could bite him Or if he asked for an egg would give him a scorpion like If there is ever a father in the world that would do that We would think of that as being the most dysfunctional father like even in the world Sometimes things like that does happen, but there's a there's a social horror a repulsion to that But if you then though you are evil know how to give good gifts to his children So, which father here hasn't ever given a good gift to his children How much more will your father in heaven Give the Holy Spirit To those that ask him so I think of myself and I actually like giving gifts to my children I'm a gift giver by nature.

I love it.

So do I think I'm more giving than God Do I think I'm a better father than he is Do I think I'm more generous than he is The fact that I like giving it but I think I gotta beg and plead him to do it If you do, I think he fundamentally doesn't want to give me something but that I love giving That makes me somewhat more generous than him And how backwards that would be if there's even this much generosity in my heart guess where it comes from You have to see it amplified by a million times If I enjoy giving gifts even that much and I enjoy lots How many millions of times is that amplified in the source of giving itself He loves giving why does he raise the Holy Spirit because it's his most precious gift If he could give the Holy Spirit anything else is his most precious gift his most holy

gift To those Who will just ask I'm afraid I've run out of time If you take those truths Sometime this week and then go read the Lord's Prayer again through the lens of those truths Jesus said pray like this my father who's in heaven the first thing you have to pray Learn he said with prayer is a correct understanding of your father And if you understand he's a father who loves to hear your prayers and loves to give good gifts Then everything else that follows in the Lord's Prayer is not difficult to ask Join me in prayer Father It is brief time to look at your word this morning Would you heal our hearts where they have been bruised Would you heal our faith where It feels eroded From anything Lord that has made us Lack confidence in asking To know that our prayers and our faith is not a

bother to you That you find our persistence Delightful And never tire Of our voices You are more than a friend you are a father Lord And if we know we have that kind of a father Who invites us to ask You're the kind of father who will hide things to make us seek Seek them out You're the one that invites us to knock and and don't give up Because knocking produces something in us Father I pray that in these days that we would see an outpouring of your Holy Spirit Like we have never seen before The gift of the Holy Spirit Be poured into our hearts by a loving father Because your spirit is one of your most precious gifts If we could receive that gift Everything else would seem easy to ask for Your spirit and your son Oh Lord Oh Lord Pour out your spirit afresh on us As our father Lord even

this morning for those who just feel weary For those who feel empty and for those who feel bruised and broken Pour out your spirit Lord I ask because I know that you love doing this You invite me to ask And never get tired of my asking So Lord in this coming months as we You lead us into a deeper understanding of your fatherhood And as you lead us into a deeper understanding of our sonship Then lead us into a mighty outpouring of your spirit And we'll bring deeply the gift of a good father We'll just bring deeply from our dad in heaven From our Abba Oh Lord Oh Lord Hallelujah Visit us in our homes Visit us in the day hours and in the night hours Visit us in our precious gatherings Visit us in 55 plus Visit us in boomers Visit us in cell groups Connect rooms Lord Visit us over coffee with

a friend Oh Lord Oh Lord If it wasn't for your word we wouldn't even know this about you If it wasn't for Jesus Who came to To reveal your father Oh thank you Lord take us now The presence of a father, son and Holy Spirit Take us May the grace Of the Lord Jesus May the love of God the Father May the friendship of the Holy Spirit Be with us all Now and forevermore Oh be blessed Be blessed Thank you Lord If you have any needs whatsoever We have a prayer time team at the front Richard Crow and Roger Halverson Any need whatsoever it would be our delight to pray for you Please come and join us upstairs And if you would be so kind as to Just turn around and Invite some say hey Will you come and have a muffin with me Come and have a coffee with me Particularly Lord Or particularly if it's

someone you just don't know Just take someone by the hand And take them with you We'll go upstairs and fellowship together

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