

**Series: Invited to Pray**  
**“Don’t Give Up in Prayer”**

**Luke 11:1-13**

Have you ever wanted to give up on something? Have you ever invested time, resources, money, etc. for something that you thought was worth it, but eventually came to the point where you threw in the towel? I anticipate that many of us have been there. It could be something simple like some workout machine that we got for Christmas one year that over time became a glorified clothes hanger instead of a workout machine. It could have been something that was falsely advertised that you gave up on the moment you discovered it didn’t work like the commercials said. Or, it could be that you have given up on something more impactful like a job that you no longer enjoy, a vehicle that you no longer care to drive, or perhaps even a friendship that you no longer want to invest in. We all understand the pull to give up. We are only two months into the new year and already some of us have given up on our new year goals because they are just so difficult. There are many things and situations that we may consider giving up on. None of us would argue that we aren’t tempted at some level to give up. But, I wonder why we give up? What causes us to give up on things? This week in reading several articles and statistics about giving up, I have learned of several common factors that lead us to giving up. I will list them in random order. Why do we give up? 1) Because we fear failure. 2) Because we are more concerned about what others think than what we are trying to achieve. 3) Because we fail once, and never try again. 4) Because we see only the failure, and not the lesson. 5) Because we don’t learn how to discipline ourselves. 6) Because we care more about the end result, not the process/journey. 7) Because we don’t surround ourselves with like-minded people heading in the right direction. 8) Because we would rather settle for short-term rewards. 9) Because we get distracted by other things. 10) Because we refuse to make adjustments to be more effective. Have you ever been there? Have you faced these? In your job? In your workouts? In your relationships? I believe we have all be there before.

Please understand that this message today isn’t a self-help message about never giving up on things. Instead it is a message on prayer. The vast majority of Christians need to grow in prayer. Many of us do in fact pray. We pray at meals, at bedtime, and we surely pray when we are driving down the road – even if it is because we were driving 15 mph over the speed limit and we just passed a cop. We do pray, but I wonder how often we set aside quality time in prayer. How often do we take our requests to the Lord and see them through? Throughout our study we have been reminded of Jesus’ example, how He would depart away from the crowd to pray. We saw in **Mark 1:35**, “In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there.” We will see this again in our text today. This was clearly His example for us, but it was also His teaching to us. He said in **Matthew 6:6**, “But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.” Jesus is calling us to be intentional to get alone with God in prayer. He is calling us to show up often at the throne of grace to talk to God. As Christians we understand this. We believe this. We would probably say “Amen” to this. Yet, I wonder how many of us are actually doing this? How often does this take place in our life?

I am convinced that the reason that so many of us need to grow in prayer is not because we don't understand the value of it, but it is primarily because we have given up. Have you given up in prayer? Is there something that you once prayed regularly that you gave up on? Is there some request that God didn't answer, so you just stopped asking? Those reasons for giving up that I mentioned ago are not biblical at all, but they do apply perfectly to why we so often give up on prayer.

What does Jesus want us to know about prayer? There are many things that we have discovered over the past month in our study, but today I believe He wants us to resolve to never give up in prayer. From His own words He gives us a practical picture of prayer, then He explains some powerful principles of prayer, and He concludes with a personal promise of prayer. He gives all of this to teach us not to give up on prayer.

Show Text

As we study God's Word this morning, I will not be spending much time on verses 1-4 because we have already studied them over the past few weeks. However, before we get to verses 5-13, it is important for us to know the context of what has taken place. Jesus has once again separated from the crowds of people, solely for the purpose of prayer. As He talks to God the Father and relates to Him and pours out His heart to Him, the disciples realize that He prays differently than others. They knew how the Pharisees prayed to be seen, how they prayed the same things over and over and over, and even how they memorized certain prayers. They had never seen someone be so connected to the Father. So one of the disciples spoke up for the group and said, "Lord, teach us to pray. We want to pray like You, but we don't know how. We don't seem to have this right. We can't do this on our own. Lord, teach us to pray." Then, Jesus began to teach them what we know as the Lord's prayer. In one model prayer Jesus taught us how to approach God, the right attitude we should have towards God, and the things we should ask of God. Jesus wasn't teaching them, or us, to memorize this prayer and recite it. Instead, He was showing us that prayer should happen in the context of a personal relationship with God and should take place with humility, honesty, and dependency on God. As soon as this was done, Jesus immediately gave an illustration. I love that about Jesus. I love illustrations. They are the window to the message. They help us get a fresh view of the point being presented. Jesus modeled prayer. Then He taught prayer and now He illustrates it for us to better understand. As He does, I want us to see three key truths about prayer. My hope is that it will help us to never give up in prayer.

### **I.     **The Demonstration of Prayer** (vs. 5-8)**

In Jesus' illustration He tells us of a man who had some unexpected company. Have you ever been there? It's not usually an ideal place to be. We aren't always ready for company. We aren't always prepared with extra food, sleeping arrangements for everyone, etc. A distant friend was on a journey and, apparently, he had some issues along the way. For whatever reason his travels were delayed, and he was unable to make it to his intended destination. Being late at night, he was weary and it wasn't safe for him to continue on the roads. He determined that he had a friend who lived in a nearby village, so instead of continuing on his journey he came to the man's house instead. But there was a problem, the man wasn't expecting his friend and didn't have food for him. He

had nothing to offer him. There was very little he could do to change the situation. He didn't have anything to whip up quickly. He didn't have an electric oven, a microwave, a refrigerator, or any of the conveniences that we have today. He couldn't gather sticks at midnight, build a fire, and find something to roast. His options weren't good. There wasn't much he could do, but he could do one thing. He could go to a neighbor and ask and plead for help and assistance. In Jesus' illustration that is exactly what happened. Though it was midnight and though the visiting friend wasn't expected, the host went out of his way to seek assistance.

### A. The Perspective of Prayer

When I say the perspective of prayer, I'm referring specifically to how we view prayer. There are many times in life that we may feel hopeless or overwhelmed with a given situation. There are many situations in life that may challenge us and cause us to feel that change is impossible and that the end is inevitable. We must remember, however, that prayer changes things. We don't have the power to change things, but we know the One who does. The right perspective of prayer begins when we realize our absolute need and dependence on the One to whom we are praying.

Put yourself in the shoes of this unprepared host. His friend has shown up unexpectedly at midnight. The man gets up and welcomes him, but his friend is hungry. He's been on a long journey. The host could've been apathetic. He could've said, "Well, it's midnight. This can wait until the morning. My guest can take care of himself. He should've let me know he was coming. It's his fault he's in this mess." However, he didn't do that. He had compassion for his guest and wanted to bless him. He wanted to be a gracious host to minister to his hungry friend. So, the host begins looking around for something to eat and realizes he has nothing to serve his guest. He doesn't even have three rolls. **\*\*ILL:** By the way, that's how you know he wasn't from the South. You've got to have bread. I can envision him pacing the floor. "What am I going to do? What can I possibly do at this hour? I have nothing to give." I believe this was one of the subtle points of Jesus' illustration. It isn't until we understand the depth of our needs that we really learn to pray. Effective prayer requires a steadfast dependence on God. This host knew that he didn't have what was needed and that he would have to rely on someone else. He may not be able to do much, but he could call on someone who could.

Friend, there is a powerful reminder here that our needs should cause us to realize our utter dependency upon God. Yes, we should have regular times of prayer where we simply praise God and thank Him, but our needs remind us constantly that God is God and we are not. Our needs remind us constantly of our need for Him. I love the way that **H.B. Charles** summarized it. He said, "It does not matter how much you know about prayer. If you are not aware of your neediness and God's sufficiency, you will never learn to pray. Prayerlessness is a declaration of independence, but needy people pray." What about you? Do you recognize your need for the Father? Do you have the right perspective of prayer?

**\*\*ILL:** A father and his son were walking down a wooded trail one day when they suddenly came across a large tree branch that had fallen across the trail. They could've

walked around it or maybe even stepped over it, but the father decided that this was a good teaching lesson for his son. So, the dad explained the importance of looking out for others who would come after them riding bikes or walking along the path. It was important to set a good example and look out for those following behind you. To do so, you want to remove obstacles that could cause others to stumble and fall. At that, he instructed the son to move the large, heavy branch. The boy began. He pushed and pulled but had no success. He said, "I can't do it." The dad encouraged him, "You can do it, son. Keep going. Be sure to use all your strength." The boy tried harder and gave it all he had. He kept on working and trying and finally with tears in his eyes he said, "Daddy, I can't do this." The dad put his arm on his son's shoulder and said, "Son, did you use all of your strength?" The boy said, "Yes sir." The father wisely responded, "No, son, you didn't, because you never asked me to help you." And at that, the wise father pick up the branch and threw it in the ditch. Friends, it isn't until we recognize our neediness that we truly learn to depend on God.

### **B. The Priority of Prayer**

The host clearly understood his need for help. He mentally grasped his great need, but then he did something else – he acted on his need. Remember the illustration. It is midnight and the man is in bed. His whole family is comfortable and settled in for the night. And all of a sudden, a friend comes to stay the night. It is obvious that he wasn't expecting the man because he wasn't prepared. He could've rejected the guest. He could've said, "I'm sorry, but I have nothing for you to eat. We will take care of this in the morning." But he did neither. Why? Because in this moment he understood that his priority was to take care of his guest. In fact, in that culture it was a very shameful thing to turn away a guest, but that is not at all what he did. When his friend arrived, he understood the urgency of the moment and got involved. Recognizing his own insufficiency, he knew that he had to reach out to someone else for help. So, got up from his own bed and went to his neighbor for help. It doesn't appear that he even considered not acting on his friend's behalf. His mind was made up. This was important. What I am saying is that he had the right priority – seeking his neighbor on his friend's behalf. Asking for help became his top priority in the moment, and it should for every believer as well.

We should go to God in prayer. Is this what you do? When you have a problem that you can't solve, do you pray? When something is lost and you can't find it, do you pray? When your friends come to you with a need, do you pray? When it is midnight in your life, do you pray about it? Do you try to do everything on your own or do you take it to the One who can do anything? I believe there are many who are comfortable spiritually. Spiritually speaking they are relaxed and taking it easy. They pray sometimes. They seek the Lord sometimes, but only when it's convenient. Sure, they pray when there is an emergency or when they really need help, but apart from that they're complacent. Friends, I want to remind us that there are needs all around us. How can we sit around apathetically without taking these needs continuously to the Lord? Many Christians are in such a state of complacency that we have become lukewarm to the things of God. When a Christian becomes cold and indifferent, one of the first things that will suffer will be his prayer life.

Friend, what does your prayer life reveal about you? About your relationship with the Lord? About your attitude towards the needs around you? Many people think their spiritual life is measured by their church attendance, their loud profession, or even their many acts of service, but I remind you this morning that God is not looking at the outward appearance. He is looking at the heart.

I am convinced that it is this lack of priority that often hinders us from praying. For some it may be that we are spiritually cold and apathetic, but for others of us it is simply that our priorities are all messed up. How do you know your priorities are messed up? By evaluating your use of time and resources. How are you spending your time? Keep a record this week of how often and how long you pray. You will probably be surprised at what it reveals. We spend many hours a week with men, but how much do we spend with our Maker? We often spend time with our friends, but how much time do we spend with our Father? We spend much time with recreation and hobbies, but how much time do we set apart for these actions that fill the soul? What is the #1 hindrance to prayer? It is our time, our busyness, and our many distractions. We can all say, "My life is so busy. I have so much to do." I can relate to that. But friend, that is no excuse for wrong priorities. We must be intentional and disciplined in making prayer the priority that it should be in our lives.

**\*\*ILL:** Slavery in our country is something that we all grieve and look down upon as part of our history. However, in the midst of those difficult times, God was also at work. There are some incredible stories that have come out of that period as many slaves believed in Jesus and had a vibrant relationship with the Lord. Their passion for the Lord was largely noted in how they praised the Lord in song and in how they prayed. Following Jesus' example, many of them would pick specific places in the fields where they would go to pray. They would go out to the field, to their specific spot, they would get on their knees and they would pray. They spent so much time on their knees in prayer that their knees would make impressions in the soil and grass would stop growing in their spot. These spots became points of accountability. If somebody was neglecting prayer, it was obvious. If someone had become distracted or busy or had forsaken their priority they would be told, "The grass grows on your path out yonder." It was a reminder that they needed to get back to prayer. What about you this morning? Is your place of prayer marked by the impression of your time spent with the Father? Or has the grass been growing in your place?

### **C. The Petition of Prayer**

Back to the illustration, we see the man has recognized his need. He has gone to his neighbor at midnight. He approaches the house, and he knocks on the door. The neighbor is sound asleep, with all his family. Please envision the scene. The people in that day did not have houses like you and I. We have a front door that opens perhaps to a hall or a living room and then off of that room are likely various bedrooms that are separated by walls and doors. In that day, their houses were comprised of one room. You can still see this modeled in nations like Haiti or Nicaragua. The houses are largely one room. It is amazing how many people can fit in one of those houses. When it is bed time, everyone comes in, closes the door, and sets up a hammock or sleeps on the floor or whatever accommodations they

have. So, when this guy knocks on the door it is a major disruption. He knocks on the door and the neighbor says, “Who is it?” He says it’s me, “Needy.” The neighbor says, “It’s midnight. What is it that you need?” And instantly comes the petition, “Friend, please lend me three loaves.” This is a very simple point, but it must be stated. The man was specific and honest in his request. I believe that God is honored when we are honest and specific with our request. I am not suggesting that we should limit God in any way; however, I am suggesting that we can and should ask God honestly for our needs. Jesus did teach us to pray, “Father, give us each day our daily bread.” That was an honest, simple request for God’s provision. In the illustration the host is not asking for a feast, for a killing of the fatted calf, or selfishly asking for himself. He is interceding for the need of his friend and asking on his behalf for his provision. What is the specific need that you need to ask God to meet today? In your life? In your marriage? In your family? In the church? What is the specific need that you need to intercede over for your friend? Your co-worker? Your neighbor?

This petition was honest and specific, but we also see that it was asked in great humility. Put yourself in this man’s shoes. This is very humbling. It was one thing to be embarrassed before his guest, but he is now about to take it a step further. He gets up and goes to his neighbor. He bangs on the door. His neighbor whispers, “Go away, we’re sleeping.” The man keeps knocking. Then the neighbor responds louder, “I said, go away!” The man keeps knocking. Finally, the neighbor asks, “What do you want?” Then the host swallows his pride and says, “I have a friend who has come to my house, **and I have nothing to offer him**. Can you lend me three biscuits?” It took great humility for this man to wake up his neighbor. It took great humility to admit that he needed help. It took great humility to ask for provision. In the same way that the man demonstrated humility, we also must practice humility in prayer. In fact, I would say that it is often our pride that hinders us from praying. Isn’t it our pride that causes us to believe the lie that we don’t need to pray? Isn’t it our pride that causes us to serve and work without taking time to pray? Isn’t it our pride that often prevents us from praying for others or asking them to pray for us? His petition was made with honesty and humility. I believe that this is often the reason for these “midnight moments” in our lives. Life is somewhat easy when guests schedule their arrival and we know how to plan. Life is somewhat easy when the grocery store and the pharmacy is open, and we can just go purchase what we need. In these easy moments it is easy to forget where our help comes from, but the unexpected “midnight moments” of life force us to humble ourselves and seek God for what only He can provide.

#### **D. The Persistence of Prayer**

The illustration is reaching a boiling point isn’t it? The neighbor is likely thinking, “What? You woke me up for this? What kind of person are you? You don’t even have three pieces of bread in your house?” So, he says to the host, “Do not bother me. The door is already shut, and my entire family and I are asleep. I cannot get up and give you anything.” The sleepy neighbor isn’t happy. He has been awakened. His children are likely starting to stir a bit. The door has already been closed for the night, and even though he has food, he is

not willing to get up and give it. I imagine that if we were in his shoes, we would likely be a little perturbed as well. He says basically, “Go away. Quit bothering me.” But notice what the man in need does. He doesn’t give up. He doesn’t return home. He doesn’t sit by idly. What does he do? He continues to knock. He continues to persist. He perseveres in his asking. He refuses to give up. He refuses to back down. He refuses to be turned away. **Verse 8** says, “Because of his persistence” his need was met. The word for “persistence” here means “shamelessness.” There was no shame in the way that he asked. He didn’t care what he looked like. It didn’t matter how embarrassing this was. It didn’t matter if he woke up everyone in town. He was determined to knock, knock, and keep on knocking until the need was met.

What about you? Are you persevering in prayer? Do you pray things through, or do you give up when God doesn’t answer in the way or the timing that you want? Many of us have been hindered from praying because we have refused to persevere. Maybe we have prayed about something for a season and we have given up when we didn’t get a favorable answer, or maybe we just got tired about praying for something over and over again. **\*\*ILL:** Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane went to pray. He took the disciples with Him and called them to watch and pray. However, three times He came back to them and found them sound asleep. Friend, that describes many of us here today. We don’t understand the urgency of the time. We sit in ignorance falling asleep unaware of our need to persevere in prayer. Christian, don’t give up in praying.

**\*\*ILL:** In 1952, a young woman by the name of Florence Chadwick stepped off the beach at Catalina Island and into the water, determined to swim to the shore of mainland California. She was already an experienced long-distance swimmer: she was the first woman to swim the English Channel both ways. On this particular day the weather was foggy and chilly. She could barely see the boats that would accompany her. For 15 hours she swam. She begged to be taken out of the water, but her trainer urged her to persevere, telling her again and again that she could make it and that the shore wasn’t too far away. She soon became physically and emotionally exhausted and just stopped swimming. She was pulled out of the water and the boats began to make their way to shore. As they did, she quickly discovered that she was only a half mile away from the shore. The next day she gave a news conference where she spoke of her failure. She said, “I do not want to make excuses for myself. I am the one who asked to be pulled out, but I think that if I could have seen the shore, I would have made it.” Proving her point, two months later on a bright and sunny day she plunged back into the water and made the entire swim. Friend, just because you may feel overwhelmed or weary or disheartened, don’t give up. You may not see the shore. You may not see the answer yet, but God is working, He is listening, and your place of provision may be just around the corner. Rely on Him, rest in Him, and keep bringing your request to Him.

## II. **The Demand of Prayer (vs. 9)**

The illustration should be clear enough for us to all get the point, but Jesus took it a step further. He gave three specific commands related to this message. These were imperative. They weren’t

simply ideas and suggestions. These are divine demands from the Lord. The Greek form of these commands suggest ongoing continual action. They are:

**A. Keep Asking**

**B. Keep Seeking**

**C. Keep Knocking**

There are some nuances to each of these words and the types of prayers that Jesus is encouraging, but for our time today I can simply say that this means that our praying should not be an activity which lasts only for a moment or as an exercise for special occasions. Our praying should be the ongoing practice in our life which never stops. We see this of the early church in **Acts 2:42** where we read that the early disciples “were continually devoting themselves...to prayer”. No doubt, this is what God was saying through Paul in **1 Thessalonians 5:17-18** when he instructs us, “Pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” **Colossians 4:2** explains, “Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving.” **Philippians 4:6** directs us to, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” **Ephesians 6:18** says that, “With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints.”

Praying isn’t something that should be done only when we are facing trouble. It’s something that should be happening continually. Whether there be a mountain or a valley, a bright day or a dull, we should be persistent in prayer. Persevering prayer is asking, seeking, and knocking until the answer is received, the path is found, or the door is opened.

**III. The Delight of Prayer (vs. 10-11)**

We know what a delight is. It is something that brings joy, happiness, and pleasure. The verse says, “Everyone who asks, receives.” Please understand that the reason we have joy in prayer is because of WHO we are praying to. God is not like some grouchy, sleepy neighbor. In fact, He is just the opposite. Jesus’ point was simply this: “If a tired and selfish neighbor finally meets the needs of a bothersome friend, how much more will a loving Heavenly Father meet the needs of His own dear children who ask! God is not like this neighbor. He never sleeps, never gets impatient or irritable, is always generous, and delights in meeting the needs of His children.” – **Warren Wiersbe**. God is not like this neighbor. He never sleeps, never gets impatient or irritable, is always generous, and delights in meeting the needs of His children. He has promised to meet the needs of His children and He has proven Himself to be trustworthy. He hears our requests, and He has the knowledge, intelligence, wisdom, and power to grant them. Does this mean that we’ll get everything we want? No, it doesn’t. Our heavenly Father knows what is best for us, even when we don’t. He is also a wise Father who refuses what we want in order to give us and others what we need. Because He knows us and loves us, we never need to be afraid of His answer. In fact, Jesus closes with this statement, “How much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?” Why the Holy Spirit? Because He is our great Comforter. He is the One who gives us grace

in our time of need. He is the One who brings Scripture to mind to show the way. He is the One who helps us trust the promises of God. He is the One who equips us for service and, through our weaknesses, uses us for His glory. He is also the One who intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, have you given up in prayer? If so, I encourage, God is a good Father Who invites you to come back, to ask, to seek, and to knock. As you rely upon Him, through the Holy Spirit, He will give you what you need. Don't give up in prayer.