

The Gospel According to
Luke

“Knockin’ on Heavens Door”

Chapter 11:5-13

Introduction

Growing up, you **never** wanted to hear the words, *“Just wait till your father gets home!”* You knew that something cataclysmic, even apocalyptic, was going to occur the moment he walked through the door and was informed by your mother.

Almost as bad was having your mother redirect you by saying, *“Go ask your Father!”* You remember: You’d ask for something, and your mom would suddenly have a stunned look on her face that let you know she couldn’t believe what you’d just said. *“Go ask your Father!”* really meant *“No!”*

Jesus had just given His disciples what we call the Lord’s Prayer. It was really a model, or a pattern, for them to follow when they prayed. In the verses that immediately follow the Lord’s Prayer (the verses we have read and are studying), it’s as if Jesus was saying, *“Now go and ask your Father!”* Except that, in this case, you want to hear those words; they do not mean *“No!”* but seem to mean *“Yes!”*

1. Look at the first example, where the friend goes at midnight to ask for food. The answer is *“Yes!”* and he is given all the loaves he needed.
2. Look at the second example, in verses nine through thirteen. You ask and again the answer is *“Yes!”* and you are given the Holy Spirit to fill you.

When you *“Go ask your Father,”* the answer is *“Yes!”* Why, then, does Father seem to be saying *“No!”* to so many of your requests?

The answer to your asking and receiving a *“Yes!”* is in these two small stories Jesus told. We’ll organize our thoughts around two

points: #1 Ask & Father Will Give You Bread To Feed Others, and #2 Keep On Asking & Father Will Give The Holy Spirit To Fill You.

#1 Ask & Father Will Give You
Bread To Feed Others
(v5-8)

Do you see that? Do you see that the friend goes to ask for bread, *not* for himself, but to feed someone else?

Jesus was telling His disciples, and He is telling you, to “*Go ask your Father*” for the needs of others, then set before them what He provides.

Let’s work through the verses to see how we come to that conclusion.

Luke 11:5 And He said to them, “Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves;

Luke 11:6 for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him’;

People often traveled in the evening or at night to avoid the intense heat of the Middle Eastern day. One such weary traveler arrives at his friend’s house at about **midnight**. It seems he had come unexpectedly; but that did not excuse the host from exercising hospitality.

Showing hospitality was more than just a common courtesy. The way you showed and showered hospitality upon guests, whether invited or unexpected, was a measure of your character. Your reputation was at stake; and, as Rocky Balboa once said, “*They don’t remember you - they remember your reputation.*”

So, put yourself in the story. You and your family are already asleep. You are a poor family, living in a one-room structure that also serves as the barn for your livestock. You go to bed thankful that God provided you your daily bread, but you have nothing left over. There’s a knock on your door. You answer it, and it’s a travelling friend. Regardless the time; regardless your poverty; regardless your lack of bread; you must show hospitality.

When was the last time you ran out of bread in the middle of the night, and went next door to ask *your* neighbor for a few slices?

You must bear in mind that the situation Jesus was describing was, in fact, an emergency – a *social emergency*. **Your reputation was on the line.** So, you get up and go quickly to your neighbor to ask for bread. The disciples would see nothing unusual about this; it happened all the time.

Luke 11:7 and he will answer from within and say, ‘Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you’?
Luke 11:8 I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs.

Our understanding of these two verses is critical to properly interpreting the story. When we read them, **we add our own biases.** We think of ourselves, in modern America, bothering a neighbor in the middle of the night for a few slices of bread. As we’ve already said, this was far more serious – Hospitality 911.

The real sense of these words, a better reading of them in context, is something like this: *“Do any of you even for a moment think that your friend won’t get up to help you?”*

It would have been a worse social catastrophe for the sleeping man and his household to refuse to help. He would never be able to live it down; his family would be shamed, and ashamed of him.

That is a very different read than we usually have on these verses. Let me answer the two concerns or complaints you might have:

1. First, in verse seven, doesn’t he **answer from within** and tell the friend outside that, if he gets up, he’ll disturb the whole family? Doesn’t he try to get rid of his friend? *Not really!* This was a simple, one-room dwelling. The animals were stabled inside, and the family was all bedded down – not, by the way, all in one bed. The whole family, and the stabled animals, were already disturbed, as soon as the friend knocked. He either was yelling through the door his request, or the man inside had already gotten up to speak

with him. The idea is what I said a moment ago: It would be absurd for him to try to stay in bed, and act like his family and animals were undisturbed. And it would be social suicide.

2. Second, in verse eight, doesn't it say that it is because of his **persistence** that **he will rise and give him as many as he needs**? Sure it does; but **persistence** doesn't necessarily mean his persistent knocking. Scholars agree that the word itself means *shamelessness*. And they agree that it can apply to either or both of the men in the story. In other words, the man seeking bread at midnight did so to save face and not be ashamed; **and** the man who rose from his bed at midnight to give him the bread did so to save face and not be ashamed.

This story is **not** teaching you that if you will be persistent in knocking on heavens door that God will finally get disturbed enough, or see how serious you really are, and be obligated to answer you. It is teaching almost the very opposite – that God is more than willing to give you the bread your request.

When you “*Go ask your Father,*” the answer is “*Yes!*” Why, then, does Father seem to be saying “*No!*” to so many of your requests?

Maybe it's like this:

1. You are the man who has no food left over.
2. Suddenly, someone you know is in need. The need seems beyond your resources.
3. You “*Go ask your Father.*” Only His ‘household’ is not a poor, one-room dwelling. His ‘household’ is heaven, and He is over the earth. He can give you all you need to **set before** your needy **friend**.

What do they really need? Most often, what they really need is *spiritual* bread, *spiritual* food – not material help.

Let's get practical, with an illustration of our own. A friend of yours suddenly gets sick. They come to you. You “*Go ask your Father*” for what they need. Is it healing? If it is, Father will show you, and give you faith and gifts of healing. More often than not, it is spiritual strength and firmness they need, in order to endure the trial, even

unto death. If that is the case, Father will use you to set spiritual food before them.

Earlier in Luke's Gospel, a paralyzed man was brought to Jesus. Instead of healing Him, Jesus told him that his sins were forgiven. He went on to heal the paralytic, in order to show that He was the Son of God with power on earth to forgive sins.

You can declare to people that Jesus *can* and *will* forgive them of their sins. It is the greatest need they have; and you have this food to set before them. God may give you gifts, or other resources, to help them physically. But the bread, the food, they need, is to know God.

The next verses introduce a new topic.

#2 Keep On Asking & Father Will Give
The Holy Spirit To Fill You
(v9-13)

Father will **give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him**. Let's think about that for just a moment.

The Holy Spirit is a person; and He is God. When you become a Christian, God the Holy Spirit comes to live in you. If He is already in you, why are you supposed to ask Father to **give** Him to you?

The only answer I can see is that you need a greater experience of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in your life.

Luke 11:9 "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

Luke 11:10 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

The verbs used mean, *Ask, and keep on asking; seek, and keep on seeking; knock, and keep on knocking*. In other words, you need to maintain an awareness of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit moment-by-moment throughout your day.

There may be a progression in the three verbs, in the sense that you get more and more intense as you go from *asking* to *seeking* to

knocking. I rather think it is just three ways of saying the same thing. I think that because the point Jesus seems to be making is that your Father has no reluctance at all in giving you the Holy Spirit. He's not holding back until He sees how serious you are, or in response to your beating down heaven's door. He wants you to **ask** and then, by faith, *believe* Him and *receive* the Holy Spirit.

You are promised that Father **will give** you **the Holy Spirit**. To reinforce this promise of the Spirit, Jesus tells another little story:

Luke 11:11 If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if *he asks* for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish?

Luke 11:12 Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?

This is similar to parents jokingly saying that they sent their kids out to play on the freeway! It is immediately understood that you would *never* do such a thing. Neither would your heavenly Father. If you ask, especially for the Holy Spirit, He gives Him to you.

There may be a whole study here about spiritual counterfeits. It's been pointed out by many commentators that a **stone** looks like the loaf of **bread** baked in the first century; that a **serpent** can be mistaken for a **fish**; or that the middle eastern white **scorpion** can look like an **egg**. For sure, many things are passed-off as being from or about the Holy Spirit that are really false, fleshly displays.

More to our application: The illustration suggests a sense of **fullness**. The **father** gives his **son** a three course meal – **bread**, **fish**, and **eggs**. Your Father in heaven wants you to have a sense that your ministry to others is filled with the **Holy Spirit**. In other words, it's not your wisdom or insight that you are setting before them as spiritual food, but rather those things that are suggested to you by the **Holy Spirit** as He influences you and you yield to His influence.

Luke 11:13 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"

Again I emphasize that you are *already* a son; God is *already* your Father. The person in this verse is a Christian who is told he or she can have a greater, fuller, experience with the Holy Spirit; and that

you should keep on asking for His presence and power in your life moment-by-moment and day-by-day.

We need to forget our *backgrounds* and *biases* and take God at His word.

1. Some of us tend to be more conservative. We believe that the Holy Spirit indwells us, but we're not asking Him to be given to us to fill us. We think that our personal study and discipline are all that is required to live the Christian life.
2. Others of us tend to be more charismatic. We believe that the Holy Spirit indwells us, but we only believe He has filled us if we speak with tongues or prophesy or experience some other outward experience of His presence.

Neither is true! You can, and should, ask your heavenly Father to give you the Holy Spirit. But His coming upon you is never to call attention to Himself, or to you, but to reveal Jesus to others by giving you power to serve.

Conclusion

"Go ask your Father." He will delight to give you two things:

1. The **spiritual food** that your 'friends' need.

And,

2. The **fullness** of the **Spirit** that you need to set the food before them.