

Even 1

2009

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';

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.

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.

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. It was a form for prayer rather than a formal prayer. 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 ask your Father!" Except that, in this case, you want to hear those words; they do not mean "No!" but seem to mean "Yes!"

- In the first example, the friend goes at midnight to ask for food. The answer is "Yes!" and he is given all the loaves he needed.
- In 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.

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. As Rocky Balboa once said, "They don't remember you - they remember your reputation."

So, put yourself in the story. You are a poor family, living in a one-room structure that also serves as the barn for your livestock. You and your family are already asleep. You're not all in the same bed, by the way; the words mean you are all sleeping under one roof – including your livestock. You went to bed thankful that God provided your daily bread, but you have nothing left over. There's a knock on your door. You answer it, and it's a friend on a journey. 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.

So, you see, the point of the story is not at all that the friend wouldn't respond unless you kept knocking like crazy. He was more than willing to respond.

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. The whole family, and the stabled animals, were already disturbed, as soon as the friend knocked. He either was talking through the door, or the man inside had already gotten up to speak with him. 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 was 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 you 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?

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

You are the man who has no food left over. Will you admit your poverty? Will you humble yourself and admit that, apart from God, you have nothing to offer anyone? It is an important first step.

All the people you know are on a journey at night. Their life on earth is a journey during which the Lord wants to reveal Himself to them. But it's night – it's dark, in the sense that this world is dominated by sin. Sin has brought disease, disaster, and death. Sooner or later, your friends will have a midnight experience for which they need help.

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 along their journey. 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 the gift of 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.

I don't know about you, but this reading of our verses sets me free to enjoy talking to my Father in heaven. It relieves me of being a brat-child, always disturbing Heaven with my continual request.

