

TO WHOM ARE WE PRAYING?

Luke 11:5-13



SYNOPSIS

This past Sunday, we started a new series on "A Praying Life." The disciples had seen Jesus develop a prayer life and they came to him asking Jesus to teach them how to pray. This tells us that prayer is important and that we can learn how to pray.

In Jesus' teaching on prayer, the focus is not about how to pray (persistence), but it's to whom we are praying. The key word to this parable is the Greek word *anaideia*, which the NIV translates as "your shameless audacity" (Luke 11:8). This word seems to make it seem like God is a tired and reluctant provider, and that we need to pray with a nagging annoyance in the middle of the night, but in the Middle Eastern lens that is the context of this parable, it's actually not about the one asking for bread, but it's about the honor of the one who will provide. What Jesus is saying is: **God does not answer because of our reputation, but His.** We aren't approaching prayer with the right orientation if we approach it with our own holiness, righteousness, or faithfulness. Our very act of prayer is admitting: You are God and I am not.

So who are we praying to? We are praying to our Father who is gracious. And we are praying to our Father who is good.

But what if we "ask for a fish," but end up "getting a snake" (Luke 11:11)? What if we asked for something but either got nothing or possibly even something worse? Four suggestions that gives us heaven's perspective:

- 1) Prepare for hardships in life. Take into account the blessings of God, and "never doubt in the dark what God told you in the light."
- 2) Discover grace and purpose in suffering, knowing that suffering produces endurance, endurance character, character hope, a hope that will not put us to shame (Romans 5:3-5)
- 3) Don't isolate yourself. Be with the family of God and carry one another's burdens.
- 4) Trust that suffering will end. Though we may not understand our present sufferings, we know that God will one day make every wrong right.



OUTLINE

1 TO WHOM IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN HOW WE PRAY

Jesus used Aramaic to pray to the Father. His prayers didn't sound like the typical religious prayers (which is probably what intrigued his disciples). He was using the language of intimacy, knowing the Father, and being in a delighted relationship with Him, which is of utmost importance. Jesus came to give us a vision of the relationship we could have with Father God so that we can enter prayer with joy and freedom.

2 TO WHOM ARE WE PRAYING?

Our God is gracious. Jesus says prayer is about asking, seeking, and knocking. And in doing so, the door opens. Jesus is dismantling the prayer rituals that were common among the pious people of Ancient Israel. We all come to prayer with tangled motives, but God is big enough to receive us, and we are not only saved by grace, but we pray by grace as well. **Our God is good,** and in the second part of the parable, Jesus paints a picture of a Heavenly Father that is infinitely more good than our earthly fathers.



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1

Icebreaker: Favorite/best hiding place you've ever had when playing Hide-and-Seek.

2

When you pray, do you catch yourself approaching prayer with your own holiness, righteousness, or faithfulness? How does the paradigm of "God not answering because of our reputation but His" change the way you view prayer?

3

Do we find ourselves praying to God in relationship or religiosity? What does it look like to pray to God in relationship rather than religiosity?

4

Have you ever felt like you "asked for fish" and "got snakes" instead?

5

How can we pray together as a community, carrying one another's burdens and lifting one another up in prayer?



BIG IDEA

To whom we pray is more important than how we pray, and Jesus came to give us a vision for this relationship we can have with our Father in heaven. We have a God who is gracious and a God who is good, more than we could ever know. Even in the moments when we don't understand, where it feels like we've been "given a snake instead of a fish," we can hold onto hope - knowing that our Father loves us and draws near to us in our suffering.