



## The Puzzle of Petition

Luke 11:1-13

### Final Question in our What About That Series

How does petitionary prayer actually work?

Continuing with our sermons on suffering

At the center of our hope is God **with** us

Prayer is the way we interact with God Who is with us

Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication (petition)

Helpful to tutor us in the wide range of ways to pray

Unhelpful in creating different types of prayer

Prayer is not divided when we make distinctions

All prayer is relational

### Relational Versus Transactional

The application (transactional) versus the shared journey (relational)

“Transactional Prayer” defined:

*Prayer that employs a method or adheres to a formula in order to acquire a desired outcome from God.*

“Relational Prayer” defined:

*Prayer that engages God in a personal interactive way which fosters connection, empathy, solidarity, and shared life.*

### Reframing Classical Transactional Approaches

ONE: **If you ask with enough faith: Mark 11:23-24**

**23** Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be

done for him. **24** Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

**Transactional:** Real faith unlocks God's gifts. Whatever I ask will come to pass to the degree I really believe God is going to do it. If I harbor any doubts that God will do what I ask, I will sabotage my request and God will not come through and it will be entirely my fault for not mustering sufficient faith. But the problem here: how do I ever know if I have enough faith?

**Relational:** Faith is unwavering trust in God's Good Person which creates in me an indomitable courageous spirit. If God is for me, who can stand against me, says **Romans 8:31**. No matter what mountain is in my way, God is bigger than the mountain and He will have His way with it and me! The point is not to have faith in God doing my request, but in God period.

TWO: **If you ask with enough persistence: Luke 18:1-8**

**1** And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. **2** He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. **3** And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.' **4** For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor respect man, **5** yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.'" **6** And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. **7** And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? **8** I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

**Transactional:** God wants to see persistence. Persistence is evidence of my sincerity and willingness to work hard to get what I want. If I persevere over some unspecified amount of time, God will give me what I ask for when my perseverance reaches His designated duration point. If I do not receive what I am asking for, it means that I have not yet persevered long enough in asking for it. The problem here is ever knowing how long is long enough?

**Relational:** God wants me to live my life constantly in His presence. This He desires for the sweetness of our friendship and for the good His presence to saturate my life. The call to pray always reveals God's desire for us that we remain close to His warm fire in the cold world. He wants us to live with the

consciousness that He is always near us and responding to our needs. The point is to abide or remain close to God through prayer, as opposed to win His favor and willingness to concede through a marathon prayer session.

THREE: *If you ask with the right motive:* **James 4:3**

**3** You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

Transactional: If I ask with pure motives, God will grant any request. To get what I want, I must somehow make sure my motives are pure. If my prayer goes unanswered, it is a sure sign my motives were impure at some level. The problem here is how do I ever untangle my mixed motives on anything?

Relational: God is serious about our relationship. If I come to Him in any kind of pretense, God is committed to shining a light on that, so that I live in a state of reality, and that I know His love in real terms, for who I really am and who He really is. The point is not to tidy myself up in order to get what I want (for we both know my motives will never be entirely pure). The point is to be living a life marked by confession and conversion, which genuine prayer leads to and out of which more honest prayer comes.

FOUR: *If enough people are asking together:* **Matthew 18:19-20**

**19** Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. **20** For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them."

Transactional: The more people that agree, the more likely God is to answer. He is persuaded by human unity. If a prayer goes unanswered, it was because not enough people were praying. The problem is how many people is enough to convince and persuade God?

Relational: God as Trinity dwells in relationship and has designed us for the same. Unity is pleasing to God because it reflects His being. God wants our prayer life to be an act of communion with God and with others. Praying together reflects prayer's *raison d'etre*: a mode of connection between God and His people. The point is not to recruit people to join me on my mission to

convince God. The point is to be connected within God's family, in prayer and out of it.

### **Settling the Issue of God's Heart Toward Us: Luke 11:1-8**

Our tendency to use one paradigm or the other depends on how we see God

If we see God as the Great Banker, we will slip into the transactional  
(Who has something we want and we need to figure out how to get it)

If we see God as a Father/Parent, we will remain in the relational

(All He has is ours already: **Rom 8:32**)

The disciples ask for Jesus to teach them to pray: **vs. 1**

Not because He "got things" but because of quality of relationship

The Lord's Prayer teaches us it is OK to ask for personal outcomes: **vs.2-4**

The parable of persistence is a matter of contrast not comparison: **vs. 5-10**

From the lesser to the greater ( if that, then all the more God) **vs. 11-13**

If (evil) parents give good gifts, how much more will God give good gifts

The Holy Spirit being the ultimate gift possible: **vs.13**

Not only is He good, He knows what we need: **Matt 6:7-8; 6:32-33**

Summary: God is good, He wants to give us the best, and He knows our needs

### **Clarifying the Purpose of Prayer as a Relational Act**

To be with God as He is with us

To bring ourselves consciously intentionally into His near presence

In order for us practice faith in God's goodness

(which is not dependent upon Him answering my specific request)

Petition prayer connects me, God, and the issue into the same room

Why we pray for one another: we crowd into the room where God is

An act of love for the person, an act of banking on God's goodness together

The paradigm of the paralytic and his friends: **Mark 2:1-12**

Pray without ceasing: **Luke 18:1** and **1 Thessalonians 5:17**

Bring everything to God without calculation