



## **42: “TODDLER LE PEW” TALKS TOO MUCH (Luke 11:5-13)**

My three year old daughter Madi asks for some pretty insane things sometimes. Any of you who have ever had a three year old in your orbit, you know what I’m saying! And Madi is a high-wired three year old! Last night, she was scared to go to bed by herself in her room, so she began to harass my wife Sarah and I...

After we went through her exorbitant bedtime routine of reading her two books, me singing her a song while playing guitar, then praying for her while she interrupted the entire time, then singing another song, then exiting her room in a specific way where I held the guitar up in her room and mouthed it’s imaginary voice, saying, “You can see me now”, then removing the guitar and saying, “and now you can’t see me, but I’m still here”, and then sticking my head into her doorway and saying “You can see *me* now”, then removing my head and saying, “and now you can’t see me, but I’m still here”, and then sticking my head in again and saying, “And even though you can’t see him, God is...” and Madi answered “here”, and then I said (like clockwork) “And God...” and Madi answered “loves me”, and I said “And God...” and Madi answered me “is everywhere”, I left the room. Madi yelled out “have a good nap!!!!!!” I said, “you too!!!!!!”

Then Madi began to moan and yell, demanding her Mom come in for another hug. Her Mom gave the hug, put up with some more complaining, left, then Madi began to moan and yell, demanding that we get her a towel because her eye hurt. I came in and gave her a towel and told her this is enough, she needs to close her eyes and go to sleep or she'll be in big trouble. Then Madi began to moan and yell, demanding that I come in and put the dress hanging up in her room in her closet. I told her, "no! I'm not doing that! You need to go to sleep **right now!** Close your eyes and stop it!" Finally, against her will, she went to sleep.

Brooklyn is our nine year old. She sometimes wishes she could watch seven episodes of the Netflix show "Heartland" in a row, and we tell her no. We have TV limits at home, even during weeks like the one we were in, where our kids had off from school because of the frigid cold. Brooklyn asks for things like that and we say no, but there are plenty of things she asks for and we say yes.

Charlotte is our twelve year old. She asks to cook dinner for us. She asks if she can use the bathroom late at night to take a bath and read a book so she can decompress from the stress of her day.

We often say yes much more often to Charlotte than we do the others. Why? She's older and more mature. She's had more experience than her sisters. She knows more about what's reasonable and what isn't reasonable most of the time. She even gives more reasonable responses to our responses.

And Brooklyn's requests are much more reasonable than Madi's. She's six years old and knows much more.

Madi's requests are pretty dang unreasonable. 😏 But she's learning. She's three and has limited brain development and ability!

God deals with us in our life of prayer not by our age level or life experience- He deals with us as we pray to Him in terms of our spiritual and emotional maturity. There's times where it's right for Him to say no, and there's times where it's right for Him to say yes! When we're brand new at following Him, it's guaranteed that we'll ask Him for wrong things and have a lack of understanding! But He loves us in our immaturity, corrects us, and helps us grow! When we've walked with Him for a while, we learn to ask Him for the right things! More and more we "walk in His will", knowing what He's leading us to do and following it without disputing.

That's exactly what Luke 11:5-13 is talking about. We were talking about the Lord's Prayer in Luke 11:1-4, now Jesus gets further into how prayer really works- how a relationship with God really happens through prayer.

So how should one approach prayer? Jesus has told us what to pray, but how should we come to the throne of grace? Since God is holy and the Creator of the universe, should He perhaps be approached rarely and only in moments of dire need? Such thinking is dead wrong. We should pray with a spirit of dependence and humility, looking for God's gracious provision. Jesus therefore goes on to present a parable that emphasizes that God is approachable, gracious, generous, and ready to hear our requests.<sup>1</sup>

Let's dig into the first chunk of the text!

*5 (Jesus) also said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend and goes to him at midnight and says to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, 6 because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I don't have anything to offer him.' 7 Then he will answer from inside and say, 'Don't bother me! The door is already locked, and my children and I have gone to bed. I can't get up to give you anything.' 8 I tell you, even though he won't get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his friend's shameless boldness, he will get up and give him as much as he needs. (Luke 11:5-8)*

For a little context to understand this parable, we must appreciate certain aspects of first-century cultural expectation. (1) Food was not as readily available as it is today; the era of twenty-four hour convenience stores, instacart and doordash is extremely new. Bread in first century culture was baked each day to meet daily needs. (2) The culture held hospitality in high regard, almost as a duty. A visitor was to be welcomed and cared for, regardless of the hour of his arrival. Here, then, we have a dilemma: a late evening guest, but no food. What would the host do? Also behind the story stands the reality that most ancient homes had only one room. To approach a neighbor meant risking waking the family. How bold would the host be?<sup>2</sup>

Jesus poses the dilemma and then asks, "Which of you would have the nerve to go wake up his friend (and possibly his family as well!) in the middle of the night to ask for bread?" The request for three loaves would meet the need, provided his neighbor still had some leftovers from the day. The answer shows the tension. He replies that he cannot be bothered, since the children are in bed and he is unwilling to risk waking

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them! Anyone who has put children to bed understands how the neighbor feels. In fact, the natural quality of the reply is part of the charm of this parable.<sup>3</sup>

Jesus then comes to his main point. The neighbor does respond, not because he is a friend but because the petitioner has “boldness” (anaideian). This Greek term is difficult to render in English. It combines two qualities: boldness and shamelessness, which is represented in the CSB translation. This man has the nerve to make such a request. In recognition of his “shameless boldness”, the neighbor honors the request (cf. Heb. 10:19 - 22).<sup>4</sup>

When it comes to prayer, us Christians can be real weirdos.

We’re all over the place man. We talked about it previously when we looked at Matt. 6:5-8. People pray in front of people to look impressive intellectually and theologically. People pray in front of people to look all ecstatic and passionate, and their hearts can be totally disconnected from God. This has been the case all throughout history.

And then imagine another thing. Some of us actually think that we can **annoy** God with our prayers, so we just don’t bother talking to Him.

Maybe we grew up in a home with parents who made us feel like we were constantly annoying them. So we project that on our perfect heavenly Father and think we’re annoying Him.



We feel like Pepe Le Pew from Looney Tunes, continually pursuing the black and white cat Penelope Pussycat, who was often the target of Pepé’s romantic advances. The

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thing is, Penelope rejected Pepe over and over. Some of us think we're like Pepe and God is Penelope, we're annoying God and He's just rejecting us over and over.

But God wants us to be as bold and shameless as Pepe Le Pew in our prayers! Do you understand this? We simply can't annoy God. We sure can annoy one another. Just ask my wife about how I annoy her sometimes. 😊 And just ask me about people at Streetlight that annoy me, and I guarantee that I'll plead the fifth!

Nope- God is perfect and good. He sent Jesus to die for us and the veil into the holy of holies was ripped open. We have total access to God. We've been fully forgiven because of the body and blood of Jesus for our sins, past, present and future! We don't need to be timid! We don't need to act pious! We don't need to say all the right words! We don't need to have a certain level of zeal! We can **boldly, shamelessly** come to the throne of God with all that we are, and with all our requests, and ask away! God is God and He'll answer us in whatever perfect way He's going to, but all along the way, we will build **relationship** with Him! And that's what He wants, through Christ and the Holy Spirit, the most! If God is saying no to a lot of things we're asking, it's not God's fault, it's really just revealing of our own maturity level and understanding of God!

Look at what Jesus said in the second half of this chunk of scripture:

**9** "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened to you. **10** For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. **11** What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead of a fish? **12** Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? **13** If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?" (Luke 11:9-13)

Who is Jesus talking to here? He issues a call to "ask," "seek," and "knock." The promise of an open door lies before the disciple, who need not be too shy to ask. Then Jesus gives another illustration. If a child asks for a basic meal, fish, or eggs, will the father give him something dangerous instead, like a snake or scorpion? What father would do that? None.<sup>5</sup>

People who are into prosperity theology use these verses all the time to justify all sorts of nutso, unbiblical things.

Prosperity theology (sometimes referred to as the prosperity gospel, the health and wealth gospel, the gospel of success, seed-faith gospel, Faith movement, or Word-Faith

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movement) is a religious belief among some Charismatic Christians that financial blessing and physical well-being are always the will of God for them, and that faith, positive scriptural confession, and giving to charitable and religious causes will increase one's material wealth. Material and especially financial success is seen as an evidence of divine grace or favor and blessings.

Prosperity theology views the Bible as a contract covenant between God and humans: if humans have faith in God, God will deliver security and prosperity. The doctrine emphasizes the importance of personal empowerment, proposing that it is God's will for people to be blessed. The atonement (reconciliation with God) is interpreted to include the alleviation of sickness and poverty, which are viewed as curses to be broken by grace and faith.<sup>6</sup>

But I want you to think about this. If prosperity theology is true, and part of God's goal in saving us is to get us "healthy and wealthy", then we might as well throw out the book of Job, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Lamentations, among others. Also, we would have to conclude that Jesus's suffering was some sort of one off situation, and He was the Son of God. We also have to completely toss out passages like this one that Paul the apostle and missionary writes;

*As God's ministers, we commend ourselves in everything: by great endurance, by afflictions, by hardships, by difficulties, 5 by beatings, by imprisonments, by riots, by labors, by sleepless nights, by times of hunger, 6 by purity, by knowledge, by patience, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, 7 by the word of truth, by the power of God; through weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left, 8 through glory and dishonor, through slander and good report; regarded as deceivers, yet true; 9 as unknown, yet recognized; as dying, yet see—we live; as being disciplined, yet not killed; 10 as grieving, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet enriching many; as having nothing, yet possessing everything. 11 We have spoken openly to you, Corinthians; our heart has been opened wide. 12 We are not withholding our affection from you, but you are withholding yours from us. 13 I speak as to my children; as a proper response, open your heart to us. (2 Cor. 6:4-13)*

And please know that Paul wrote this to the Corinthians, who were really into leaders who had wealth, hype, popularity, and spoke well, giving good presentations. They were called the "super apostles" and were enemies of the gospel according to Paul. That's why Paul was pleading with them to open their hearts to him and his co-laborers. They had bought into charlatans more than real disciples and missionaries!

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<sup>6</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prosperity\\_theology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prosperity_theology)

And what about the martyrs? Think of all the people suffering for their faith around the world!

More than 380m Christians suffer high levels of persecution and discrimination for their faith. 1 in 7 Christians are persecuted worldwide. 1 in 5 are persecuted in Africa, 2 in 5 are persecuted in Asia. 4,476 Christians have been murdered in the past year. 7,679 Churches and Christian properties have been attacked, 4,744 Christians have been imprisoned.<sup>7</sup>

Well according to prosperity gospel preachers like David Oyedepo, Todd White, Benny Hinn, E. W. Kenyon, Oral Roberts, A. A. Allen, Robert Tilton, T. L. Osborn, Joel Osteen, Creflo Dollar, Kenneth Copeland, Reverend Ike, Kenneth Hagin, Joseph Prince, and Jesse Duplantis,<sup>8</sup> I guess Job, the prophets, Jesus, the apostle Paul, and all of these suffering Christians are just being disobedient... 😏

Nope- that's not the case! And you can sense my sarcasm here.

In Luke 11:9-13, Jesus is not telling people to treat God like a genie, rub his fat blue Disney animated belly, and get whatever they want! No! And why? Because of Luke 11:13.

Jesus concluded, "If you then, though you are **evil**, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the **Holy Spirit** to those who **ask** him!" We may draw on the Spirit's resources at any point in our walk, not just at its start. The Father delights in giving the basic spiritual provisions that the disciple needs to negotiate his or her way through life. If one needs strength or insight from God, he will provide it if we ask.<sup>9</sup>

**Because..** the great gift of prayer is an **increasing relationship** with the **Holy Spirit!** Who, by the way, lives inside of every true Christ follower! We can get all Pepe Le Pew with God, and He will just put more and more of His ways into us through the Spirit!

And those who have the Holy Spirit living in them throughout history have been the ones to give up lives of comfort, popularity, wealth, and power to start hospitals, universities and orphanages. They have gone on mission to the uttermost parts of the earth. The Holy Spirit led Christians to lead the way in abolishing slavery. The Holy Spirit led Christians like Deitrich Bonhoeffer to stand against Nazis. The Holy Spirit has led Christians in Chinese underground churches to take beatings, imprisonments, and

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/persecution/countries/>

<sup>8</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prosperity\\_theology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prosperity_theology)

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murder from the government while their witness keeps being strengthened and the church keeps growing.

Christianity is on the decline in the United States. New data from Gallup shows that church attendance has dropped across all polled Christian groups. According to Gallup's data, this decline in church attendance among Christians speaks to a wider pattern across religion in the U.S. generally. Where an average of 42 percent of U.S. adults attended religious services every week or nearly every week 20 years ago, now this figure is just 30 percent. This is largely due to an increase in the share of U.S. adults who self-identify as having no religious affiliation.<sup>10</sup>

It may be that the number of Christians in the United States, where biblical Christianity is legal, is currently higher than in China, where biblical Christianity is illegal. But China's Christian population has been growing and could surpass the US in the future. China's population is much larger than the US population. The number of Christians in China has been growing, even though the government has closed churches and jailed some believers. Some say that the number of Christians in China has been increasing by about 10% annually for nearly 40 years. In 2014, some experts predicted that China's Christian population could exceed 247 million by 2030, which would make it the world's largest Christian population.<sup>11</sup>

And would that make China the new "Christian Nation"? No. There's no such thing as a Christian nation. There are true Christians, true disciples, true missionaries within nations that truly represent the triune God of the Universe no matter what the cost is.

The Spirit does some wild things in some wild places, like China! Like Kenmore, Akron, Ohio! Look at how He's saved lives by the gospel in our midst! Look at how He's increasing our Church in prayer! Look at how He's supernaturally visiting people in visions, dreams, healings, and power encounters! Look at how people are coming together from different races, upbringingings, backgrounds, socio-economic statuses, and political persuasions to disciple people and further the Great Commission!

So we come to God boldly, and we ask, in the power of the Holy Spirit, for whatever we are led to ask, and we leave the rest up to God! We're not going to annoy God with our requests! Our God, who is holy and just, and has given us access to Him through Christ, will listen to anything we say, and in the end, He will chisel away all our fleshly,

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.statista.com/chart/31992/us-christians-who-attend-religious-services/>

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<https://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/houston-texas/houston/article/China-officially-atheist-could-have-more-12633079.php>



earthly, demonically driven, selfish desires, and replace them with the groanings of the Spirit!

*26 In the same way the Spirit also helps us in our weakness, because we do not know what to pray for as we should, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with inexpressible groanings. 27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because he intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. (Rom. 8:26-27)*

May we move from spiritual infancy to toddlerdom, to elementary, to middle school, to high school, to college, to young men and women, to middle aged men and women, to elderly men and women in the Lord! And please, let us understand that He is working with us and within us to bring all things into order and to glory for His Name! We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. (Rom. 8:28)

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What is your prayer life like? Are you seeing God answer prayers? Do you feel like you're praying and God isn't answering the way you'd like? Explain.
2. Do you see how someone's relationship with a parent, their father in particular, can affect their relationship to God in prayer? How do you view God? How does this view of God line up with your view of your father and/or mother?
3. What's the difference between "praying in the Spirit" and "praying in the flesh"?