

“And Lord, please let me get good classes with good teachers so I can get good grades. And Lord, please take care of my fish, and my dog, and my cat. And Lord...” There was no end in sight. The laundry list of prayers included such things as taking care of mommy and daddy, but also things like making sure the favorite TV show didn’t go off the air. When “amen” finally was said her parents quickly got her tucked into bed in case there was more to come.

How many of you have prayed that kind of laundry list prayer before? The one where you just let your mind go to name everything you want done in your life. I want this, I’d like that, please give me these. Or are you more guarded when you pray? If you can I would love it if possible if I could please without too much trouble on your part have something that you are probably not even aware that I am hoping to someday maybe have, please. You guard your request with conditions; so many the actual request gets lost. Which one is right? Which is more effective? How did Jesus pray? He prayed often, much of the time privately. **“Teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.”** Jesus used this opening to teach prayer to them and us.

All night you’ve been talking yourself up preparing to speak with your boss in the morning. It’s important to you, but will the boss think the same thing? You get to your desk early. You scan the office. No boss yet. Every door opening you get that panic feeling in your stomach. Speaking with the boss isn’t your thing. You’re already nervous. Palms sweating, speech ready to break out at 100 miles an hour. When the boss walks in your nerves really kick in. Approaching the door you can barely hear the knock. That’s the way some people approach prayer, isn’t it? They know God is busy. He rules the universe so it’s likely he’s more concerned about some war, or disease, or poverty and not so much about yours or my petty little issue. Every prayer you or I would offer is analyzed for importance. We might make the prayer, but the knock on heaven’s door is so light even God might not hear it. “Excuse me, God. Yeah, if you’ve got the time I really hate to bother you, but can you squeeze my prayer in?”

What prayers have you said in quietness or with hesitation? Prayers said almost hoping God didn’t hear because it’s so silly or you only realized afterwards it was sinful. The prayer that seems more of a bother than anything. Maybe it’s praying for the same material blessing a second, third, or fourth time. God, I know you keep saying no...but if it’s not too much trouble maybe you could say yes this time. It might be something we think is important but how could God. God, I know it’s probably not that big of a deal to you, but I really need this extra money. God, let me win the lottery. God, I hope that girl or boy likes me. Have you not prayed something because you didn’t want to disturb God in heaven?

Maybe it’s just that we pray for the bare minimums. What will it seem like if I just keep asking for blessings? Will I seem greedy or selfish? If I keep asking God and bothering God for blessings for me will there be less for others? Will I be taking blessings away from other people by keeping God occupied with me? Plus you’ve figured out that if you ask for less, only a little, then you can’t be disappointed. We shortchange our prayers and in the process shortchange God.

I’m sure everyone knows one person who always asks the obvious question no one else seems willing or brave enough to ask. They ask without any shame whatsoever. They’re like the friend at midnight Jesus talked about. **“Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.”** That’s pretty gutsy. Middle of the night, his friend has a family and is just getting off to sleep, and he’s going to come banging on the door asking for bread. And it’s not that he has no food or is starving. He’s just shameless. He asks the question without caring about the consequences. He always figures, you don’t get if you never ask.

What if our attitude in prayer was a little more “if you don’t ask you don’t get”? What if we were a little more shameless? **“I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man’s boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs.”** The man standing outside was shameless in asking. He didn’t care the hour or the bother it would cause. He wanted and so he asked. He appealed to a friend and received. It’s time we realized our prayers could stand to be more shameless. We appeal to God and with him there is no bad time. Everything is known to him, no earthly, spiritual, or eternal need is unknown to God. The man at midnight let nothing deter him from asking. We too must let nothing deter us from praying. We can be shameless in our praying.

Even if you’ve never been in charge you know the order of things. Newly hired employees don’t get two weeks vacation just after they start. Underclassman don’t expect individual time with the teachers first. Everyone has to follow the order, the priority, the unwritten rule of paying your dues first. To think that you’ll get great things right away without following the order comes across as arrogant. Before God we realize we’re nothing. We’re like bugs to him. So how can we ask for anything good? New Christians have it even worse. God is surely going to make them sweat it out a little. He won’t give them anything really big until they’ve proven themselves, right? Maybe we still think we’re proving ourselves worthy of gaining good things from God before we pray. We don’t want to seem overconfident about asking for things because God has a history of not giving them to us right away. And when you continually ask for good and it seems only bad comes your way, then we want to blame God or doubt his plans and care for us.

Blaming God seems reasonable. Even as a church we asked for success and get even lower attendance. We asked for enough money instead a new budget still comes up short. We wanted blessings and seem to get difficulties. So the next time we learn, we pray with protections, hesitations, a lack of confidence. We’re not sure what’s coming from God, good or bad. Maybe we don’t pray so much because we’re not confident what we’ll receive.

Children don't even think about how their parents treat them. They trust with complete confidence. Jesus pointed out, **"Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?"** These things don't normally happen. Even though parents are sinful they know to care and provide for their children. They know to give them good things and not trick them or give them wicked things instead. Jesus says we can make requests of God in prayer with the same confidence. No need to worry about deception. God doesn't substitute wicked things for good when we pray. His love and concern for you is greater than that of your parents. He protects. He cares. He knows the good things we need.

Every prayer we speak can come from a place of confidence. We know who we're praying to. God loves us. God sent his Son Jesus for us. If he gave his son into death and resurrection, he will also give good things to believers who ask him. **"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."** Our confidence to pray is built on a God who when we ask, he gives. When we seek, he allows us to find. And when we knock he's there to throw the door of blessings open to us. God is ready and willing to answer prayers even more than an earthly father.

So be shameless in your prayers because your asking never bothers God, just like a child asking his father is never a bother. Be confident in your prayers to God trusting that he will always answer with what is best for you just like a child always trusts his father will give what's best. Do you see why you can pray this way? Jesus says God is greater than your earthly fathers, **"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!"** Jesus told us how to pray shamelessly and pray confidently in this way, **"When you pray, say, Father..."**