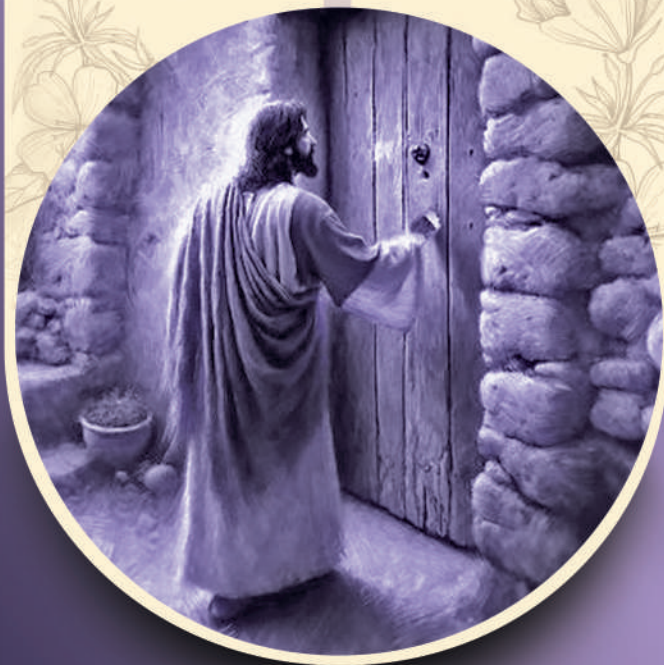


THE PARABLE OF
**FRIEND AT
MIDNIGHT**



INTRODUCTION

Throughout the ministry of Jesus, He often used parables to teach profound spiritual truths. These short, yet deeply meaningful stories were drawn from everyday life, making heavenly realities accessible through earthly illustrations. Unlike straightforward teachings, parables engage the listener's mind and heart, inviting them to think, reflect, and discover deeper truths about the kingdom of God.

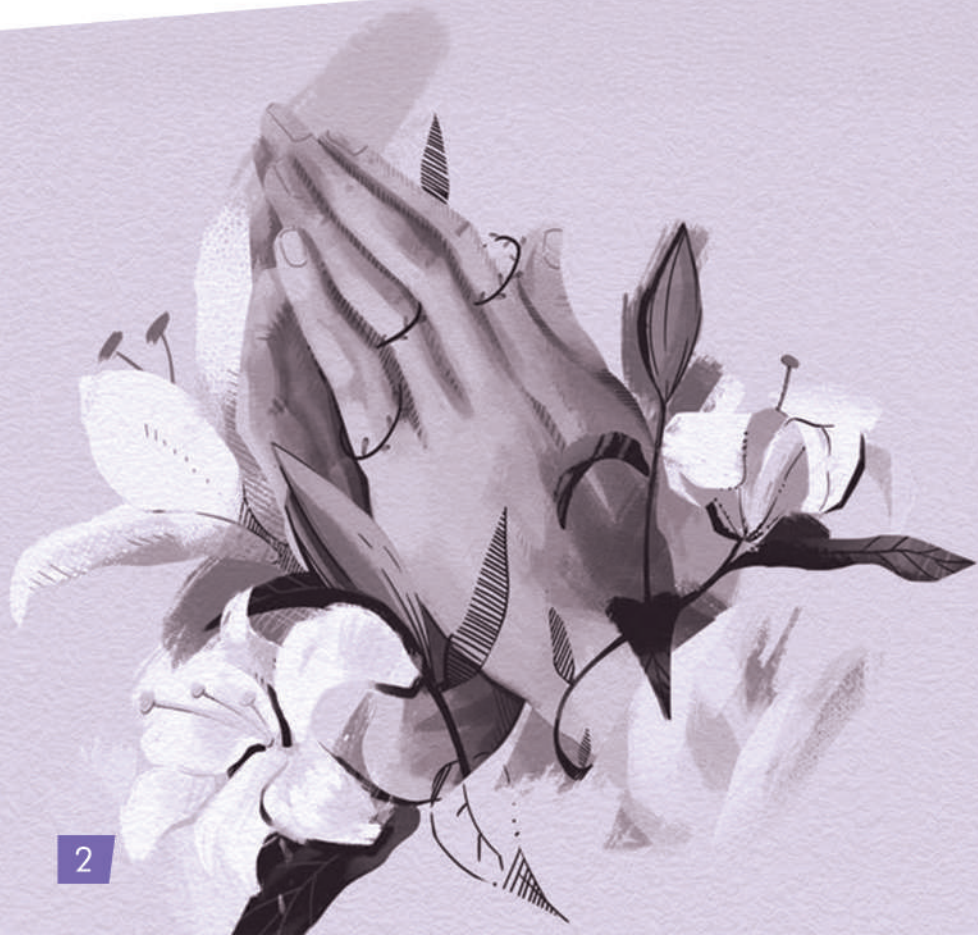
Jesus' parables were not just moral lessons but windows into **God's character and His relationship with humanity**. Whether through the parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15:3-7), the parable of the sower (Luke 8:4-15), or the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32), Jesus communicated God's mercy, justice, faithfulness, and the call to live according to His will.

Prayer is one of the greatest privileges given to believers. It is more than just asking for needs—it is about building a deep, abiding relationship with God. When Jesus' disciples asked Him, "*Lord, teach us to pray*" (Luke 11:1), He responded with what we now know as the Lord's Prayer (Luke 11:2-4). The way Jesus taught prayer was revolutionary. He did not tell His disciples to use formal titles or distant language when addressing God. Instead, He instructed them to begin with: "*When you pray, say: 'Father...'*" (Luke 11:2)

This simple yet profound word—Father (or Abba)—changed everything. It reminded His disciples that prayer is not about religious duty but about approaching a loving, caring, and providing Father who delights in His children.

However, Jesus knew that people would often struggle with prayer. *What happens when we don't receive immediate answers? What do we do when it feels like God is silent?* To address these concerns, **Jesus immediately follows the Lord's Prayer with the Parable of the Friend at Midnight.**

The Gospel of Luke emphasizes prayer more than the rest of the gospels and the parable of the Friend at Midnight is unique to the gospel of Luke, as it is not found in the other gospels.



The Parable of a Friend at Midnight

Luke 11:5-13 (NKJV), *“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; ⁶for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; ⁷and 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’? ⁸I 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. ⁹“So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ¹⁰For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. ¹¹If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? ¹²Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? ¹³If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!”*

From Father to a Friend

This single word—**Father**—transformed the understanding of prayer. Jesus introduced this revolutionary word “*Father*” – “*Abba*” to address God in prayer. No longer were people to approach God as a distant ruler or an unapproachable deity. Instead, they were invited to **call Him Abba, their loving Father**—the One who provides daily bread, forgives sins, and delivers from evil, which is the essence of the Lord’s prayer taught by our Lord Jesus to His disciples (Luke 11:2-4). This was the

foundation of prayer: *relationship over ritual, connection over obligation.*

In this parable, Jesus introduces another dimension of prayer: **God as a Friend**. Jesus is showing us that God is not only our Father—He is also our Friend.

Friendship with God

Friendship is one of the most cherished relationships we experience in life. A true friend is someone we can trust, someone who listens, and someone we turn to in times of joy and distress.

Many assume that the guest keeps knocking relentlessly until his friend finally wakes up and responds. Based on the assumption of persistence, people interpret this parable to mean that God only answers prayers after much perseverance.

Why don't we PRAY?

'Prayer' for a believer is like the air that we breathe. Prayer is means by which we commune and communicate with God. Yet, many believers struggle with a lack of prayer.

Why do so many of us, even those who believe in the power of prayer, find ourselves deficient in it?

- We Don't Pray Because We Are Self-Sufficient.
- We Don't Pray Because We Doubt Its Effectiveness.
- We Don't Pray Because We Are Spiritually Lazy.
- We Don't Pray Because We Don't See It as a Duty.
- We Don't Pray Because We Are in a Hurry and Distracted.
- We Don't Pray Because We Harbor Sin.
- We Don't Pray Because We Have Forgotten Our First Love.

Even in a very busy, very distracted world, people still make time for what really matters to them. So there's something deeper, beneath the surface, that keeps us from praying. Let us be like the disciples who said, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1). In doing so, we return to the heart of our faith—deep, dependent, and persistent communion with our God.

Unlike the Parable of the Persistent Widow in Luke 18, where the widow repeatedly pleads with the judge, there is no mention of continuous knocking in this parable. The word "*anaideia*," often translated as "*shameless audacity*" or "*persistence*," does not refer to the man at the door but to the sleeping friend inside. The Middle Eastern culture of friendship was deeply tied to hospitality, loyalty, and responsibility. A true friend was someone who could be counted on, even at midnight. **Jesus was teaching us that if earthly friendship involves such commitment, how much more will God, our divine Friend, respond when we come to Him?**



In Luke 11, through the Lord's Prayer, the Parable of the Friend at Midnight, and Jesus' teaching on asking, seeking, and knocking, we see that God is not just a distant deity but **He is a loving Father, a generous Giver, and a faithful Friend** who welcomes us into constant communion with Him.

In **James 2:23**, Abraham is called "**a friend of God.**"

Jesus also tells His disciples: **John 15:15** – "*I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.*"

Is the Parable of the Friend at Midnight about persistence in prayer or about developing friendship through prayer?

1. Jesus is not telling us to repeatedly beg God as if He is unfriendly, but rather to approach Him boldly, trusting in our relationship with Him. God is our Father, our Friend, and our Provider—and His door is always open.



- God is represented in the parable as the friend who is sleeping. But the whole point of the parable, however, is that God is *not* like the sleeper. God's door is never closed and He has bread in abundance. Unlike the reluctant sleeper friend in the parable, God welcomes our asking, seeking, and knocking. He does not grow weary of our prayers. He is not annoyed by our persistence. He delights in our pursuit of Him. *If God cares about birds and flowers, will He not care about you?* (Matthew 6:26)
- Persistence here is not about continuous knocking or asking, as seen in the parable, where the man at the door only asks once but the reply from the inside was a hesitation because he was sleeping. Praying continually and faithfully is a good thing, but persistence, especially persistence as vain repetitious prayers, should not be imported into this parable because Jesus himself specifically warned us against it in Matthew 6:7: *"And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words."*

| Vain Repetitions (Matthew 6:7) | Persistent Prayer (Luke 11:5-8) |
|---|--|
| Empty, meaningless words. | Sincere, heartfelt conversation. |
| Repeating words without faith. | Continually seeking God with trust. |
| Thinking more words will force God to answer. | Trusting that God answers according to His will. |
| A mechanical, ritualistic approach. | A relational, faith-driven approach. |
| Praying for show, rather than from the heart. | Praying with confidence in God's character. |

2. Jesus is challenging us to rethink prayer—it is not about convincing God to act, but about trusting in His unshakable goodness.

Many people view prayer as if they need to convince or persuade God to take action, even though we do ask Him for our daily needs, protection from temptation, and help in our struggles. However, prayer is not about trying to manipulate God into granting our requests. Instead, it teaches us to rely on Him and trust in His goodness. When we continue to ask, seek, and knock, we are not changing God's heart—we are allowing Him to shape ours. True prayer is about approaching God with childlike trust, confident that He always desires what is best for us.

Jesus uses a powerful analogy: **Luke 11:11-13**, *"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? 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!"

Earthly parents, though imperfect, desire to give good things to their children. How much more will our perfect heavenly Father give us what is best? God's best may not always feel good initially, but it leads to a deeper, stronger, and more fulfilled life in Him. Our feelings cannot determine what is good for us. God sees beyond our temporary desires and provides what will shape our character and faith. The Israelites in the wilderness wanted immediate food and comfort, but God's plan was to build their faith through dependence on Him (Deuteronomy 8:2-3). Sometimes, God's best comes through hardship, delays, and even pain. Joseph may have wanted deliverance from prison immediately, but God's best was to prepare him for leadership that

Three Loaves of Bread

While the **three loaves** in the Parable of the Friend at Midnight (Luke 11:5-8) primarily represent the essential provision needed for hospitality in a Middle Eastern context, some have suggested a deeper spiritual symbolism.

In the parable, the man asks for **three loaves**—not one or two. Could this be a reminder that when we pray, we should seek **the fullness of God**?

The **three loaves** might not have been explicitly intended to symbolize the Trinity, but the idea aligns beautifully with the biblical truth that **God gives Himself fully to those who seek Him**.

Some Bible scholars have suggested that the three loaves symbolize:

- **Jesus, the bread of life** (John 6:35) – Our salvation and eternal sustenance.
- **The Word of God** (Matthew 4:4) – Our daily instruction and guidance.
- **The Holy Spirit** (Luke 11:13) – Our power and helper in living for God.

If we consider the spiritual meaning of these three loaves together, they symbolize the complete provision of God for our lives. So, Jesus taught us to pray, *"Give us each day our daily bread"* (Luke 11:3).

that would save a nation (Genesis 50:20).

3. The Parable of the Friend at Midnight is not merely a call to persistent prayer, but an invitation to abiding (*ménō*) and devoted (*proskarteréō*) prayer.

- **Abiding Prayer: The Greek Word *Ménō***

The concept of abiding prayer—remaining steadfast in communication with God—can be understood through the Greek word *ménō*, meaning “to remain, to abide, to endure.” Jesus often used this word to describe the believer’s relationship with Him, particularly in John 15:7: “If you abide (*ménō*) in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.” This reinforces the idea that prayer

is not a one-time request but an ongoing relationship. Jesus, through this parable, is encouraging His followers not to approach God hesitantly, but to remain in bold, persistent prayer, trusting in His goodness.

- **Devoted Prayer: The Greek Word *Proskarteréō***

The parable illustrates active perseverance in seeking God, which is closely tied to the Greek word “*proskarteréō*,” meaning “to continue steadfastly, pressing forward with boldness, to be devoted, to persist in adherence to something.” This word is used in Acts 2:42,



Abide
in God

describing how the early church was devoted to prayer and fellowship.

Jesus calls His followers to approach prayer with the same tenacity and devotion as the man in the parable. The urgency of midnight symbolizes those moments when faith is tested—when one feels alone, tired, and on the verge of giving up. Just as the man refused to leave his friend’s house until his need was met, we must refuse to leave the presence of God, battling in prayer to stay faithful. It is in those moments that persistent prayer becomes the anchor that keeps us faithful to Christ.

Jesus is urging His followers to approach God as both Father and Friend—not timidly, but with confidence and faith.

4. God will keep His reputation of being a Prayer-answering God

God’s faithfulness to answer prayer is not just an act of kindness—it is a reflection of His very character and reputation. The Bible repeatedly reveals that God’s name and His nature are tied to being a provider, a deliverer, and a prayer-answering God.

This parable is based on the *cultural expectation of hospitality* in the Middle Eastern world. In ancient times, hospitality was not optional—it was an obligation. If a guest arrived at someone’s house, it was the host’s duty to provide food, lodging, and care. However, the man in the parable is caught unprepared—he has no food to offer his unexpected visitor. So, in desperation, he goes to his friend at midnight to ask for bread.

When the man knocks on his friend's door at midnight, he is not asking for a personal favour—he is asking his friend to uphold the honour of their shared community. The sleeping friend at first resists, but ultimately, he gets up—not necessarily because of friendship alone, but because he does not want to be shamed in the community.

The Greek word for persistence is "*anaideia*," is often translated as "*shameless persistence*," but some scholars argue it could also mean the *avoidance of shame*. In other words, the friend gives the bread not just because of persistence, but to maintain his reputation. God's reputation is tied to being faithful, generous, and a provider. He is not answering reluctantly—He delights in answering prayer. If a human friend will answer because of social expectation, God will answer out of His divine goodness and commitment to His own name.

So, God is interested in developing friendship as well as God acts not just for our own benefits but to uphold His own character in this relationship with us.

A Balanced View of Prayer

When one studies the *parable of the Friend at Midnight* alongside other parables of prayer, such as *The Persistent Widow and the Unjust Judge* (Luke 18:1-8) and *The Pharisee and the Tax Collector* (Luke 18:9-14), we gain a fuller picture of what Jesus taught about prayer—its persistence, humility, and faith.

- **Parable of the Persistent Widow and the Unjust Judge (Luke 18:1-8)**

The parable of the Persistent Widow teaches about bold, unwavering persistence in prayer, showing how faith-filled perseverance moves the heart of God.

The parable begins by Jesus teaching us “to always pray.”

Luke 18:1, *“Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.”*

Jesus tells the story of a widow who persistently seeks justice from an unjust judge. The judge does not fear God or care about people, yet because of the widow’s continual pleading, he grants her request. The point is clearer in this parable: *if an unjust judge who doesn’t fear God responds to persistence, how much more will a just and loving God hear our prayers?*

- **Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18:9-14)**

The parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector highlights the inner posture of prayer. He began the parable by saying, *“to some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable.”* (Luke 18:9)

The Pharisee prays with pride, listing his own religious accomplishments but the tax collector stands far off, beating his chest, crying, *“God, be merciful to me, a sinner!”* (Luke 18:13).

Jesus declares that the tax collector, not the Pharisee, was justified before God because of his humility (Luke 18:14).

These two parables together reveal the balance in prayer:

- Boldness in approaching God (Persistent Widow)
- Humility in standing before God (Tax Collector)

The greatest prayer life holds both qualities—a heart that never stops seeking God and a spirit that never stops relying on His grace.

How to avoid soulish or sinful prayers?

Soulish or sinful prayers are those prayers that are driven by selfish desires, fleshly impulses, or misalignment with God's will. To avoid these kinds of soulish prayers, we must focus on a few key principles rooted in God's word.

- **Start with self-examination**

Reflect on your prayers and especially the motives behind your prayers. Are you praying from a place of pride or greed, or resentment? **James 4:3** warns us that prayers can go unanswered when asked with *“wrong intentions to be spend it on your passions.”* Some examples: *For example, are you praying for a spouse simply because you desire someone beautiful to boost your self-esteem or to take revenge on past relationships? Or do you pray for a job out of a sense of entitlement rather than a desire to serve others and be a blessing?*

Shift your heart towards humility, and surrender, aligning your desires and motives with what's good, true and eternal.

- **Watch your emotions**

Soulish prayers often spike in anger, fear or desperation – For example, *you might pray in a fit of rage, asking God to punish someone who hurt you, or you might feel desperate and demand that God act according to your timeline.* Don't let feelings hijack you. Let your prayers be shaped by love and grace, rather than by fleeting feelings of anger or hurt.

- **Anchor your prayers in the Scriptures**

God's Word is the foundation that anchors and directs our prayers. It serves as a filter, guiding us to pray in accordance with God's character and promises. Praying in alignment with Scripture helps us avoid falling into soulish traps, as it redirects our focus to God's will rather than personal desires.

For instance, praying, *"Your will be done"* (Matthew 6:10), helps ensure that our prayers are aligned with God's divine purpose rather than our personal agenda. So, immerse yourself in Scripture, allowing it to shape and refine your prayers.

- **Seek the Holy Spirit's guidance**

Romans 8:26 tells us that the Holy Spirit helps us when we don't know how to pray. In moments of confusion or uncertainty, pause and listen. Allow the Holy Spirit to guide you away from self-centered prayers and lead you into deeper union with God.

If you are unsure of what to pray for, ask the Spirit to guide your heart, convict you, and help you pray in alignment with God's will.

Trust that the Spirit will comfort, advocate, and empower you to pray according to God's purposes.

- **Test the fruit**

Evaluate the outcome of your prayers. Are they fostering positive change? Are they producing love, unity, and growth? Or do they stir up more anger, bitterness, or division? A prayer that is in line with God's will will lead to *transformation*—both in you and in the situations, you pray for.

Ask, Seek and Knock! – Persevering Prayer

Luke 11:9-10, *"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; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened."*

Persevering prayer is prayer that does not give up—it keeps *seeking, asking, and knocking, trusting* that God hears and answers in His perfect way and time. It is not a desperate attempt to wear God down, but a faithful persistence that clings to God's character.

However, in today's culture, the word perseverance can sometimes feel outdated or burdensome. A more relevant term might be:

- **"Relentless Prayer"** – a prayer that refuses to let go of God's promises.
- **"Unwavering Prayer"** – a prayer that stands firm despite challenges.

"Faithful Prayer" – a prayer that is grounded in trust, not just effort.

"Resilient Prayer" – a prayer that withstands delay and discouragement

Four Qualities of a Persevering Prayer!

1. Persevering prayer will strengthen our faith

The purpose of our praying is to strengthen our faith. The very act of prayer will strengthen the faith that lies behind it. We are to pray for those things that are hopeless and which will take long, long hours of prayer. Things that so concern our lives and our hearts and our minds and our family, friends and neighbors, that we can give them to God daily, time after time after time. And God would encourage us in that because such prayer will strengthen our own faith similar to a strong marriage where the communications are open, no matter what external problems or difficulties might beset you.

Ephesians 6:18, *"And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests..."*

2. Persevering prayer is an investment of our own life to God.

Just as an investment grows with time, the more we seek God in prayer, the more our faith matures. Persevering in prayer transforms our priorities, our patience, and our ability to trust in God's faithfulness.

Sometimes, the greatest breakthroughs come after long seasons of

persevering faithful prayers. Think of Abraham waiting for Isaac, Hannah praying for a child, or the persistent widow in Jesus' parable (Luke 18:1-8).

On the other hand, Jesus prayed three times in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:39-44), showing persistence in seeking the Father saying, *if it's thy will, let this cup be taken from me*. Even though the suffering was not removed, His prayer strengthened Him to fulfill His mission.

Similarly, Paul prayed three times persistently for the removal of the *"thorn in the flesh"* (2 Corinthians 12:8). He did not receive the answer he initially sought, but he did receive God's sustaining grace. Paul's unanswered prayer led to a deeper revelation of God's power—that weakness is an opportunity for God's strength to be revealed.

Jesus teaches that persevering

Acronyms in Prayer

There are several popular acronyms used to describe prayer, helping believers structure their conversations with God. Here are a few:

ACTS – A well-known model for balanced prayer:

- **A – Adoration** (Praising God for who He is)
- **C – Confession** (Acknowledging and repenting of sins)
- **T – Thanksgiving** (Expressing gratitude for His blessings)
- **S – Supplication** (Presenting requests for self and others)

PRAY – A simple and effective structure:

- **P – Praise** (Worshiping and honouring God)
- **R – Repent** (Confessing sins and seeking forgiveness)
- **A – Ask** (Bringing needs and desires before God)
- **Y – Yield** (Submitting to God's will and listening)

FIVE-FINGER PRAYER – A guide for intercession:

- **Thumb** – Closest to you (Pray for family and close friends)
- **Index finger** – Those who teach and guide (Mentors, pastors, leaders)
- **Middle finger** – Those in authority (Government and workplace)
- **Ring finger** – The weak and suffering (Sick, poor, struggling)
- **Little finger** – Yourself (Personal needs and growth)

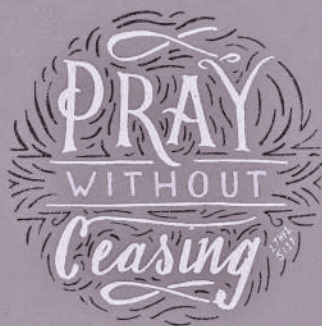
prayer is not just about changing circumstances but about surrendering to God's will. Persevering prayer teaches us that God is sovereign—He knows what is best for us, even when we think we know better.

Colossians 4:2, *“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.”*

3. The practice of persevering prayer is for our discipline

Like any meaningful relationship, a deep and vibrant prayer life does not happen by accident; it is built through consistent practice, intentional effort, and spiritual commitment. Persevering in prayer is not just about receiving from God—it is about becoming who God created us to be. Persevering prayer trains us and strengthens our spiritual muscles, teaching us to rely fully on God. It helps us to develop spiritual maturity to live a life of character in accordance with our faith. It also becomes a discipline to train us into greater assignments from God, like Moses, Joseph, and David.

1 Thessalonians 5:17, *“Pray without ceasing.”*



4. The greatest answer to persevering prayer is God's presence in our lives

The greatest answer to any prayer is not a thing, but a Person—God Himself. His presence is greater than any provision, His nearness is better than any miracle, and His companionship is worth more than any earthly blessing.



Abraham had received many blessings from God—wealth, land, and a promise of descendants. Yet, God did not tell him that his greatest reward was land or children, but rather, God Himself.

Genesis 15:1 – *"After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.'"*

Throughout Scripture, God's presence was the ultimate reward for those who sought Him. Before ascending to heaven, Jesus Himself promised His disciples *"I am with you always"* (Matthew 28:20). Even when they faced trials, suffering, and unanswered requests, His presence sustained them, strengthened them, and gave them peace. God's presence is the ultimate answer to our deepest needs.

Conclusion

The Lord Jesus teaches us that God is not like that sleepy friend in the Parable of friend at midnight. He doesn't roll over in bed, sigh, and reluctantly get up. He doesn't need convincing. He is not like the unjust judge. He isn't irritated by your voice. He's the Father who loves to give. He's the Friend who never turns away. He's the God who answers. Jesus was showing us the heart of a Father who delights in hearing His children. A Father who never runs out of bread. A Father who wants us to keep knocking—not because He is unwilling, but because our knocking draws us closer to Him. The greatest answer is not about what we receive, but who we encounter. So keep knocking. Keep asking. Keep seeking. The door will open. And when it does, you'll find more than what you came for.

CHURCH EVENTS (APRIL - MAY 2025)

MONTHLY EVENTS



CHAPEL SERVICE

Every Wednesday | 7pm
@ Temple of God



TEENS CHURCH

Every 2nd Saturday | 5.30pm
@ Temple of God

SPECIAL EVENTS



CHILD DEDICATION

April 5th | 11:30am
@ Bethel AG Church



FASTING & PRAYER

April 15th, 16th, 17th | 6pm daily
@ Bethel AG Church



GOOD FRIDAY

April 18th | 8am, 10am & 12noon
@ Bethel AG Church



EASTER SUNDAY

April 20th | 9:30am
@ Tripura Vasini (Palace Grounds)



KIDS VBS

April 22nd - 26th | Age: 4-12yrs
@ Bethel AG Church



TEENS CAMP

May 6th - 10th | Age: 13-19yrs
@ Bethel AG Church



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