

Sometimes... all it takes is a minor inconvenience to ruin your whole day. It has been revealed that the most stressful time of the day is 7:23am. ... On average people will experience three dramas each day... with the first drama of the day typically happening by around 8:18am. ... These stressful situations could be anything from being stuck in traffic or waking up late... to spilling things on clothing... and tripping in public which are also likely to make people feel flustered. (“Flustered” might be too soft of a word...)

Research has found that tiredness... an interrupted night's sleep... and a busy day at work were among the top causes of such dramas. Often when we think 'drama' we think of big matters... but the research shows how much of an impact seemingly small niggles can have on our daily moods.

According to one survey... the following are some of the **top** everyday “dramas” adults experience:

- Getting stuck in traffic
- Spilling something down clothing (food, drink, make-up, toothpaste)
- Waking up late and being late for work
- Struggling to find a parking space
- Forgetting bags at the supermarket
- Public transport being cancelled
- Sending a text message to the wrong person
- Checking your bank balance and having less money than you expected
- Clothes you want to wear being in the wash
- Realizing an email you thought you'd sent is in your “drafts”

The point that would I like to make by mentioning all of this... is that we need to take steps EVERY DAY to ensure our emotional resilience.

Believers NEED to have regular extended times of prayer on a daily basis.

We simply MUST center our thoughts on the Lord and ask Him to give us the resources to meet that day's frustrations and stresses – which are inevitable.

Jesus has given us the perfect tool for us to do this. We have been studying the Lord's prayer for the past two weeks. (And) one of the more obvious things to notice from this model for prayer is that we ought to begin with a focus on God's character and honor... while expressing our desire to see Him overcome the evil in this world by bringing His Kingdom to earth – which He WILL do.

The entire model that Jesus gives us for praying is largely concerned with WHO God is and wanting His agenda to be accomplished. ... (And) because of this... we might easily get the impression that our only concern as we pray... is for God's glory and therefore we should hold our own (personal requests) to a minimum. (We should be careful NOT to bother the Sovereign God of the Universe with our petty little - although daily - frustrations.)

In today's passage which follows "The Lord's Prayer"... Luke continues with Jesus' teaching about prayer... He uses a brief parable... to teach us that we ARE (indeed) to bring our daily issues to Him. In fact the parable will teach us to do so BOLDLY! ... Our lesson today is "What should be our fundamental attitude when we pray?" (But you see... I have already answered that question... there is no longer a mystery... so now all that remains... is for me to further encourage you with this truth...)

What would you do if you awakened in the middle of the night... your child was very sick... and you had to get to the hospital right away? ... Your

spouse is out of town... and you don't have a car that works. ... You can't afford an ambulance... but you do know your neighbor has a car that can get you to the hospital. ...Would you go to your neighbor to get help?
...Many folks would because of the urgency of the matter at hand.

When something is urgent... it DEMANDS immediate attention. If your child is drowning in the pool... that is an urgent matter. ... If your house is on fire... it is urgent that you get out NOW!

- * Urgency has power, punch, and weight to push us around when we don't want to be pushed.*
- * Urgency has a way of yanking us out of our comfortable little shells.*
- * Urgency speeds us up when we like to go slow and take it easy.*
- * Urgency shouts and screams when we would rather listen to quiet whispers.*
- * Urgency can transform someone who is wimpy into someone who is very tenacious and stubborn.*
- * Urgency has a rippling or domino effect. The pressure on one person tends to spread to others.*

The tyranny... trauma... and dictatorship of the "urgent" changes our priorities... and it bullies us to do what we are not use to doing. ... In a way that is good... and sometimes it can be bad. ... When urgency motivates us to do what is right... it is a blessing. ... When urgency causes us to be foolish and make unwise decisions... then it is destructive.

When we look at today's verses in Luke... we find a man that is responding to the tyranny of the urgent. ... If you have been begging God for something... pay close attention to this passage. ... If you have a tendency to quit and give up easily... stay focused on what the Lord is teaching here.

If you have ever thought of God as holding a giant 2X4 and ready to smack you into tomorrow... or perhaps (maybe) when you pray... you sometimes picture God as asleep... or unconcerned... or so preoccupied with His Own pleasures – (please) listen carefully to Jesus’ teaching in this passage. This really is a passage that you should consider. You will be encouraged... and (hopefully) you will put away such wrong thinking. Let’s take a look (now) and see what we can learn.

Luke 11:5-6

Jesus opens with a question. ... He paints a picture of a man gripped by the tyranny of the urgent and the unexpected. ... A traveling friend has arrived at midnight. (BTW - Why would he be traveling at such a late hour?) The answer is it was much cooler at night to travel through the desert.

Does anyone remember the Old Andy Griffith television show? ... When this friend arrived... he might have said something like the words of Gomer Pyle: “*Surprise! ... Surprise! ... Surprise!*” (Well... anyway)... This man was caught off guard... and had no food to care for the weary traveler.)

(You may recall) – that hospitality was a very big deal in the Middle East. It was a matter of cultural honor to be a good host. What an embarrassing situation he suddenly was in. Because of the tyranny of the urgent... he went to his neighbor-friend’s home... seeking provisions from his neighbor. ... The pressure of this critical matter moved him to disturb his neighbor.

Let me say (here) that if you have some unexpected surprises or pressures in your life right now... you can relate to what this man is going through.

You understand the pressure... push... and power... (like a demanding dictator) so you give it all your immediate attention and energy.

Luke 11:7-8

We must be prepared in our praying for times when refusal seems harsh. The Syro-Phoenician woman... who requested that her demon-possessed daughter be healed... was put off by Christ rather curtly. ... But that was to test her faith.

Mark 7:25-30 (ESV)

²⁵ But immediately a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit heard of him and came and fell down at his feet. ²⁶ Now the woman was a Gentile, a Syrophenician by birth. And she begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. ²⁷ And he said to her, "Let the children be fed first, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." ²⁸ But she answered him, "Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." ²⁹ And he said to her, "For this statement you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter." ³⁰ And she went home and found the child lying in bed and the demon gone.

Jesus' initial refusal was a test of the woman's faith. ... Faith needs to be subjected to tough situations if it is going to develop in strength. ... When God refuses to answer **your** prayer at the first request (and that refusal seems harsh)... it certainly does not mean God is disinterested and unwilling to answer your prayer... It (likely) DOES mean that He wants to strengthen your faith. ... Few things so strengthen our faith as delayed answer to prayer. ... **[P A U S E]** ...

I almost didn't mention this principle... because citing this truth as part of a discussion of Luke 11:7... might give the false impression that Jesus' parable would have us see the stingy neighbor as representing God.

... [P A U S E] ... No. ... Jesus (in no way) intended to imply that God is like the stingy neighbor in this parable. (LISTEN) the point of comparison is **not** between the neighbor and God. GOD'S RESPONSE TO YOURS AND MY PRAYERS – STANDS IN **CONTRAST** TO THE RELUCTANT NEIGHBOR IN THIS STORY. "*Here is how **a neighbor** is likely to respond – but God is so much **different**...*" ... This is made clear in verses 9-13... which we will see when we get to them in a few minutes. (But for now... understand that Jesus' parable - here -It is **not** comparing apples to apples. It is **contrasting** two expected responses - which are **not-at-all** alike. The natural human response is contrasted with the natural response of God. They are polar-opposite (distinctly diverse from each other.)

Answer to prayer is not *wrung out of the Father* with much effort... like we might expunge water from a towel. Our Heavenly Father gives willingly.

PRAYER IS NOT OVERCOMING GOD'S RELUCTANCE. – IT IS LAYING HOLD OF HIS HIGHEST WILLINGNESS. ... [P A U S E] ...

We do not have to storm the gates of Heaven in order to get God to answer our prayer. God has not gone to bed. Heaven's door is wide open.

... [P A U S E] ...

Now... there **IS** a similarity that we **are** to notice. Luke 11:7 actually **does** have a comparison that we need to recognize. We need to compare *the petitioner who goes to his neighbor* – with ourselves (when we pray.) We are supposed to be like him.

Let me tell you... This petitioner has **gall**. ... He is willing to go to great lengths and to suffer great rebuke... in order to get the bread so that he could be a good host. ... It takes nerve to wake up a neighbor (and possibly

his whole family) in the middle of the night. And the way that this parable is presented... the petitioning neighbor is a picture of annoyance.

The door was closed... the family had retired for the evening. The door would have had a wooden or iron bar placed through rings in the door panels... and removing it would be noisy. In addition... the children (*plural*) are asleep in bed. The whole family would commonly sleep on one mat. They did not enjoy the modern convenience of separate bedrooms. (In other words)... getting up will wake the children — a major inconvenience! The hesitation that the neighbor expresses is not so much a lack of ability to provide the food ... but an unwillingness to do so because of the chaos it would cause. Every parent who finally gets their children to sleep... and goes to bed totally exhausted (or any owner of a dog that barks at every falling leaf) can identify. ... This took a shameless boldness to knock (just once)... and even more to persist after he was refused.

Whenever you and I pray... we are to assume the role of this petitioner who was banging on his neighbor's door in the middle of the night... with shameless boldness. ... But don't misunderstand! We are about to see in the very next verse (verse nine) that we are not to come before the Lord with pride and cockiness... but with a reverent attitude.

Luke 11:9-10

This famous text is not blank check for our material desires. God is not a celestial slot machine where you pull the handle enough times in prayer and you will get what you want! ... There is more to prayer than this. This passage tells us how to pray with a Christlike character.

Three words! “**Ask**”... “**Seek**”... and “**Knock**.” Each one grows with intensity... and together... they tell us the character of prayer.

First... we must pray **humbly**. ... There are two different words in the Greek language for “ask.” One of them (Αιτεω) is only used for asking as an inferior - to a superior. ... Αιτεω more frequently suggests the petition of one who is lesser in position than the one to whom the petition is made. It was used to describe the case of men in asking something from God... a child from a parent... a subject from a king... or a beggar from a passer by. (Interestingly) Jesus never used this word when praying to God the Father. The Greek word “εποταο” is always used. “Εποταο” is only used when the petitioner is on a footing of equality with the person to whom he makes the entreaty. ... This little subtlety shows the equality of Jesus and the Father.

But **we** are told to ask – in a **humble** manner... as a subordinate. We are to show humility in asking and recognizing our needs and limitations. When we approach the Lord in prayer... we must not have a cocky... proud... demanding spirit.

First... we must pray **humbly**. ... **Second...** we must pray **earnestly**.

The next step (“seek”) involves asking... but **adds action**. The word “seek” means to look for something... and to look earnestly. It is the Greek word ***zeteo {dzay-teh'-o}***... which means “*to look for something earnestly and intently*.” ... So... this is diligent seeking... not casual seeking. (LISTEN!)... prayer is not to be a casual exercise. ... It is more than simply going through the motions... being concerned more about **form** than **substance**.

First... we must pray humbly. ... **Second...** we must pray earnestly. ... **Third...** we must pray persistently.

If we are to knock... that means we are facing a closed door. Often God wants us to pray - when the door of circumstances is closed. ... (And) the very idea of biblical knocking implies perseverance. We are to continue knocking at the closed door until the Father opens the door and supplies whatever is needed.

Actually each of these verbs are written in (what is called) the “iterative tense” which means keep on asking... keep on seeking... and keep on knocking. ... (Just a few more observations about the grammar of these words! – Please bear with me... because it provides some real treasure for our understanding. There is a good pay-off.)

These are written in (what is grammatically called) the *arōist imperative mood*... meaning – these are **commands!** ... There are two types of imperative moods in Greek. This one... the **arōist imperative** issues a STRONG command. “*Shut the door – NOW!*” is an example of arōist imperative. ... The other (which is NOT employed in this verse) – is called the “present imperative.” This one issues a command for what you ought to do. (It isn’t as strong.)

So taking this very strong manner by which it is expressed in the Greek language - prayer is to have a high priority in our lives. It is to have the priority of a Divine command. Prayer is not an extra assignment to obtain extra credit or to catch up in class if you want to pass; but it is a regular assignment which is your duty to do. Prayer is a Believer’s duty ... to fail at such a point is inexcusable. Arthur Pink wrote: Prayerlessness is not to be

looked upon as an innocent infirmity... but as a sin of the deepest dye.”
... [P A U S E] ...

Do you ever treat your prayer time as a bonus that you're giving to God...?
“Hey Lord... I'm giving You FIVE WHOLE MINUTES of my day...”

Now Jesus (in teaching us about prayer)... intensifies the lesson... by moving from an illustration using friendships/neighbors... to that of a parent and child. A parent is far more likely to answer the request of his own child... than a neighbor is to his neighbor. Jesus (still) wants to impress upon us God's willingness to answer our prayers.

Luke 11:11-13

This “how-much-more” argument (or... argument from lesser-to-greater) was frequently used in the rabbinic literature of Jesus' day. ... It accents the point that if something is true in this little instance... how much more so in the larger case. If evil people can give good gifts to their children... how much more can the heavenly Father make provision for His children.

In asking for essential items, no one would supply dangerous ones. To do so not only denies the request... it reverses it. People are not so cruel and neither is God. ... God gives neither what is useless (a stone) nor what is harmful (a serpent or scorpion).

No one is so liberal and so generous - as God. ... The specific good gift Luke has in mind is the Holy Spirit. ... God supplies far greater gifts than any earthly father can provide in giving the Holy Spirit. (Stop and consider this.) ... The gift of the Holy Spirit is worth more than any earthly gift. It is the gift of God's very presence... His guidance... and intimacy with Him.

Do you believe that...? (There is no other gift that could possibly be better!)

Here is the point (here). ... Because the Holy Spirit is God's highest gift and God will not refuse giving Him to anyone who asks - believers can trust in God's provision for all their lesser needs as well.

Anytime that you are prone to think that God is unapproachable by you... anytime Satan wants you to think that God must be asleep... or that He would never listen to the likes of YOU... that He will mock you... or give you something that is harmful (instead of the very best for you)... please consider today's passage. All of that has been swept away by what Jesus taught about prayer.

God is not selfish... begrudging... or stingy. ... He is not preoccupied with His Own needs (like the stingy neighbor.) ... His followers don't have to beg or grovel when they come with their requests. ... He is a loving Father who understands... cares... comforts... He willingly gives the Holy Spirit to us... and much lesser needs.

Now... I want to close the way that Chuck Swindoll closed his writing about this passage.

First, always count on God to answer clearly.

Now, I did not say quickly. For some reason, I'm one of those people who seldom gets a quick answer. Some people do. They might ask at breakfast, "Lord, please provide the rent money," and they go to the mailbox that afternoon to find it waiting. I rarely have that happen. I make a request and then there's a fairly long period of waiting. And in the waiting period, I grow. My trust in God expands. I become increasingly more persistent—and admittedly more impatient. But I have learned through the years to count on God to answer clearly ... always.

Second, never hesitate to be bold, even though the odds are stacked against you.

You are talking to a Father who has never met His match. Never hesitate to be bold in His presence! Now, I don't mean impudent. I'm not suggesting that we stick our hands on our hips and strut ourselves in front of heaven as though God is supposed to do as we demand. I refer, instead, to a gentle boldness, a confident boldness that comes from assurance in the goodness of God. His answer may be no, but He will nonetheless honor your confidence in His ability.