

Lesson 172

TEXT Luke 11:5-13; 18:1-8

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURE Matthew 26:36-46

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to explain that importunity in prayer will bring an answer. It is important that we do not become discouraged though there may be no evidence of an answer until it is given.

KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER Men ought always to pray, and not to faint. — Luke 18:1

KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. — Luke 11:9,10

RESOURCE MATERIAL Tract No. 57 — Prevailing Prayer

**ANSWER
TITLE:**

Praying Pays Off!

**SEARCH
TITLE:**

A Friend at Midnight

REFERENCE INFORMATION

Importunity means "persistence in requesting or demanding," even to the point of being annoying. In both examples given in this lesson, the request was granted because the grantor didn't wish to be bothered. However, God is not displeased with our continual coming to Him. He uses these stories to teach us to be persevering in our coming to Him for our needs. In the Book of Hebrews we read that God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

We have several examples in the Bible of those who importuned for specific things, and the Lord granted their requests. In the eighteenth chapter of Genesis we read

how Abraham pled with God to spare the city of Sodom if fifty righteous could be found there. Abraham brought the figure down to ten and the Lord agreed to spare the city for ten righteous. Unfortunately there weren't even ten righteous!

Jacob wanted assurance from God that he would meet his brother in peace. He wrestled all night with a "man" who could impart that blessing. The man told him that his name would no longer be Jacob, but Israel: "for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed," and Jacob received the blessing that he desired.

YOUR OPENER

A Friend at Midnight

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RESPONSES

1. God delights in giving us the things which are needful in our lives (Matthew 7:11), even though at times the answer may seem delayed (Luke 18:7). Bring out that God knows the things we have need of even before we ask (Matthew 6:8), and if we seek to please God first, these things will be supplied. See Matthew 6:32-33.

2. To *importune* means "to request or demand persistently or repeatedly." We are to continue to ask until we receive the answer to our prayer. Jesus instructed His disciples to tarry until they received power (Luke 24:49). Have one student read Jeremiah 29:13, and then discuss the meaning of the word *seek*. Bring out that it implies a strong, time-consuming effort, but Jesus promised that those who seek shall find.

3. In both cases the petitioner refused to take no for an answer, but continued asking until he was granted his requests. God wants us to come in the same way. Another fine example of prevailing with God can be found in Jacob's prayer in Genesis 32:24-29. Encourage your students to give an example from their own knowledge or experience of an instance when prayer was answered after a time of prevailing.

4. Your students' responses to the question will likely bring out that they might have experienced some doubts if faced with either one of these situations. Discuss with your class the different ways Satan will come in with doubts and discouragements, and stress the importance of overcoming them through believing God and the promises in His Word. Sometimes it may even seem that God is not hearing us, as with Jesus and the woman, but if we are asking according to His will, He does hear and He will answer. How can we be sure that our prayers are according to God's will? Your students should conclude that we must pray as Jesus did, "Not my will, but thine, be done." There may be times when the answer He sends will be no, but we have the privilege to prevail in prayer until we do receive the answer from Him.

Jesus had much to say during His ministry about effectual, prevailing prayer. He gave several parables showing the importance of praying. He also left us a beautiful example by His personal prayer life. His disciples wanted Him to teach them how to pray. He gave them as a model the "Lord's Prayer," and told them what was necessary to pray a prayer that would be heard and accepted by God. The Bible also provides examples of others who prayed and received answers.

1. In both of the parables given in our text, requests were being made of someone who had no desire to supply the need. How does this contrast with God's response when we come to Him with a need?

2. What does it mean to importune? How can we apply this to the requests we make in prayer to the Lord?

3. The principal verses in Jesus' two parables are Luke 11:8 and 18:5. They show the reason the requests were granted. How can we profit spiritually by following these examples in our prayers?

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ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

4. Many times discouragements will come when we are desiring something from the Lord. Sometimes others may try to discourage us. Read the accounts of the blind beggar in Luke 18:35-43, and the Syrophenician woman in Matthew 15:22-28. How might you have reacted in the same situation?

5. Sometimes a lengthy period of time may pass without any seeming answer from the Lord. Elijah and Daniel, two great men of God, both went through such times (1 Kings 18:42-44 and Daniel 10:1-13). What was the answer they received for their waiting?

6. Elijah's servant saw a little cloud, like a man's hand. What action did Elijah take and what spiritual attribute do we see exhibited here? Read Hebrews 11:1.

7. Jesus said that men ought always to pray, and not to faint. What is the meaning of the word *faint* and how can it be applied to our prayer life?

8. Jesus condemned the Pharisees for praying to be seen of men, and for the use of vain repetitions (Matthew 6:5-7). What is the difference between these kinds of prayers and the importuning prayer that Jesus commended?

9. What encouragement can we receive from Abraham's prayer life and his faith in God in times when he had to wait?

5. Elijah continued in prayer while his servant went to look toward the sea seven times, and on the seventh time the servant saw a cloud like a man's hand. On the twenty-first day, an angel came and strengthened Daniel. Elijah had God's promise that He would send the rain, and he stood on that promise. Daniel had no such promise, but still he waited on the Lord. Ask your students what lesson we might find in these two examples. Your students should see that if we have a direct promise from God that the answer will come, it may be easier to hold on and believe than in the times when we have not received any direct assurance. But in either case, to hold on is necessary.

6. Elijah didn't go to see if his servant's statement was correct, but immediately sent word to Ahab to make haste and get off the mountain, for there was going to be a great rain. This shows that Elijah had great faith. Discuss with the students that no matter how long and hard we may pray, God cannot answer unless we have faith that He will. A person must believe that He is "a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." We may have little or no evidence of an answer, but if we trust Him, the answer will come.

7. *Faint* means "to be weary; to lose courage or hope." This is the opposite of perseverance and faith in God. James tells us that if we waver, doubt, or give up, we shall not receive anything from the Lord (James 1:6-7). Knowing that the Word of God says this, we should endeavor to keep in a spirit of prayer and not be discouraged or quit praying.

8. The heathen thought they would be heard for their much speaking, and the Pharisees (called hypocrites) prayed to receive the applause of men. James said some received not because they asked amiss, that they might consume it upon their lusts, or own desires (James 4:3). Ask your students to give some possible reasons why God might not answer prayers today. Their answers may include praying with the wrong motive, praying to be seen of men, and lack of faith.

9. Abraham's life story is an outstanding example of waiting before God in prayer. He prayed twenty-five years for an heir that God's promises might be fulfilled, and God in His time answered. In concluding your class time, it would be good to rehearse with the class the kind of prayer that God answers: one which is prayed according to His will, in faith, and with a purpose to receive an answer from God.

YOUR WRAP-UP

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

What does *importunity*, as referred to in verse 8 of our text, mean?

Why did the judge in our text decide to help the widow?

Our key verse says that we "ought always to pray, and not to faint." What does this mean?

Name some Bible characters who prayed until the answers came.

Can you think of a situation or need in your life that you would like God to work out? If so, is it any more difficult than the Bible characters' situations we've just discussed? What will it take on your part for God to work this out for you?

What are some things that will hinder our receiving an answer to our prayers, and how do they hinder us?

Why does Jesus stress the fact that the judge avenged the widow of her adversary though he neither feared God nor regarded man?

In our ANSWER story, even though there was no sign of Larry's grandpa's ever coming into the Gospel or of his changing, did Larry's dad ever give up praying? Did all the years of prayer make a change in Grandpa's life? Was there a noticeable change in Grandpa when he got saved?

THINGS TO DO

Play a guessing game by having each student act out a Bible character whose prayer was answered by God.

Have students do a skit on the topic of importunity. It could portray friends who want us to do something that we are too tired or lazy to do. As they continue to persist, we give in and do what they ask. Another could illustrate two people looking for work. One is content to sketchily fill in an application. The other gives every detail asked for, then drops back to follow up on his application. He could state how he would appreciate a personal interview, and that he would like to present his qualifications for the job in greater detail.

Talk to your students about a prayer-request search. Have them go out during the coming week with a note-

book and pencil in hand and look around their neighborhoods, at school, and at church. Is someone sick? Have new neighbors moved in? Who is on vacation? Tell them to write out a prayer request for each situation they discover. On the following Sunday, ask them to share the prayer requests with the rest of the class. (They should omit names.)

Ask your class if they have ever heard of or participated in a prayer chain. Explain that each person is assigned a time to pray: 2:30-3:00 a.m., 11:30 p.m.-12:00 a.m., etc. All the people in the prayer chain know that there will be round-the-clock prayer for any given situation. But what happens if you fail to pray during your time? What if you fall asleep? Yes, God will still honor the others' prayers, but what about you? Remember that importunity in prayer will bring an answer.

Answers for ANSWER

Keep On Prayin'

Importunity is a big word that means, "to be persistent." God wants us to be persistent in our prayers and not become discouraged. Read the Bible text given in the multiple-choice quiz below. For each of the eight sections, decide which one of the three choices is correct. Write your choice (a, b, or c) on the line beside the matching number in the smaller box.

1. Luke 11:5	a. Which of you shall have a neighbor b. Which of you shall have a friend c. Which of you shall have a brother
2. Luke 11:5	a. shall go unto him at midnight b. shall go unto him at lunch time c. shall go unto him at evening
3. Luke 11:5	a. Friend, lend me three loaves b. Neighbor, lend me a loaf c. Brother, lend me two loaves
4. Luke 11:6	a. for my mother has come b. for a friend of mine is come c. for a neighbor has come
5. Luke 11:6	a. I have no milk b. I have no loaves c. I have nothing to feed him
6. Luke 11:7	a. Trouble me not b. Ask someone else c. You can have some tomorrow
7. Luke 11:8	a. because of his need b. because of his importunity c. because he asked
8. Luke 11:8	a. he will give him as many as he needs b. he will give him what he can spare c. he will not give to him

1. B
2. A
3. A
4. B
5. C
6. A
7. B
8. A

