

Read: Luke 18:1-8

Be a Pest!

Luke 18:1-8

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said: “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’

“For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care what people think, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually come and attack me!’”

And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Betty lived in the corner house across from the high school, with the well-trimmed lawn and gorgeous flower beds. But the kids from the high school cut across her lawn after school and ruined her landscape. She asked them to stop, but they didn’t listen. So, Betty went to court to get a ruling against those who trespassed on her private property. The judge initially tossed the case from the court. But Betty came back. The judge tossed it again. Betty came back again. As many times as the judge tried to get rid of Betty’s case, Betty came back.

Finally, the judge had enough. He took the case and ruled in her favor. However, the judge did not consider Betty’s case because he felt compassion for her, but because he was worn out. Betty had pestered the judge enough to get her day in court.

Betty sounds like the widow in Jesus’ parable. And she ought to sound like you and me when we pray to God. This is the point Jesus makes in his story—that we “should always pray and not give up.” In other words, Jesus wants us to be a pest.

You can “bug” Jesus every day with your prayers and requests. He has promised to hear and answer. For instance, Jesus did not teach us to pray for bread once in a while, but for “daily bread.” Jesus expects that we will come to our Heavenly Father *every day* and pester him to fill our earthly needs according to his promise. Even greater than earthly bread is the food of forgiveness that feeds our souls. That, too, we need every day—and every day God forgives us. Remember, however, that unlike the judge in Jesus’ story, God is not “unjust.” He loves to give us those things he has promised.

Not everything we pray for is clearly promised in the Word. When we get sick, we may pray for health, but God may have other plans. Or we may ask for an earthly *want* that isn't really a *need*, and God may not give it to us. In those cases, Jesus encourages us not to give up. Keep bugging God with your requests. His answer may not be "no," but "not yet." Don't give up on your prayers. Go ahead, be a pest!

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- Why did the judge finally listen to Betty (or the widow in Jesus' story)?
- How often does God want you to pray to him?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- How is God both like and not like the judge in the story?
- What are the answers God can give to our prayers? What should we do when the answer seems to be "no"?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Give an example in your life of a request you have made in prayer more than once. What about it made you persist in praying?
- Why is it tempting for people to pray once or twice about something and then give up?

Closing Prayer:

Patient Lord, you are always more ready to listen than we are to pray. Forgive us for forgetting that you want us to be bold and persistent in our prayers. We are grateful to you because no matter how often we beg your mercy, you forgive us all our sins. Inspire us to rush your throne of grace with our petitions again and again, trusting that you want us to pester you with our prayers. Amen.