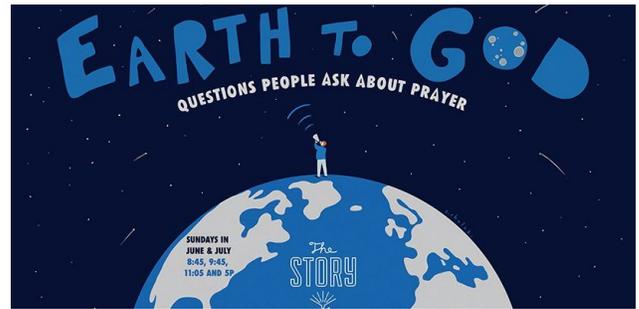


Sermon Study Guide

The Story Houston - July 7, 2019

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Intro to 'Earth to God'

After today, we'll be halfway through The Story's sermon series on prayer! I hope this series has been inspiring and challenging to you. As we look ahead to the next month, be sure to keep your questions about prayer coming via email (EarthToGod@thestory.church) and don't forget to join The Story's new Facebook Group called "The Story Houston ONLINE". So far in this series, we've learned about the following questions:

- What is prayer? (June 9, John Hopper, guest speaker)
- Is there any proof that prayer really works? (June 16)
- If God already knows the future, why pray? (June 23)
- Does God talk back when we pray? (June 30)

You can hear/watch these sermons online at thestory.church/watch or by subscribing to *The Story Houston* podcast on Apple Podcasts or your favorite podcast app.

Today we'll explore the questions:

Does it matter how long, or how many times, you pray for something?

What should you do when you pray and nothing happens?

Does God ever change His mind?

What were your thoughts about these questions before hearing this message? On what authority, knowledge, or experience do you base your understanding?

Last week we looked at the story of the Old Testament prophet Elijah (1 Kings 19) who, in the worst moment of his life, looked for God in three places - *the force of a windstorm, the chaos of an earthquake, and the heat of a roaring fire* - but God was not there. Instead God came to Elijah in the stillness, and spoke to Him in a whisper. This passage taught us how to listen for God, but this only begs the question: **if God is so tender and loving toward us, why do so many of our prayers appear to go unanswered? How have unanswered prayers affected your relationship with God?**

Jesus told two stories to reconcile some of our questions about prayer: the **Parable of the Unrelenting Friend** (Luke 11:5-13) and the **Parable of the Persistent Widow** (Luke 18:1-8).

Luke 11:5-13 Then Jesus said to them, "Suppose you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.' And suppose the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity he will surely get up and give you as much as you need.

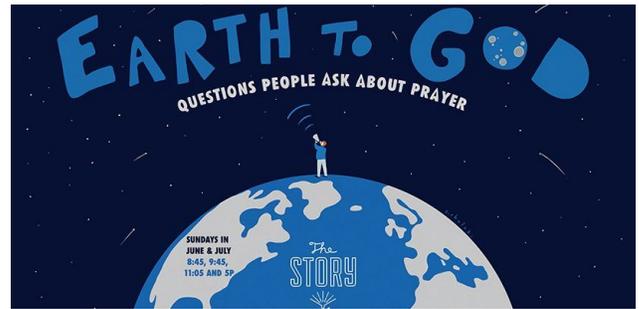
"So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.

For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

"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!"

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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?"

Jesus told two types of parables: comparing parables and contrasting parables. What is an example of each type, and what is the most important difference between them?

What kind of parables are these two from Luke's gospel? How do you know?

Three possible reasons God wants us to be persistent in prayer:

1. _____
Psalm 37:4 - *Delight in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart.*
2. _____
Colossians 4:2 - *Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.*
3. _____
2 Chronicles 32:31 - *But when envoys were sent by the rulers of Babylon to ask him about the miraculous sign that had occurred in the land, God left him to test him and to know everything that was in his heart.*

Your Notes: