

Finding God in a Dysfunctional Church

Luke 11:5-13 And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. 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. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

CONTEXT: disciples ask “Lord teach us to pray,” Jesus teaches the Lord’s prayer, tells this unusual story, and ends with ask-see-knock

MIDNIGHT HOUR – if a man traveled at this hour, he was lost! (the midnight hour also points to the end of the age)

The friend was knocking, saying “help me feed my lost friend!” But the man’s family was already comfortable – “I don’t need anything for me! I’m warm and fed. Why should I bother? It’s their fault they got lost!”

Like Jonah – the world was praying while the church was sleeping!

Church, please don’t put up a “Do Not Disturb” sign! We are the delivery people for the Bread of God – if we don’t deliver it, God will eventually fire us and hire someone else! He cares about bread for the hungry!

“But this won’t benefit me!” That’s selfish – and wrong! Look on the FIELDS! Let down your NETS! Lost people are at our DOOR!

Thankfully, this was not the attitude of the man in Jesus’ parable – he finally got up out of his comfort zone and did something about the need!

HAVE YOU EVER FELT LIKE YOU WERE TRYING TO FIND GOD IN A DYSFUNCTIONAL CHURCH?! Well, Christianity for the most part in North America is pretty dysfunctional – traditional, dry and dead! But I have good news for you – you can find God even in a dysfunctional church! Why? Because you can reach out to God for yourself!

Yes, the people who have the bread should be excited about the bread and concerned about you! You are absolutely right! But sometimes, churches get overfed, sleepy and comfortable. It’s tragic, but it’s true. There are dysfunctional churches and dysfunctional saints!

1 Samuel 22:1-2 David therefore departed thence, and escaped to the cave Adullam: and when his brethren and all his father’s house heard it, they went down thither to him. And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men.

If David was a shepherd, he certainly had an interesting flock! The group that followed him was comprised of people who were in distress, in debt, and discontented. Ever wonder why pastors have stress?!

But the good news in Jesus’ story is that, although the friend wouldn’t rouse himself for the sake of friendship, he did it due to persistence!

Jesus uses the word “IMPORTUNITY” here, the only time in the New Testament. It means “shamelessness, insistence, persistence, impudence, and troublesome.” When you pray like this, you get results!

Ask, Seek, Knock – continuing tense!

Matthew 15:22-28 And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

This story is in the Bible for anyone who has ever felt like they didn’t belong to the “church group” – this woman didn’t let her inferiority become her destiny, she just kept at it until she got what she needed!

ASK – she asked Jesus and He didn’t even answer her
SEEK – she began to persistently seek help from the disciples
KNOCK – even when insulted, she kept right on knocking!

And she is far from the only persistent person in the Bible ...

Mark 5:24-34 And Jesus went with him; and much people followed him, and thronged him. And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment. For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague. And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes? And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing. But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth. And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.

She was separated and alone, day after day, month after month, year after year, with no physical contact from another human being. Her very presence caused some who knew her condition to recoil in order to avoid their own contamination. For twelve years, life hemorrhaged from her body, leaving her weak and unclean in the eyes of her family and community. She was alone and cut off, hearing not only the whispers of her neighbors but also the screams of her own self-condemnation.

She had invested the little money she had in one false hope after another to rid herself of her plague, to no avail. There was not a counselor or doctor who did not know her and try to sell her on their remedy for her situation. She still got worse ... and poorer!

With the walls of her condition closing in on her, she finally realized that she could no longer live with this issue in her life. She had to act, alone if necessary. She had to do something, drastic if need be.

When we first see her in the Bible, she is weakly walking, sometimes crawling, pushing in desperation through the suffocating crowd to get to her one last, best hope ... Jesus. But IN SPITE OF the crowd she manages to touch just the hem of His garment. But that is enough!

Did you notice what Jesus leads up to in Luke 11? How much more will God give the Holy Ghost to them that ask him PERSISTENTLY! (And by the way, you're not even in a dysfunctional church so it's even easier!)

Can you imagine the power created when a GROUP begins to knock!
The friend inside the house would never be able to stand the noise!
THAT IS THE POWER OF CORPORATE, PERSISTENT PRAYER!