



# COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

Worth Repeating / Week 3

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## SERIES SUMMARY

A four-week series on the Parables of Jesus.

WEEK 1: God loves you even when you're lost.

WEEK 2: At God's party, the invitation is for us all.

WEEK 3: When it comes to prayer, don't quit because it's quiet.

WEEK 4: Putting others first changes us and our relationships for the better.

## SCRIPTURE

*Then, teaching them more about prayer, he used this story: "Suppose you went to a friend's house at midnight, wanting to borrow three loaves of bread. You say to him, 'A friend of mine has just arrived for a visit, and I have nothing for him to eat.' And suppose he calls out from his bedroom, 'Don't bother me. The door is locked for the night, and my family and I are all in bed. I can't help you.' But I tell you this—though he won't do it for friendship's sake, if you keep knocking long enough, he will get up and give you whatever you need because of your shameless persistence.*

*"And so I tell you, keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened" (Luke 11:5-10 NLT).*

## TEACHING OUTLINE

### INTRODUCTION

- There's nothing worse than having to wait in line at an amusement park to enjoy a ride or snack. But the joy of what you're waiting for is worth the wait!
- Tell a personal story about the longest you've ever waited in line for something.

## TENSION

- We've all had to wait on something, been told no, or ended up not getting what we wanted when we wanted it.
- Waiting for something more complicated or serious can leave us feeling frustrated, disappointed, or even hopeless. And a lot of us feel that way about waiting when it comes to prayer.
- We're told it's worth the wait when it comes to prayer, but sometimes it feels like our prayers aren't answered the way we want. And sometimes it feels like we get no answer at all.
- God loves us, is working for good, and hears us when we come to Him.
- There's more to prayer than we can see.

## TRUTH

- In the book of Luke, we read one of Jesus' parables about a man who asked his neighbor for some food for his guest. The neighbor responded by saying he couldn't help out. But Jesus explained that the man should not give up and should keep asking because eventually his persistence would pay off. Just like the man asking for food, God wants us to come to Him in prayer over and over again. (Luke 11:5-10)
- God does things in response to prayers. His response isn't always what we want or in the timing we'd want, but He works through the very act of prayer.
- Sometimes we get so focused on what's happening or not happening that we miss how God is actually working.
- When it comes to prayer, don't quit because it's quiet.

## APPLICATION

- God loves us, is listening, and wants to hear from us.
- When we pray persistently, we can trust that one of these things will happen:
- God will do something FOR us. He'll answer our prayers and move on our behalf.
- God will do something IN us. He'll change something inside of us for the better.
- God will show us something BETTER to ask for.
- This week, commit to praying persistently and looking for how you see God working for you, in you, or on something better for your life.

## LANDING

- When it comes to prayer, don't quit because it's quiet.
- What's one question I have about prayer?

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## YOUR STUDENTS

A conversation on prayer is hard for any age group! Why? Because when it comes to prayer, we don't always get the results we want or expect. This is especially hard for middle schoolers as they may struggle to wait on the answers to their prayers or to even understand that there is a God they can't see working on their behalf. Our goal is simply to encourage them to keep praying! Just be careful how you talk about persistence when it comes to prayer. We never want to give students the illusion that persistence in prayer will always give them what they want or that if they didn't get what they prayed for, they simply weren't persistent enough.

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# INTERACTIVE: AT THE DOOR

## OVERVIEW

For this Interactive, you'll use a prop (a door) to illustrate how it can feel when prayers seem unanswered and to show students what we can do in response.

## WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- A full-sized door
- A way to securely prop the door on stage

## HOW-TO

Before your large group time, find a door that can be installed on stage. You could ask a church member for a door they no longer use, buy a cheap door from a home improvement store, or temporarily take a door from your environment off its hinges. Once you have the door, place it on stage by either securely leaning it against a wall or mounting it to a 2x4 brace on the stage floor.

You'll then use the act of knocking on the door as a metaphor for prayer in the Tension and Truth sections of your talk. Simply check out this week's Teaching Script for prompts on when to do so.

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# TEACHING SCRIPT

Worth Repeating / Week 3

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## BOTTOM LINE

A SERIES ON THE PARABLES OF JESUS

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## INTRODUCTION

3 MINUTES

Question: Who here loves amusement parks? *[Pause for students to raise their hands in response.]* The rides, the rollercoasters, the junk food, the shows, the people watching—there's something for everybody! But do you know what's the worst thing about an amusement park? Waiting in line! There's nothing worse than having to wait in line for an hour just to ride that two-minute rollercoaster or enjoy that over-priced snack. If you're anything like me, you probably complain the whole time. But still, you wait. Why? Because **the joy of what you're waiting for is worth the wait.**

### TELL A PERSONAL STORY

*Tell a story from your own life that illustrates the following thoughts or ideas . . .*

- Talk about the longest you've ever waited in line for something.
  - Maybe it was for a rollercoaster, or a movie premiere, or to buy a new pair of sneakers, or be the first customer at a new Chick-fil-a.
  - Whatever it is, make sure you emphasize how long you waited in line, but also the fact that you waited because you thought whatever was at the end of the line was worth the wait.
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## TENSION

3 MINUTES

Let's be honest: Sometimes waiting can be a lot more difficult and complicated than just standing in line for a few hours. Maybe you waited on a grade for a really important test, and it didn't come back the way you hoped. Maybe you waited to find out if you'd finally get the spot

on the team, but after all that work and waiting, you still got denied. Maybe you waited to see if your parents would work it out, or your best friend would change their behavior, or that guy or girl you wanted to date would finally call.

We've all been there, right? **We've all had to wait on something, or been told no, or ended up not getting what we wanted when we wanted it.** That kind of waiting leaves us frustrated, disappointed, and sometimes even hopeless.

And honestly, I think a lot of us feel that way about one particular part of this whole faith thing: **prayer.** We're told prayer is good—that talking to God and sharing our requests with Him is part of what it means to follow Jesus. And more than that, we're told to keep praying, keep asking, keep showing up, and keep believing that God will answer. **We're told prayer is worth the wait.**

But what about when the wait goes on forever? What do we do when we pray, and pray, and pray, but nothing seems to happen? Nobody gets better, those bad circumstances don't change or even get worse, and we don't get the outcome we wanted. In those moments, we don't know what to do.

**Sometimes it feels like our prayers aren't answered when we want or the way we want. Sometimes it feels like we get nothing—no answer at all.**

#### **INTERACTIVE: At the Door**

*This is where you'll use a door to illustrate how it can feel when prayers seem unanswered and show students what we should do in response. Check out your Communicator Guide for details.*

Sometimes when we pray, we knock on God's door [*knock on the door*], but we feel like no one's home. So, we knock again and again. [*Knock a few more times.*] Still, it's just silent, and we're left standing there with no response. Because of that, we decide the wait may not be worth it after all. We get disappointed and discouraged, and we back off from God. We stop praying, stop asking, and stop turning to Him. [*Turn your back to the door.*] After all, if He didn't answer our prayers before, why should we believe He ever will?

Let me just pause here and say that this is one of the biggest struggles most people (including myself!) have when it comes to faith. But here's what I know to be true: **God loves us. God is working for good. And God hears us when we come to Him.** He hears us knocking. [*Motion to the door.*] And if that's the case, I have to believe **there's so much more to this prayer thing than we see.**

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## TRUTH

5 MINUTES

Jesus knew His followers would have these types of questions. That's why He spent so much time on Earth trying to teach them more about God and the way He works. One of the ways Jesus did that was through stories called parables. These stories have been repeated over, and over, and over again for thousands of years. That's not just because Jesus told them, but also because He used them to teach people more about who God is.

Jesus' parables explain complicated things in our faith (like prayer!) in ways that everyone can understand. So, let's take a look at a parable recorded by Jesus' follower, Luke that can teach us something specifically about prayer:

*Then, teaching them more about prayer, he used this story: "Suppose you went to a friend's house at midnight, wanting to borrow three loaves of bread. You say to him, 'A friend of mine has just arrived for a visit, and I have nothing for him to eat.' And suppose he calls out from his bedroom, 'Don't bother me. The door is locked for the night, and my family and I are all in bed. I*

*can't help you.' But I tell you this—though he won't do it for friendship's sake, if you keep knocking long enough, he will get up and give you whatever you need because of your shameless persistence (Luke 11:5-8 NLT).*

Okay, so let's break this down. Jesus told a story about a guy who needed food to share with a friend. He went to a neighbor, knocked on the door [*knock on the door*], and asked for the food. But the neighbor was basically like, “*No man, I'm tired. I can't help.*”

Now, most of us in this situation would probably get mad at our friend for being lazy and unhelpful. And we'd probably just give up and go home without the food. [*Start walking away from the door.*] But Jesus told the person in need to do something different. [*Turn around and walk toward the door.*] In this story, He encouraged them to keep knocking. [*Knock on the door.*] To keep asking. [*Knock on the door.*] To keep waiting for an answer. Because when they did, their persistence—the fact that they didn't give up—would pay off.

What does this have to do with prayer? Well, look at how Jesus wrapped up the story:

*“And so I tell you, keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened” (Luke 11:9-10 NLT).*

This is huge for us! Jesus told this story because He wanted to teach us something specific about how prayer is important to God. First things first, though, God isn't like the friend who stayed in bed and refused to help. He isn't bothered or annoyed by our prayers. He isn't frustrated by our requests. No, God *wants* us to come to Him. This is what Jesus wanted us to focus on in this parable—**God wants us to come to Him in prayer again, and again, and again.** He wants us to knock [*knock on the door*], and knock [*knock on the door*], and knock on God's door [*knock on the door*] over and over. And in this passage, we learn this: The neighbor who was persistent got what he needed.

Why does Jesus want us to keep on praying, and praying, and praying about something? Because Jesus knows that sometimes, when we don't get the answer that we want when we want it, we might be tempted to give up on prayer altogether. We might start wondering if God's even on the other side of the door. [*Motion to the door.*] And we might start thinking, “*Well, since God's not answering, He must not be there. Or maybe He doesn't even care!*”

So, we give up. But Jesus says, “*Don't!*” He says that we should talk to God about it, and talk to God about it, and talk to God about it some more. He tells us to be persistent to the point of being annoying!

Why? Because somehow (and we don't know quite how this works), **God does things in response to our prayers.** Yes, a lot of times it takes more time than we'd like, or the answer doesn't always look like we think it should. But God responds to what we're asking. He says to bug Him about it until He does something. [*Knock repeatedly on the door.*] And somehow, **God works through the very act of praying.**

No, Jesus isn't guaranteeing that we'll get our answer in our time. **Sometimes, we get so focused on what's happening—or not happening—that we miss how God actually is working.** When things change for the better, we believe God has shown up. But if they remain the same or change for the worse, then we think that He has failed us.

What Jesus *is* promising us here is this: God works in response to our prayers. And if we don't see Him answer, He's not ignoring us. He's inviting us to pound on His door some more until He does. [*Motion to the door.*]

What I want you to remember is this: **When it comes to prayer, don't quit because it's quiet.**

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## APPLICATION

2 MINUTES

Here's what I think we can learn about prayer from this parable. **God loves us. God is listening. He wants to hear from us.** And when we go to Him in prayer, He notices. He moves. He works on our behalf. Even if it's in a way we don't understand or can't fully see, we can believe that He answers our prayers.

So **when it comes to prayer, don't quit because it's quiet.** When we pray persistently the way Jesus instructed us, we can trust that one of three things will happen.

1. **He will do something FOR you.** God will answer our prayer. He'll move on our behalf. He'll make a better way for us. Will it always be the way we expect or want? Probably not. But can we trust that God is for us and loves us even still? Absolutely!
2. **He will do something IN you.** Whenever God doesn't seem to be working around us, we can trust that He is working *in* us! He is changing something in us for the better. And sometimes, the waiting period between our prayer and His answer is just the space we need for Him to change our hearts.
3. **He will show you something BETTER to ask for.** God might just change your prayers altogether. Sometimes we go to Him seeking one thing, only to realize that something better is possible. Prayer shows us that if we don't give up on it!

This week, I want you to try one thing: **Commit to praying persistently.** I want you to commit to keep showing up, keep knocking, keep seeking, keep asking. Maybe you're praying for just one thing or maybe you're praying for a lot of things. Whatever it is, commit to praying about it every single day this week. Maybe even every single day after that! As you do, **look for how you see God doing something for you, in you, or better for you.** I believe that no matter what, you'll see God move in your life.

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## LANDING

1 MINUTE

As you head to Small Group, I want you to remember: **When it comes to prayer, don't quit because it's quiet.**

Then, I want you to think about this: **What's one question I have about prayer?**



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS

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