

*"You can't always get what you want.
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But if you try, sometimes you just might find, you get what you need."*

These words, the refrain from the Rolling Stone's anthem of the late 1960s, spoke into a time of war and division, when the younger generation's idealism had ended in frustration and disillusion, when wounded hearts were in need of balm. Yet no matter what era you encounter them, they can speak to us on a personal level. For we all go asking, we all go seeking, we all long for doors to be opened. We all know the pain of disappointment of not getting what we want in the way we imagined or hoped for, or desired, only to realize later, that we may, in fact, have gotten what we needed most.

Wants and needs: Two different words whose meanings are both well understood and also conveniently interchanged depending upon one's motivations. To Want is to have a desire to possess or do (something), or to wish for; while to Need is to require (something) because it is essential, or very important rather than just desired. To distinguish between the two is to ask "what is essential?" — and of course, what is essential for each of us is truly subjective. When we are the sole decision maker, we determine what is essential. But when two or more are involved, the question looms larger. One tool we can use to discern our essential needs from our desired wants is called the MoSCoW. It helps us to identify and discern what are our Must haves, Should haves, Could haves, or Won't haves, and to visualize the interplay between them, so that we can find clarity and better understand which we really need. And that can be helpful when it comes to prayer — because it is our needs and wants that comprise our prayers to God, as well as our requests of others. And how those requests are answered can make all the difference.

The disciples have asked Jesus, their teacher who prays, to teach them "how" to pray. Prayer is a part of Jewish religious life, something that was taught to some of them by John the Baptist, and now, they want to hear from Jesus.

When you pray, he says:

- Address your beloved God by name. For Jesus, this is Abba, Aramaic for Father. Whatever name by which you name God: Creator, Holy One, Divine Mother, Heavenly Father or Loving Friend— Jesus invites you to call God by a name that expresses the intimacy of the relationship you share.
- With an outward focus toward God, then pray that God's name be blessed, and that God be exalted, for God is the one who transcends all.
- In anticipation of God's realm made present and in acknowledgement of your dependence upon God, pray every day for your daily sustenance — that that which you most need will be provided for by God.
- Pray also for God's mercy and forgiveness of you, as you acknowledge God's mandate that you, also, forgive.
- Pray to remain strong in faith, that your faith not be tested nor that you fall prey to your own desires or the temptations of the world.

With these instructions, Jesus has now shown the disciples how to pray, but how can they know that God hears their prayers, or if God will answer? Before they can wonder aloud, Jesus shares a parable, the parable of the pushy pal, to assure them that indeed, God hears and answers prayer.

Simply put, the parable is the story of two friends. One who finds himself in need when a guest arrives late and has no bread to offer. Wanting to be hospitable, he comes to the home of his friend, and asks to borrow food. His friend, already retired for the night and not wishing to be bothered, tells him he can't help.

At the heart of the parable is this question: Must one respond to a request from a friend that comes in the most inconvenient of times or circumstances? To this, Jesus says yes, adding, "...even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, at least because of his persistence, he will get up and give him whatever he needs."

When you hear the word persistence, what comes to mind? The Greek word used in Luke's gospel, "*anadeia*", better translates to a bold shamelessness, or in Yiddish, *Chutzpah*. The friend in need is bold in his asking and expresses no shame when calling out to his friend for help at midnight. Equally, his friend seems to have no shame as he rejects the man's quest for help. Ultimately, although friendship and how we treat our friends matters, what will cause him to respond is his friend's actions - asking for help, seeking it from him, and expecting fully that he will open the door, is what will shift his response. His friend is tenacious, and determined, he is shamelessly bold in his actions.

Ask and you will receive; Seek and you will find; Knock and the door will be opened. Like a beggar asking for food, someone lost seeking wisdom, or a person knocking at the door, when we come to God boldly in prayer, we can be assured that God will hear us and respond to our needs. For if we human beings (inherently selfish and fallible) know well how to give to our children what they most need, Jesus says, how much more will God give to us what we most need?

Prayer calls for our participation: Jesus teaches that we are to come to God in daily prayer, to boldly and shamelessly let God know what it is that we most need and want, and then to let go and open ourselves to receive. It is the giving of the spirit that is God's answer to our needs — the presence of God with us always, a presence upon which we can rely.

Perhaps it is in our fear, pain or desperation that we come to understand what it is to pray — those times when we express to God our deepest longings, our most fervent wants, when we plead with God to meet us in our need, to give to us what we want. It is natural that in times of distress and struggle we would want to reach out to God for help. Yet, nowhere does Jesus guarantee us that we will get what we want. Only that God will respond and give what we need. And ah, therein lies the challenge—wants vs needs and who deems what is essential for us. How can we put our trust in a God who seems distant? Who doesn't seem to hear our prayers at all, let alone answer them? We may have "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me" moments that leave us lost and uncertain of how to make our way forward. It is perhaps in moments like these, that we may find strength and hope: in Jesus' words of reassurance that God does hear and answers prayer — and in the words of The Rolling Stones: that we can't always get what we want, but if we try...or dare I say, pray; sometimes we might find we get just what we need.

God sent Jesus into the world that we might know God intimately, and to help us learn how to pray - how to talk with God and to share with God all that we need and want; God sent the Holy Spirit into the world as an answer to our deepest prayer and longing — that we may trust that we are never alone, and that God will show forth what is best for us. God doesn't promise to give us what we want, but always promises that when we ask, seek and knock — in prayer, that we will get what we need. So be bold and shameless: ask for what you want and need, seek out God, or a friend for help, and never lose faith that the door will be opened.