

# Persistence is Not Futile

Portraits of Prayer Series

Week One

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Did You Know?  
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Prayer in the Bible takes on many methods and forms, but is always communication between God and His people. Prayer is a dialogue. It is not a time for us to speak and God to listen, but for us to interact with God. This week, we're focusing on persisting for requests that we have and being confident that God will answer those needs.

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Monday, January 28, 2013  
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**Read:** Luke 18:1-8

**Discuss:** What are the differences between the unjust judge and God in this parable? How is faith connected to our persistence in our requests before God? This widow saw the judge as her last resort. It's unlikely that she would ever get justice, and yet her persistence wore down the judge. Persistence is not about wearing God down, but about showing the desperate needs we have to Him.

**Act:** Is there a request you have stopped praying for or a request you don't believe God cares about? The Bible teaches us to persist in our prayer and to seek God for our answers. Always come to God first and often. Let your faith be built up as He answers prayer and as you commune with Him. Don't ever feel ashamed that God has not yet acted in your need. We are promised that He will!

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Tuesday, January 29, 2013  
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**Read:** Luke 11:5-13

**Discuss:** What is the reason given for the friend helping the neighbor in need? What does impudence/persistence mean in verse 8? Do you think there are any conditions to Jesus' promise in verses 9-10? The great truth about God is that He is a good Father who is generous in His gifts. He wants to bless us with His good gifts. Why might we be afraid to bring anything before Him?

**Act:** Do you believe at the very heart of prayer that God is good and working in your favor? Do you think that He doesn't want to bless you? What's holding you back from asking God

about a certain need? Commit to being persistent in your request before God. Don't put a timestamp on it and see what God will do!

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Wednesday, January 30, 2013

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**Read:** Acts 4:23-31

**Discuss:** Peter and John have just been released by the authorities despite standing up to them.

That could be very dangerous, and we'll find out later that they are imprisoned for preaching about Jesus. But when they return to the church, the people there begin to seek God desperately for more boldness to continue proclaiming His gospel. Have you ever faced any danger for preaching the gospel or telling others about Jesus? There are many in other countries who are gravely persecuted and even martyred for their faith in Christ. Should we not be even bolder in a nation of such freedoms? But we need God to give us that boldness!

**Act:** How do you pray about being a worker in God's harvest? Do you consider asking Him to create divine appointments for you to help others come to know Jesus? Do you pray for boldness to speak about Jesus and testify when God offers an opportunity? We are concerned about many matters in our prayers, but do we ever pray for God to make us better witnesses and servants to Him? Pray and ask God to use you today as you go about your day.

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Thursday, January 31, 2013

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**Read:** 1 Samuel 1:9-20

**Discuss:** This historic account shows us the faith of Hannah in going before the Lord, but it also shows us her desperation before God. She could not make her womb open or become fruitful on her own. God is the giver of life. She persisted in her prayers, and reminds us of the neighbor at night persisting even shamelessly before his friend for bread. She was shameless in her approach, unconcerned about what others thought of her as she sought God. This was so much so that Eli thought she was drunk! But she explained her situation and her desperation to him and he understood.

**Act:** Do you care what others think when you are before the Lord? We must be careful to not make spectacles of ourselves, but oftentimes our trouble is that we are not fervent enough in our prayers. We worry too much about social conventions to show true desperation before God. We must always come to Him respectfully, but there are times when we need to ignore our surroundings so that we can connect with God. What are you willing to do to see God act in your need?

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Friday, February 1, 2013  
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**Read:** Mark 10:17-23

**Discuss:** In contrast to those who persist in prayer, this rich young ruler did not persist when he stood before Jesus. He went away sad because he did not press Jesus to learn more. He did not accept Jesus' challenge to surrender more to God. Because he did not persist, he did not receive from God that day. What are the disadvantages to not persisting in prayer with God?

**Act:** We must make it a discipline to go to God when we need something from Him. The dangers of what will happen, or not happen, when we don't persist in our request could easily affect the outcome.

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Saturday, February 2, 2013  
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**Read:** Mark 7:24-30

**Discuss:** This woman comes to Jesus and is quite persistent. Jesus even turns her away and she persists! This is why Jesus grants her request. She refuses to leave Him without answering her request. Why do you think Jesus responded the way He did? What sort of barriers stood between this woman and her request being answered? Sometimes God wants to see if we will work harder to seek Him, to find Him and if we will offer Him more of our time. Sometimes it's not about the need but about the amount of our trust in God to fulfill it.

**Act:** Are you determined no matter what to continue seeking God until He acts in your situation? What distractions do you allow in your life to keep you from devoting more of yourself to God in prayer over this persisting need? We need to persist more than the situation that we are praying about. Are there other methods you should consider, such as fasting, to devote yourself more to hearing God's voice on this matter?

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Sunday, February 3, 2013  
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**Read:** Genesis 2:18-25

**Discuss:** This is our text for Pastor's message this morning about marriage in the Bible. As you read through the text, think of two questions that puzzle you concerning prayer and persistence.

**Act:** If Pastor does not answer these questions, ask him after service to help you understand better this parable.