

Views from the Pews - Persistence in prayer

I tell you, 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. - Luke 11: 8

The Scriptures are full of examples of the power of relentless prayer. Think of how Abraham boldly negotiated with God to spare the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah if even a small number of righteous people could be found within them (Genesis 18:22-33). Or of how Hannah's unwavering faith endured years of pouring out her heart's desire for a child before the Lord (1 Samuel 1:9-20). Or of how Elijah fervently prayed for rain, continuing his supplications even when there was no immediate sign of relief (1 Kings 18:41-46). Or of how King Hezekiah, faced with a terminal illness, pleaded with God for healing and deliverance from death (2 Kings 20:1-11). His earnest supplication moved the heart of God, who granted him an additional fifteen years of life. Or of how Daniel prayed earnestly for the restoration of his people and their return to their homeland (Daniel 9:1-19). Are such stories confined to Biblical times?

Most of us are familiar with the system by which community or research funding is distributed through some sort of specialist committee. The committee is made up of people familiar with the problems in hand, and about what needs to be done or discovered to make progress. They have money to disburse and a fair idea of what difference it could make if distributed judiciously. They also know most of the people qualified to address the problems that need solving, and they are usually keen to make sure those people are supported. But they don't offer the funds unasked. They simply wait until they receive a formal application. Then they give money to those proposed projects that could potentially do most good.

Jesus assured us that God knows what we need, and will supply it when we ask in faith, recognising our total dependence on God as creatures of grace. Of course there are some who ask in faith and are refused, or made to wait, especially if they ask for what God sees will not do us or the kingdom good, but the saints insist that God is then likely to give them something else instead. Perhaps the ones who miss out are simply the ones who do not ask.

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