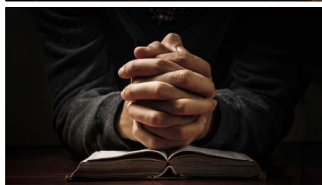


# Importunity

## The Command for Shameless Audacity

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Today we're learning how to **demand what we don't deserve!** Cuz sometimes, it's a fine line between *confidence* and *arrogance* and the question that keeps us on the *right* side of God's will is *this*: **Are your demands based on God's commands?**



Well, *first*, let's get the *difference* straight; **demands are requests made with authority** – while **commands are orders given by authority**. When I was a bartender, I would *demand* customers not drink and drive – as a *request* to *obey the law*. But when they got pulled over, the police would *command* them *not* to drink and drive *by order of the law* and *remove* them from the car. Cuz **anyone can demand something from a person** but **only authorities can command the person**. So, when we make God *our* highest authority, we're *agreeing* to take all our *commands* from *Him*. And *regarding* His commands, Jesus explains:

*If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ... If you keep My commands, you will remain in My love ... [And] My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ... I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in My name the Father will give you. – John 15:7-17 NIV*

So, the command is clear: **love each other**. But did you notice how following *His commands* affects *our demands*? **"If you remain in Me ... ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you."** Huh? He *literally* grants *wishes*? Does *our love* make God *our* genie? No of course not! Every praying Christian is *well* aware that God *doesn't* always meet *our demands*, regardless of how *hard* we pray. And *why*?

**[Well, it's common among Christians that]** When you ask, you do *not* receive, because you ask with *wrong motives*, that you may spend what *you* get on *your pleasures*. – James 4:3 NIV

And His command was to *love each other*; not just *ourselves*. So, **every demand we make must be motivated by a love of others**.

**[And by following that command]** This is the *confidence* we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we *have* what we asked of Him. – 1 John 5:14-15 NIV

And that's why Jesus taught us to include **"Thy will be done"** Matt 6:10 in all our prayers; it's a way to keep our requests *righteous* and *override* our naturally *selfish* demands. And *yet*, in the *same* teaching we're also *commanded* to *demand* God **"Give us each day our daily bread."** Luke 11:3. *Why*?

Well, just *one verse* later, Jesus seems to *anticipate* the question and offers this parable:



"[Suppose you go to a friend] at midnight and say, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of *bread*; a friend of *mine* ... has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.' [out of love] And suppose the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of *friendship*, yet because of your shameless audacity he will surely get up and give you as much as you need. "So [when it comes to making demands of Me, says Jesus,] I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. – Luke 11:5-10 NIV

So... we're supposed to ask God for things with *shameless audacity*?! Yeah! Technically the Greek word is *anaídeia* [ah-NAY-thee-ah], and it's also translated as *impudence*, *persistence*, *pestering*, and most literally, **importunity**. Ever heard *that word*? It's a bit *old-timey*, but it means being **annoyingly persistent with troublesome urgency when making demands**. So, I think the NIV actually *nails it* with "**shameless audacity**". Think about the way Ralphie went after that *Red Ryder* in *A Christmas Story*! It's *that persistence* but for *someone else's* present!

But *still*, why would being *annoying* beat being *friends*? Well, **importunity is a sign of sincerity!** The *more* something *means* to us, the more we'll *harp* on it. Cuz when **we want something more than anything, we won't take "no" for an answer!** It's our *persistent importunity* that *proves* our *heart's priorities*. So, Jesus gave us this parable about the *character* of our *prayer* to remind us of two things: **Our demands need to be selfless** and **our demands need to be sincere**.

So, it makes perfect sense His command to pray includes instructions to make the *daily demand* "**Give us the bread Lord!**" as long as our *intention* is to *share* it with *friends*! Because **loving others is God's will but shameless audacity is His way**. And it's why *these two words* get their own verse:

*Pray continually* – 1 Thessalonians 5:17 NIV



Cuz practice makes *perfect* and the more we *perfect* our *prayer* the more it pushes us to *practice sincere selflessness*. Cuz like *all of God's* commands, His *prayer* instructions grow *the* unique trait that *all kids of the King* share: **humble confidence**. Cuz **humble submission to God's command, comes with the confidence of His strength on our side**.

[And that's the *picture of faith!* So,] Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, ... Let us hold *unswervingly* to the hope we profess, for [we should be confident cuz] He who promised *is faithful*. – Hebrews 10:22-23 NIV

[In fact, the redemption we were promised *came* with Jesus; so now] In *Him* and through *faith* in Him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. – Ephesians 3:12 NIV

And to illustrate what the delicate dance of *humble* confidence looks like, listen to *this story*:

[Once upon a time, Jesus was holed up in a house and] A woman of Canaan came from *that* region and *cried out* to Him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! [Note the humble submission to Jesus as Master *and* Messiah] My daughter is severely demon-possessed." But *He* answered her *not a word*. [Sounds like a loving demand, but how can we know if her selflessness is *sincere*?] And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, "Send her away, for she cries out after us." But He answered and said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of *Israel*." Then she came and *worshiped* Him, saying, "Lord, *help me!*" But He [giving more opportunity for importunity] answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs [like you]." And she said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs [like me] eat the *crumbs* which fall from *their* masters' table." Then Jesus answered and said to her, "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire." And her daughter was healed from that very hour. – Matthew 15:22-28 NKJ



**Now *that's* the shameless audacity of faith!** And *that's* the model for *humble confidence* that every Christian should stand up and salute! This woman *confidently* walks right up to *Jesus* and *demand*s His help for someone *she loves* and when *He* says *she doesn't deserve* it, she humbly *agrees* – but doubles down on her *demand*!



**"I know I don't deserve a seat at the table – but You commanded me to come! I know I was born a dog, but I hear making You my Master, makes me born again – as a kid of the King. And if that's true, I'm just following orders to demand what You command! Even if it's nuts!"**



*You hear it?!* That's the Gospel in all its glory kids! And it *does* sound nuts! None of us deserve to be at God's table – but *we're* commanded to *demand* a seat as *honored guests*! Cuz after *Jesus* paid for the sin that separated us from God, He *expects* us to *confidently* come home!

We just need to stop confusing *confidence* with *arrogance* and *humility* with *timidity*. Cuz **timidity means we don't believe what Jesus *did* accomplished what He *said***. Cuz *He* said it *made* us *worthy*.

For the *Spirit* God gave us [through His Son's sacrifice] does *not* make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline. – 2 Timothy 1:7 NIV

For those who are *led* by the Spirit of God are the children of God. – Romans 8:14 NIV

And His *children* always have a seat at His *table*! Cuz His children are all there to *share* God's love:

[So,] Dear *children*, let us *not* love with words or speech but with *actions* and in *truth*. This [love] is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we [have the confidence to] set our hearts at rest in [God's] presence. [Now,] If *our* hearts *condemn* us [as *unworthy*], we know that *God* is greater than *our hearts*, [and *He* says *we are worthy*] and He knows everything. [And] Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from Him anything we ask, because we keep His commands and do what pleases Him. And *this* is His command: to believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and [by His power,] to love one another as He commanded us. – 1 John 3:18-23 NIV

So, **is that how you're living?** Do you daily feel *God's* strength as *you* submit to *God's* will? If not, don't *worry*, it takes considerable *practice!* *Christian* life turns *worldly* life upside-down; and **we have to re-learn humility without timidity and confidence without arrogance.** Because, down here, strength usually means *superiority* and submission means *inferiority* – but both feelings can ruin a relationship. Cuz **true love can't be one sided!** **Both parties have to believe life's better with their partner!** We have to know *we* want them *and* they want *us!* And only when we have *that confident* relationship with Jesus can we humbly *demand* His *help* with the love *He* commands:

Therefore if *you* have *any* encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from *His* love... then make my joy complete [says Paul] by being like-minded, having *the same love*, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in *humility* value *others* above *yourselves*, *not* looking to *your own* interests but each of *you* to the interests of the *others*. In your relationships *with one another*, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to His own advantage; rather, He made Himself *nothing* ... Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place ... [So,] my dear friends, ... continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, [as humble children whose confidence only comes through the commands of their King] for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill His good purpose. – Philippians 2:1-13 NIV



Y'know, I had a friend who used to work for the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation – and she had the *coolest* job I ever heard; **spending their money!** She just went out to meet with organizations who needed funding to fight *disease, poverty, and injustice* around the world. And when she found *opportunities* where the *foundation's* money could *save* lives, *she* had to *convince* the Gates' *estate* to write a big fat check! Cuz even though they were *loaded*, the Gates' *weren't* interested in *wasting* a penny. So, when making their *decision*, I'm sure there was nothing like an employee's *annoyingly persistent pleas* to put the foundation's mind *at ease!* Cuz they could *see* the *sincere belief* that *this* gift would *serve* the *foundation's* purpose.

And as cool as that *is*, here's what *we* need to see when we walk out these doors *today*: **We have that same incredible job! We've been hired to give away God's riches!** His *infinitely* valuable life-saving *love* is *freely* given by *His* grace – and all *anybody* needs is *someone* to connect them to *His* foundation! And that's *our* *commission!* We're supposed to *humbly acknowledge* that we *don't* have the power to save a single soul on our *own*, but *confidently ask* God to save 'em *all!*

[Just like Paul said,] Although I am less than the least of all the Lord's people, this grace was given me: [the command and confidence] to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ, – Ephesians 3:8 NIV

Cuz when *our* ultimate authority *commands* us to *love each other*, **we can't take "no" for an answer; even if it means demanding His help with importunity!** Cuz *He* knows the *unique* humble confidence it takes to get *us kids* to *His* table; but *He's* *determined* to feed *us* the feast we don't deserve!