



# THE NONCONFORMIST

THE **PUZZLING** STORIES  
OF JESUS

8



## YES, NO + MAYBE

1. I've been called a nag before (and they were serious)!
2. I have a difficult time asking people to do something more than once.
3. The way to get prayers answered is to be like the persistent widow.
4. God wants us to repeatedly ask for things, so that we can show Him how serious we are.
5. Jesus wants us to petition God like the widow petitioned the Judge in this story.

## DIG DEEPER

● **READ Luke 18:1-8 (NLT)**

1 One day Jesus told his disciples a story to show that they should always pray and never give up. 2 "There was a judge in a certain city," he said, "who neither feared God nor cared about people. 3 A widow of that city came to him repeatedly, saying, 'Give me justice in this dispute with my enemy.' 4 The judge ignored her for a while, but finally he said to himself, 'I don't fear God or care about people, 5 but this woman is driving me crazy. I'm going to see that she gets justice, because she is wearing me out with her constant requests!'"

6 Then the Lord said, "Learn a lesson from this unjust judge. 7 Even he rendered a just decision in the end. So don't you think God will surely give justice to his chosen people who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? 8 I tell you, he will grant justice to them quickly! But when the Son of Man returns, how many will he find on the earth who have faith?"

✦ **1-8 The occasion** - Jesus had just delivered some teaching about the coming of the kingdom and the coming of the days of the Son of Man. When events do not develop as one expects, one tends to become discouraged and impatient. So Jesus followed with an admonition to pray always and not give up.

✦ **1 Always pray and never give up - Always pray:** πάντοτε 'always' does not mean to pray constantly without a break, but to pray persistently and not be tempted to stop when the answer is delayed. **Never give up:** Literally, "not to faint" (μη ἔνκακειν [mē enkakein]). Literally, not to give in to evil (ἐν, κακεῶ [en, kakeō], from κακός [kakos], bad or evil), to turn coward, lose heart, behave badly. The word faint describes a believer who loses heart and gets so discouraged that he or she wants to quit.

● **How persistent should we be in our prayer requests, before it becomes inappropriate?**

✦ **2 There was a judge** - The "courtroom" was not a fine building but a tent that was moved from place to place as the judge covered his circuit. The judge, not the law, set the agenda; and he sat regally in the tent, surrounded by his assistants. Anybody could watch the proceedings from the outside, but only those who were approved and accepted could have their cases tried. This usually meant bribing one of the assistants so that he would call the judge's attention to the case.

✦ **2 Who neither feared God nor cared about people** - Because of these characteristics, it should be clear to

## DIG DEEPER...CONTINUED

the audience that this judge does not represent God in this parable.

- Why do you think that God uses a bad Judge as a character in this parable?

**+ 3 A widow of that city** - The widow had three obstacles to overcome. First, being a woman she, therefore, had little standing before the law. In the Palestinian society of that day, women did not go to court. Since she was a widow, she had no husband to stand with her in court. Finally, she was poor and could not pay a bribe even if she wanted to. No wonder poor widows did not always get the protection the law was supposed to afford them!

- Why do you think that Jesus used this widow as a character in this parable?

**+ 2-5 The widow contrasted with God's people** - Jesus did not say that God's people are like this woman; in fact, He said just the opposite. Because we are **not** like her, we should be very encouraged in our praying. He argued from the lesser to the greater: "If a poor widow got what she deserved from a selfish judge, how much more will God's children receive what is right from a loving Heavenly Father!" The widow had no access to the judge, but God's children have an open access into His presence and may come at any time to get the help they need (Eph. 2:18; 3:12; Heb. 4:14-16; 10:19-22). The woman had no friend at court to help get her case on the docket. All she could do was walk around outside the tent and make a nuisance of herself as she shouted at the judge. But when Christian believers pray, they have in heaven a Savior who is Advocate (1 John 2:1) and High Priest (Heb. 2:17-18), who constantly represents them before the throne of God. We not only have God's unfulfilling promises, but we also have the Holy Spirit, who assists us in our praying (Rom. 8:26-27).

- If Jesus was trying to illustrate to you that your prayer experience is the opposite of this widow's experience, what does that tell you about your prayer experience?

**+ 5 This woman is driving me crazy** - The description of the judge being "bothered" is rather picturesque. What she does is "cause him trouble" (to parechein moi kopon). She gets on his nerves. In fact, the judge characterizes himself as "beaten down," using figuratively a term that refers to having a black eye (hypōpiazō).

- If God is not like this judge, how does your "nagging" sound to Him?

**+ 6-7 The judge contrasted with the Father** - Unless you see that Jesus is pointing out contrasts, you will get the idea that God must be "argued" or "bribed" into answering prayer! God is not like this judge; for God is a loving Father, who is attentive to our every cry, generous in His gifts, concerned about our needs, and ready to answer when we call. The only reason the judge helped the widow was because he was afraid she would "weary" him, which literally means "give me a black eye"—i.e., ruin his reputation. God answers prayer for His glory and for our good, and He is not vexed when we come.

- How does God answer our prayers?

**+ 7 Don't you think?** - The basic argument of the parable involves an *a fortiori* reasoning that culminates in 18:7-8a. Although the conclusion of the argument is in the form of a question that expects a positive answer, it can be reworded as follows: "If the unjust judge yielded to the continuous cries of the widow, who was a stranger, and granted her the vindication she sought (the picture part of the parable), how much more will God, who is just and their loving Father (12:30; 11:2), hear the cries of his chosen ones who cry out to him day and night (the reality part)."

- How does God bring "much more" into the answers to our prayers?

**+ 8 What will you see...And what will God see?** - God will, even more certainly than the unjust judge, bring the justice for which his people continually pray. So we will see justice. God's question for us is this: "But will I see many of you with persistent faith despite it taking longer than you wish?"

- When can we expect God's justice, and when can He expect our faithfulness?



## MY PRAYER...

1. How am I persistently remaining hopeful for God to have the best timing?
2. How much more do I need to pray about certain things in my life?
3. What new aspect of God's character does He want me to know?