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An Appraisal and Interpretation of the *Friend at Midnight*

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Introduction

The parable of the *Friend at Midnight*, found in Luke 11:5-8, is much like a sleeping giant. At first glance, the parable seems to be a fairly simple one to understand and interpret. However, when one arouses both the Greek text and the multitude of commentators and analyzers of this parable, he is faced with something much more complex and powerful than his first impression. It is the purpose of this article to present in an organized fashion the various views concerning the parable. This will then be followed by a thorough, yet succinct, study of the context, background, and plot of the parable. From this study the teachings of the parable will be gleaned. It is hoped that the reader will be challenged to gain a clear understanding of the *Friend at Midnight* and apply the great practical value of its teachings to his own life.

Understanding the Views

A study of the various views of this parable brings one immediately to the crux of the problem with this tiny story. The differing views can be organized into three major families all centering around their translation and understanding of the *hapax legomena* (*anaidein*) found in verse eight. It is interesting to note that even though there are three basic families of views, within a family there are often a number of different variations.

The Traditional View

Those holding to this view typically understand the story in the following manner. One night a man receives an unexpected visit from one of his friends. He desires to be hospitable to his friend, but he does not have enough bread to give to his guest. Consequently, he goes to another friend of his in the village and asks him to give him three loaves of bread in order that he may serve his guest. The aroused friend says he cannot fulfill the request because he and his family are in bed and the door has been shut for the night. The man making the request, though, wins the day because of his importunity, or *persistence (anaidein)*. He continues to call to his friend inside until the friend fulfills the man's request. The application then of the parable is that the disciple must be persistent in his prayer if he is to see an answer to that prayer.¹

The Neo-traditional View

Those holding to this view agree with the *NIV* translation of *anaideian* as *boldness*. They follow the traditional view in translating *anaideian* as a positive term, but typically see theological problems with a man being able to persuade God by sheer persistence, albeit nagging, in asking. David Wenham and Craig Blomberg, two major proponents of this view, understand Christ as teaching two equally significant principles in the parable. First, as the man making the request in the parable, believers should be unafraid, to the point of boldness, to present their needs to God in prayer. Second, God will

¹ John R. Donahue, *The Gospel in Parable* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988) 186-187; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (X-XXIV)* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc. 1985) 910; Archibald Hunter, *The Parables Then and Now* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1971) 81; Archibald Hunter, *Interpreting the Parables* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960) 81; Simon J. Kistemaker, *The Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980) 176; John A. Martin, "Luke," *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, eds. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1983) 235; Canon Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to St. Luke: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974) 195; R.C. McQuilken, *Our Lord's Parables* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1980) 144-145; Raymond R. Rickards, "The Translation of Luke 11:5-13," *The Bible Translator* (1977) 28:239, 242.

abundantly provide for the needs of His children.² Both Alan Johnson and I. Howard Marshall give assent to these two major thrusts of the parable.³

The Shame View

Those holding to this view translate *anaideian* with the sense of shame, whether it be *shamelessness* or *avoidance of shame*. They draw their major support from the use of the word in classical Greek, the LXX, and Josephus. This view can be divided into three basic variations.

First, there are those who propound that the shamelessness applies to the man making the request from his sleeping friend (*host* and *sleeper* respectively will be the identifying terms for these personages throughout the remainder of this article). J.D.M. Derret drawing from the mid-eastern concept of friendship, holds that the host is *without shame* in making the request to the sleeper because the sleeper is his friend.⁴ The obvious application of this view is that the believer should never be ashamed of bringing his needs to his heavenly Father.

Second, there are those who combine the sense of shamelessness and persistence and apply it to the host.⁵ The host, because he is shameless in his persistence in asking for the bread, finally receives his request. This, of course, is very similar to the traditional view, but strives to account for the negative tone of *anaideian*. The application of the parable is the same as that of the traditional view.

² Craig L. Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1990) 274-277; David Wenham, *The Parables of Jesus: Pictures of Revolution* (Toronto: Hodder & Stoughton, 1989) 181-183.

³ Alan F. Johnson, "Assurance for Man: The Fallacy of Translating *Anaideia* by 'Persistence' in Luke 11:5-8," *JETS*, (1979) 131; I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978) 463.

⁴ J. Duncan M. Derrett, "The Friend at Midnight: Asian Ideas in the Gospel of St. Luke," *Donum Gentilicium*, eds. E. Bammel, C.K. Barrett, and W.D. Davies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978) 80-85.

⁵ A.D. Martin, "The Parable Concerning Hospitality," *The Expository Times*, (1925-26) 37:412-413; B.T.D. Smith, *The Parables of the Synoptic Gospels* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1937) 147.

The third variation applies the *anaideian* to the sleeper. In this view the sleeper is seen as the focus of Christ's discussion in 11:8. Christ states that the sleeper may now arouse himself in order to avoid shaming himself before the host and ultimately the rest of the community. The principle then of the parable is that the disciple in faith can expect answers to his prayers because God would never shame Himself by not supplying a need that the disciple has.⁶

These are the three overall families of views concerning the parable of the *Friend at Midnight*.⁷ This brief survey has not endeavored to note all variations within each of these families. It is now important to move on to a clear understanding of the parable and then to arrive at some careful conclusions concerning the parable and its application for the believer.

Understanding the Context

In order to gain a clear picture of the parable, it is paramount that one understands the surroundings within which Luke places it. One must consider the general context of the book, the immediate preceding context, and the immediate following context of the parable.

The General Context

The book of Luke is part one of a two part series which Luke wrote, the second part being the book of Acts. It appears to be his desire to show how God's New Testament plan was begun and how it continued during the early days after Christ's ministry (Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1-2). The book of Luke clearly portrays the love of God in

⁶ Kenneth Ewing Bailey, *Poet and Peasant: A Literary Cultural Approach to the Parables in Luke* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976) 119-133; Everett W. Huffard, "The Parable of the Friend at Midnight: God's Honor or Man's Persistence?" *Restoration Quarterly* (1978) 21:154-160; Joachim Jeremias, *Rediscovering the Parables* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966) 124-127; Marshall, op.cit., 465.

⁷ One noted view that does not fall into one of these families is put forward by N. Levison. He understands *anaideian* as meaning *strengthening* and applies it to the sleeper. He sees the sleeper as a man of noble character who concerns himself with encouraging the host. N. Levison, "Notes and Notices of Recent Criticism Importunity?" *The Expositor*, (1925) 9:460.

various ways and to various people.⁸ It as well emphasizes Christ's humanity, presenting Him as the Son of Man.⁹

In light of the parable at hand, one should note that Luke, when compared to the other gospel writers, has some of the most extensive teachings concerning prayer.¹⁰ Luke appears to group his writings around the different geographical areas of Christ's ministry. 4:14-9:50 deal with Christ's ministry in Galilee. 19:45-21:38 tell of Christ's ministry in Jerusalem. The section in which the *Friend at Midnight* falls is in the general category of Christ's teaching while he was between these two great arenas of Galilee and Jerusalem (9:51-19:44).¹¹

Immediate Preceding Context

The parable of the *Friend at Midnight* follows the well known Lord's Prayer (11:1-4). 11:1 provides a brief scenario surrounding the giving of the Lord's prayer. One day Christ was praying. When He finished, one of His disciples asked Him to teach them to pray. The disciple knew that John the Baptist had taught his disciples to pray and desired that Christ would, like John, teach them. Christ then provides a model prayer for the disciples. It is given to them to show them how to pray, not simply for them to repeat.¹² Christ presents four basic categories about which the disciple should pray. First, the disciple needs to worship God in his prayer. He should ascribe holiness to God, His heavenly Father, and should pray for the advancement of the Father's kingdom.¹³ Second, the disciple should request from God his daily sustenance. God is viewed as the ultimate Provider of all of the believer's needs. Third, forgiveness of the disciple's sins should be sought as he lives a life of forgiving all those who are indebted to him. Finally, the disciple is to pray for victory

⁸ Morris, op.cit., 13-14.

⁹ McQuilkin, op.cit., 141-142.

¹⁰ Ibid.; Morris, op.cit., 46.

¹¹ Morris, op.cit., 64-67.

¹² McQuilkin, op.cit., 143.

¹³ *eltheto* is an aorist active imperative (11:2). It should also be noted that the TR has a longer version of 11:2 which includes "Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth."

over temptation. God is seen as the Protector and Helper of the believer in the spiritual warfare in which the believer is engaged.¹⁴

Immediate Following Context

The parable of the *Friend at Midnight* is followed in 11:9-10 with instructions concerning prayer that are based on the parable. Christ presents the simple truth of asking and receiving. The disciple is simply to ask and his heavenly Father will provide for his need. The stipulations and clarification of the ask and receive principle are presented in the parable in verses 11-13. Just as a human father would not deny good gifts that are requested by his children, so too, the heavenly Father will, to the greatest extent, do the same for His children. Many have taken the present tense form of *ask*, *seek*, and *knock* to express the idea of *ask and keep on asking*.¹⁵ This is obviously stressing the continuous idea that is found in the present tense. Another possibility, though, is to understand this present tense as being used to present a gnomic truth. Dana identifies this use of the present tense as a customary present.¹⁶ In light of the fact that Christ is teaching a principle of prayer, this is a very legitimate option.¹⁷ 11:9-10 clearly declares a promise to the believer of answers to his prayer. This provides fantastic motivation to pray.

The parable in 11:11-13 is comparing God's response to a disciple's prayer with the response of a father to the request of his child. It is clear that this parable is making a direct statement about God and His character.¹⁸ The parable is moving from a lesser form

¹⁴ *eisenegkes*. See W.F. Arndt and F.W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957) 233.

¹⁵ J.Dwight Pentecost, *The Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids : Zondervan Publishing House, 1982) 78.

¹⁶ H.E. Dana and Julius R. Mantley, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Toronto: The MacMillan Company, 1955) 183.

¹⁷ Derrett, *op.cit.*, 79; Levison, *loc.cit.*

¹⁸ David R. Catchpole, "Q and 'The Friend at Midnight,'" *Journal of Theological Studies* (1983) 416.

to the exemplification of a greater form¹⁹ and is closely tied with the entire preceding context of 11:1-10.²⁰

Understanding the Background

The small parable of the *Friend at Midnight* is filled with cultural material from the time of Christ. It is important for a proper understanding of the parable to gain a clear grasp of these cultural ideas. One should note before going further that this parable is not recorded in any of the other gospels,²¹ so a majority of the background material will be gathered from sources outside of the Scriptures.

To begin with, many commentators have pointed out similarities between this parable and the parable of the widow and the judge that Luke records in 18:1-8.²² Those involved in form criticism would quickly point out the similarities. These parables both concern prayer and both use the "how much more" method of comparison. Beyond these two points the similarities quickly begin to fade. Those holding to the traditional view of interpreting the *Friend at Midnight* like to draw upon the similarity of these two parables to support their translation of *anaideian* as *persistence*. Since Luke under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit did not chose to put them in the same or close context, one needs to use support from the parable in 18:1-8 with caution.²³

¹⁹ Wenham, op.cit., 181.

²⁰ It should be pointed out that both the immediate preceding and following contexts are also found in Matthew 6:9-13 and 7:7-11 respectively. Both of these are found in Matthew's presentation of the Sermon on the Mount. The Lord's prayer in both Matthew and Luke is nearly identical as well as the ask and receive principle of prayer. There is some variation in the parable comparing God to a human father. Matthew uses bread and stone in the son's request while Luke uses egg and scorpion. Luke also speaks of the giving of the Holy Spirit in response to the disciple's prayer while Matthew simply says, "good things." See Wenham, op.cit., 181-182.

²¹ McQuilkin, op.cit., 200.

²² Donahue, op.cit., 185, Marshall, loc.cit.

²³ Herman Hendricks, *The Parables of Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1986) 218.

As one's attention turns to the plot of the parable, one meets a night traveler. This was not a totally uncommon circumstance to the first century Jew. In Syria, Jordan, and Egypt, night travel was common in order to avoid the heat of the desert. In areas of Israel, though, both the dangers of night travel and the more pleasant daytime weather (at least in some regions and during certain seasons) may have allowed for much more travel during daylight. With the means of travel being slow, it was not always possible for a traveller to arrive at his destination by dusk; consequently he may travel into the night.²⁴

The bread that the host did not have to offer his unexpected friend could have been any of several various types of loaves. Bread in the first century came in sizes from a loaf small enough to fit in one's hand to those which were flat and nearly two feet across. There also was variation in how often the bread was made. In some places women would bake enough bread for their families to last a week. In other areas, they would bake every day. It was not uncommon in a situation where a family had run out of bread before baking time for that family to borrow bread from a neighbor in the community. Bread was not the meal in itself. It actually was the fork and spoon that one used to pick up the rest of the his meal. A bite size portion would be broken off and dipped in some type of sauce before it was eaten.²⁵ In light of the parable being studied, one needs to note that three loaves, no matter what the size, would have been a hospitable amount to present to the guest for a meal. The host did not have an adequate supply of bread in his own home so consequently he went to a friend to request what he needed.²⁶

In the eastern culture, there was—and still is—a very great sense of community. Individuality was not esteemed, but rather, participation within the community was esteemed. Two pertinent points arise from this sense of community. First, when a visitor came to a man's home, he was not considered simply the guest of that man, but was a guest of the entire community. If the visitor was not treated well, that spoke badly of the entire community. When a guest came to a community, it was the responsibility of the whole community to make sure he was properly cared for. Second, an

²⁴ Bailey, *op.cit.*, 121ff, Pentecost, *op.cit.*, 77, Wenham, *op.cit.*, 180.

²⁵ Bailey, *op.cit.*, 122-123; Derrett, *op.cit.*, 82; Huffard, *op.cit.*, 157-158.

²⁶ Bailey, *loc.cit.*; Wenham, *loc.cit.*

individual's honor was closely tied to his reception by his community. Communities were very close knit. One of the greatest fears in eastern society was to be cast out of or shamed within one's community.²⁷ As will be seen later, this sense of shame and honor ran even deeper between friends.

The sleeper appears to be a commoner. From his response to the host, it is clear that he lived in a peasant's home. Variations abound in the description of this type of home. Some of this could be due to the fact that there may have been a number of variations on the same theme in the homes of peasantry. It seems that the sleeper lived in a typical small one-room home which served all of the family's needs plus possibly even acting as a barn for the animals. At night the door would be closed and "locked" with a wood or iron bar, and the family would all sleep together on a raised portion in the back of the home with the animals possibly being kept in the lower front portion of the house. They slept on mats possibly with one covering to spread over the entire family. Clearly, a man getting up in the middle of the night under these conditions had a great potential of raising quite a ruckus.²⁸

A final note concerning the background. As was alluded to before, this parable could be classified as a "how much more" parable.²⁹ The sleeper provides an analogy of God. The point is not that the sleeper characterizes God, but rather God is shown to be much greater in His response to a disciple than the sleeper's response to the host.³⁰ In a logical fashion, the formula is: if A is true, then how much more B.³¹

Understanding the Story

It remains now to take a look at the parable itself and its applications in light of all the forgone material. Jesus begins the story with the phrase *Tis eks humon*. This can be translated, "Who of you."

²⁷ Bailey, op.cit., 122-123, 132; Huffard, op.cit., 158-160; Derrett, op.cit., 81.

²⁸ Marshall, op.cit., 464-465; Morris, loc.cit.; Wenham, loc.cit.

²⁹ Wenham, op.cit., 181.

³⁰ Marshall, op.cit., 462; Pentecost, op.cit., 78; Wenham, loc.cit.

³¹ Harvey K. McArthur and Robert M. Johnston, *They Also Taught in Parables* (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1990) 192.

This phrase is used to begin a rhetorical question that expects a negative reply. A study of the passage indicates that this question runs from verse five to the end of verse seven. To briefly paraphrase the question, Jesus was asking His disciples, "Can any of you imagine having a friend who would not loan you bread to use when you have need, even if the need arises at night?" The disciples' response would automatically be, "No, we can't imagine such a friend."³²

Within the scope of this question the disciple is called on to identify himself with the host. The two main characters of the parable are the host and the sleeper.³³ The host's friend is the sleeper.³⁴ The host has a friend unexpectedly arrive at his home sometime around midnight (*mesonuktiou*). The Greek word can simply mean "the middle of the night."³⁵ It was only proper etiquette that the host offers the visitor a meal and a place to stay.³⁶ Unfortunately, the host's supply of bread was depleted so that he could not offer the visitor a proper meal. Since the guest was a guest of the entire community, as was noted earlier, the host went to his friend's home to ask for some bread. In light of the question format of the parable, the reply of the sleeper is only hypothetical. In actuality, the sleeper would most definitely get up and give his friend, the host, all the things that he needed.

Friendship in the Middle East was a very permanent and close tie. It not only included the idea of sharing, which is easily understood by the western mind, but it goes beyond that point to the promise of commitment and honor. The watchword of one's friendship in the Middle East is, "Your honor shall be as my honor."³⁷ This commitment and honor was one of the highest standards of life, worth

³² Bailey, op.cit., 120-121; Derrett, op.cit., 80; Johnson, op.cit., 124.

³³ C.H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961) 7-8.

³⁴ Bailey, op.cit., 124-125; Johnson, op.cit., 125. Jeremias mistakenly takes *poreusetai* as the coming of the friend to the hearer, thus identifying the hearer with the sleeper; see Joachim Jeremias, *Rediscovering the Parables* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966) 125. Smith points out, though, that "who of you" is the natural subject of *poreusetai* which is best translated *go*, and consequently identifies the listener with the host (Smith, op.cit., 147).

³⁵ Arndt, op.cit., 508; Wenham, op.cit., 180.

³⁶ Bailey, op.cit., 122-123; Wenham, loc.cit.

³⁷ Derrett, op.cit., 80-83.

more than even money. If one would lose his honor because of delinquent action in a friendship (this extended to the community level as well), suicide was a legitimate option for that person.³⁸ Consequently, the host reminds his sleeping friend of this relationship when he awakens him by calling him *friend*. It would be inconceivable on the part of the sleeper to deny the host of his request, no matter what the trouble may be.

The sleeper's expected actions. One's attention is now turned to the thorny problem found in Christ's explanation of the sleeper's expected actions. Christ states in 11:8 that though the sleeper will not get up because the host is his friend (*philon*), yet because of the sleeper's *anaideian*, he will provide for the host all that the host needs. Two matters of importance must be presented here. First, it must be proven that *anaideian* belongs to the sleeper and not to the host. Second, a right understanding of *anaideian* must be obtained.

The syntax and structure of 11:8 clarify that *anaideian* is a description of the sleeper rather than the host. A block diagram will provide a good understanding of the syntax.

I say to you

If even he (sleeper) *will not give* to him (host)
having risen up
because of being his friend

yet he *will give* to him whatever he needs
because of his anaideian
having risen

It is apparent that the causal clause begun by *dia* in the second main thought is supporting the verbal idea of which the sleeper is the subject. Consequently, it appears that *autou* in the causal clause refers to the sleeper instead of the host.

The structure of 11:8 even more clearly indicates *anaideian* belongs to the sleeper. Kenneth Bailey shows by way of the inverted chiasm which is found in this verse that the sleeper should be the subject of the line of the chiasm containing *anaideian* since the sleeper is the subject of all of the other lines of the chiasm. The

³⁸ Bailey, op.cit., 122-124; Derrett, op.cit., 81.

following diagram presented by Bailey follows the phrase order of the text.

Line Number	Line Content: "I say to you . . ."	Line Subject
B1	<i>if he will not give to him</i>	the sleeper
2	<i>having arisen</i>	the sleeper
3	<i>because of being a friend of his</i>	the sleeper
1'	<i>but because of his (anaideia ?)</i>	???
2'	<i>he will arise</i>	the sleeper
3'	<i>and will give him whatever he needs</i>	the sleeper

Bailey goes on to state, "It is clear that the entire stanza is talking about the sleeper and that line 3' should also apply to him. Whatever the disputed word means it applies to the man in bed, not the host outside the door."³⁹ From both the syntax and the structure of 11:8 one discovers that *anaideian* is a description of the sleeper.

The meaning of *anaideian*. Now then, what is the meaning of *anaideian*? The word is used only once in the New Testament, so proof must come from secular sources and the LXX. Three men in separate articles have provided an excellent catalogue of the available material stretching from ancient Greek literature into the early second century A.D.⁴⁰ There are several points of significance from their study. In almost every case that the word is used, it is used in a negative sense typically portraying some kind of shamelessness. In the LXX it is always used in the sense of *shamelessness* (having no shame) or in the sense of *defiant, angry, or harsh*. There is only one possible exception in Jeremiah 8:5 where it may carry the sense of *continual or perpetual*. Even in this context, though, it is used in a negative light.⁴¹ The use of *anaideian* in the LXX bears some significance since much of Luke's Greek is reminiscent of the Septuagint.⁴² In Josephus, a contemporary of Luke's, the word is

³⁹ Bailey, op.cit., 128.

⁴⁰ Bailey, op.cit., 125-128; Catchpole, op.cit., 408-413; Johnson, op.cit., 125-128.

⁴¹ Bailey, op.cit., 126.

⁴² Morris, op.cit., 26-27.

used exclusively with the idea of *shamelessness*, *impudent*, or *affront*.⁴³ The use of *anaideian* outside of the New Testament clearly demonstrates its negative meaning of *shamelessness*, *harshness*, and *impudence*.

What then is the meaning of *anaideian* in the context of the *Friend at Midnight*? There are several factors which will help point to a conclusion. First, not only is this a *hapax legomena*, but it is also found in the context of friendship, which is unusual.⁴⁴ This may then allow for using a minor meaning of *anaideian*, or at least a not-so-common sense. Second, it must be kept in mind that the first part of the parable is a rhetorical question demanding a negative response. Therefore, one should expect that friendship would cause the sleeper to arouse himself and provide for the host's needs. Third, eastern friendships went far beyond the concept of sharing to the concept of commitment. Friends were committed to the honor of one another. This commitment was easily understood by family. Finally, as will be mentioned shortly, in the analogy of the parable to the spiritual world, Jesus compares God to the sleeper. It is granted that this parable is moving from the lesser to the greater so that all characteristics of the lesser should not be applied to the greater. Christ, though, in 11:8 is moving from illustration to principle and appears to stress the characteristic of *anaideian* in describing the sleeper. This points towards Christ's desire for this characteristic in some way to tell a truth about God Himself.

So then, how should *anaideian* be understood in this passage? If one English word had to be used, it seems best to understand it in the sense of *commitment*. This is supported by several factors. First, Josephus uses the word in one context to carry the idea of maintaining a position under pressure. In this context it is still speaking of the negative shamelessness of Antipater.⁴⁵ This sense then is consistent with *commitment*. Second, in 11:8 *anaideian* is seen as a cause that is something beyond or stronger than the cause of being the host's friend. The Greek word used for friend here is *philon*. A possible meaning of *philon* when used as an adjective is

⁴³ Bailey, loc.cit. Johnson, op.cit., 127.

⁴⁴ See material listed in footnote 39.

⁴⁵ Catchpole, op.cit., 409-410.

kindly disposed.⁴⁶ When used as a noun it could then be understood in the sense of a *kindly disposed one*. It is true that *philon* carries the sense of devotion, but it appears that Christ is here separating the positive and negative characteristics of friendship, between the pleasure and hard work of friendship. From the rhetorical question of 11:5-7 one understands that friendship would cause the sleeper to help the host. Christ goes on then to indicate in 11:8 that when the ease of kindness in friendship (*philon*) would not cause the sleeper to help the host, the harsh commitment of friendship (*anaideian*) would. Finally, *commitment* in this context does carry the negative idea of *anaideian*. Commitment in friendship makes a friend do what he does not always desire to do. To an English speaking person, commitment typically carries a positive tone. This tone can be carried into this passage to a certain degree, but it seems best to understand that *commitment* is stressing the harsh, undesirable sense of its meaning in 11:8.

Understanding the Significance

One must now determine what Christ was teaching from this small, but powerful parable. In light of an understanding of the parable, the background, the context of the Lord's prayer (11:1-4), the principle of asking and receiving (11:9-10), and the parable of a father's response to a son's request (11:11-13), the following teachings emerge. The central teaching of the parable is this: God, the disciple's perfect Friend, will provide completely for all of the disciple's needs which are requested from Him in prayer.⁴⁷ In light of the ask and receive principle of 11:9-10, an important secondary teaching is seen. The disciple should never fail to present any and every need to God in prayer no matter what and when the circumstances may be.⁴⁸

Other teachings can be gleaned from this parable. First, it is apparent from the proper understanding of friendship that in order for a believer to expect answers to his requests, he must remain a close friend of God. This obviously would include close fellowship

⁴⁶ Arndt, op.cit., 868.

⁴⁷ Bailey, op.cit., 133; Blomberg, op.cit., 276; Johnson, op.cit, 131; Wenham, op.cit., 181-183.

⁴⁸ Blomberg, loc.cit.;; Johnson, op.cit., 131.

and a relationship void of offense toward God. Second, from the timing of the provision in the parable, one notes that God may not always provide in advance for the needs of His disciples, but when the needs arise, He will provide. Third, from the response of the sleeper, it is apparent that God does not have to be nagged into answering prayer. He will provide as soon as it is necessary.⁴⁹ Finally, the expression "whatever he needs," when compared to the request for three loaves of bread, indicates that God may often choose to provide over and above the disciples' needs.

⁴⁹ Blomberg, *loc.cit.*; Derrett, *op.cit.*, 79; Johnson, *op.cit.*, 128.