

## Lesson 11      8 October, 2017

### "Lord, Teach Us to Pray"

**Lesson Scope:** [Luke 11:1-13](#)

*References in brackets refer to Luke 11 unless otherwise noted*

#### **Lesson Focus**

This lesson on prayer was a result of the disciples observing Jesus praying. We do not know the details of the time and place, but Jesus' prayer must have left an impression on them. Their request that Jesus would teach them to pray as John taught his disciples indicates that they felt a desire to pray as Jesus did. Likely they were able to feel an intimacy with the Father as they listened to Jesus praying.

In Matthew's account, Jesus opened His teaching on prayer by warning against the twin dangers of vain repetitions, which was a pagan practice, and of praying to be seen of men, something the Pharisees did. Jesus reminded His disciples in that account that the purpose of prayer is not to remind God of our needs, since He knows them beforehand (Matthew 6:5, 8). Prayer links us to God, our source of spiritual power and wisdom. Like Jesus' disciples, we should seek to experience more deeply the blessings of a meaningful prayer life.

Our prayer life is closely connected to our relationship with God and our sense of dependence on Him. There is value in memorizing the Lord's Prayer, but Jesus gave us this prayer as a pattern for our prayer life. Even at our best, we are dependent on the Holy Spirit to carry our prayers to the Father (Romans 8:26).

**Lesson Aim:** To identify elements of effective prayer.

**Theme Verse:** Philippians 4:6. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

#### **Lesson Text**

##### **The Purpose of Prayer**

[Luke 11:1-4](#)

And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John

also taught his disciples. <sup>2</sup> And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. <sup>3</sup> Give us day by day our daily bread. <sup>4</sup> And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

### **The Quest in Prayer**

#### **Luke 11:5-10**

And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; <sup>6</sup> For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? <sup>7</sup> And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. <sup>8</sup> I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. <sup>9</sup> And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. <sup>10</sup> For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

### **The Response to Prayer**

#### **Luke 11:11-13**

If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if *he ask* a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? <sup>12</sup> Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? <sup>13</sup> If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

### **Questions for Study**

#### **The Purpose of Prayer**

1. What do the words "Our Father" convey about the relationship we need with God to have effective prayer?
2. What outlook are we expressing when we pray, "Thy kingdom come"?
3. How can we pray 11:3 from the heart when we are surrounded with plenty?
4. What are some helps for those who lack assurance of forgiveness?
5. What are some practical principles we need to follow for God to be able to "lead us not into temptation"?

### **The Quest in Prayer**

6. What lesson is Jesus teaching in 11:5-8?
7. What will we find and receive, and what will be opened to us if we ask,

seek, and knock?

8. What are some reasons we may fail to be persistent in prayer

### **The Response to Prayer**

9. Why do we need to be reminded that God will give only good gifts to His children?

### **Analyzing the Passage**

The disciples' request seems to be that Jesus would teach them an appropriate way to pray, rather than that Jesus would help them sense their need of prayer, even though that is an important element of our prayer life.

Throughout the centuries, men of God have repeatedly reached out to God in prayer. Jesus, as the Son of God, lifted prayer to a new level of closeness to God by opening His prayer with the words "Our Father."

From this beginning He leads us on to have His will become our will, and to have His goals become our goals. Surely and clearly, Jesus leads us into a prayer that avoids the snare of an endless repetition of my wants and needs.

"Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us" leads us away from the snare of hypocrisy by linking our request to our conduct.

In 11:5-13, Jesus gives teaching on the effectiveness of prayer. He contrasts the slow response of a friend who is indisposed to take on another's problem, with a father who will not settle for giving his son anything less than what he needs.

### **Principles and Applications**

#### **The Purpose of Prayer**

1. A growing Christian desires closer fellowship with God through prayer (11:1). As the Christian grows in his walk with God, he takes on new responsibilities, faces new challenges, and wins new victories. All of this requires communion with God. It is important to find regular times to pray. We should include prayer with our personal Bible reading and with family worship. It is a good practice to end the day with prayer before retiring for the night. It is also good to make it a practice to pray spontaneously for situations that the Lord brings to our mind during the day.

2. Effective prayer is the heart cry of the child of God to his Father (11:2). Now that we have been adopted into the family of God as sons and daughters, it should be natural for us to want to communicate with God. The close relationship we can have with God should cause us to share our

deepest struggles and our true feelings without reserve. It is true that God knows these struggles and feelings already; however, it does us good to pour them out to Him in prayer.

3. Prayer is an opportunity to express praise and thanksgiving to God (11:2). The psalmist wrote, "Among the gods there is none like unto thee" (Psalm 86:8). The glimpses God has given us of heaven show the heavenly host praising God. As the child of God walks with God, he finds from experience that there is none equal in goodness and greatness. This should produce praise and thanksgiving, and our prayers should include both. We should especially be thankful for the gift of salvation and the church that helps us maintain our walk with God.

4. Those who offer effective prayer desire God's will above all else (11:2). Prayer is not a means of twisting God's arm, nor should we come to God as a lawyer, seeking to prove our point. The goal of prayer should be to align our will with God's will so He is free to accomplish His purposes. To bring a request to God and then immediately thank Him for answering our request in a certain way, may be more an attempt to align His will with ours than an exercise of faith. Truly, to pray effectively requires surrender and humility.

5. Prayer is the greatest resource for all our needs (11:3, 4). Through prayer we can reach the One who has said, "The world is mine, and the fulness thereof" (Psalm 50:12). It is a small thing for God to provide for our physical needs. And He can meet our spiritual needs as well. God not only desires to give us victory over temptation, He desires to help us avoid temptation. He is able to direct life's circumstances for our spiritual good. May we not fail to ask in faith for those things we need.

6. Only those who forgive their fellow men can effectively ask for forgiveness (11:4). God's perfect holiness cannot overlook or ignore our sins, so they separate us from God. It is not God's holiness, however, that keeps us from being forgiven, but our unwillingness to forgive others. By God's grace we need to be prompt in forgiving the brother or sister whom we find abrasive or the one who always leaves us feeling slightly inferior.

Let us forgive so we can be forgiven.

### **The Quest in Prayer**

7. To be effective in prayer, we must be committed to God and enduring in prayer (11:5-8). In these verses, Jesus gives us an example of someone who received what he needed because he was bold enough to ask. Jesus also gave the account of the widow who moved the unjust judge to action through her persistent requests (18:5). If courage and persistence can move

people to action, how much more will it move God who is just waiting for us to call on Him for help.

8. Although God knows man's every need, He works when His children ask, seek, and knock (11:9-10). Sometimes when people are requested to make a decision, they will instead use delay tactics and avoid giving any answer. We can be sure God will answer us when we pray. The promise that we will receive if we ask must be understood in the context of having surrendered our wills to God (James 4:2-3). If our greatest request is that God's will be done, then we will hear the answer when God speaks. It might be yes, or no, or I have something better in store for you. Whatever the answer, we can be sure God has heard us and will show us His will if we are open to it.

### **The Response to Prayer**

9. God, in His perfect wisdom, gives to His children only what is good (11:13). While a friend may lose patience with our shortcomings, God is like a Father whose experience and deep understanding of His child knows what needs are behind those shortcomings. God deals with us out of His knowledge of our deepest needs. His dealings are good, even if we cannot understand them.

### **Important Teachings**

1. A growing Christian desires closer fellowship with God through prayer (11:1).
2. Effective prayer is the heart cry of the child of God to his Father (11:2).
3. Prayer is an opportunity to express praise and thanksgiving to God (11:2).
4. Those who offer effective prayer desire God's will above all else (11:2).
5. Prayer is the greatest resource for all our needs (11:3-4).
6. Only those who forgive their fellow men can effectively ask for forgiveness (11:4).
7. To be effective in prayer, we must be committed to God and enduring in prayer (11:5-8).
8. Although God knows man's every need, He works when His children ask, seek, and knock (11:9-10).
9. God, in His perfect wisdom, gives to His children only what is good (11:13).

## Answers to Questions

1. What do the words "Our Father" convey about the relationship we need with God to have effective prayer?

We need to be a child of God for our prayer to be effective. The sin that estranges us from God must be dealt with. We need to see God as a Father in whom we can confide and who is able to help us through our problems.

2. What outlook are we expressing when we pray, "Thy kingdom come"?

There is a present and a future aspect to God's kingdom. To pray "Thy kingdom come" indicates that we are in harmony with the plan of God. The church is an important part of the kingdom of God. To pray "Thy kingdom come" and not be in harmony with the church is inconsistent.

3. How can we pray 11:3 from the heart when we are surrounded with plenty?

It is true that in our day, hard times usually do not deprive us of sufficient food, yet our prosperity is less secure than it appears. We are dependent on God for our health, for the law and order in our country, and for the lack of famine and disease. We do not want to be like the Laodicean church who felt they were "rich" and had "need of nothing."

4. What are some helps for those who lack assurance of forgiveness?

Jesus clearly links our receiving forgiveness with how we extend forgiveness. The devil brings unrest where he can, but we need to accept by faith God's forgiveness and put our focus on freely forgiving others.

5. What are some practical principles we need to follow for God to be able to "lead us not into temptation"?

We must be honest with ourselves about our areas of weakness and then avoid known temptations. If we cannot read a newspaper without reading things we should not, then part of praying this prayer would be avoiding such papers. It would involve staying within the guidelines set out by our church in using technology. In all areas we will avoid temptations as much as possible and not overrate our ability to withstand temptation.

6. What lesson is Jesus teaching in 11:5-8?

If we do not ask, we will not receive. The truth is that if reluctant people can be moved to meet a need, how much more easily God will be moved to respond to our needs.

7. What will we find and receive, and what will be opened to us if we ask, seek, and knock?

In response to prayer, God has opened closed doors for people. People have found answers to life's problems through prayer. We cannot, however, be sure God will always open the doors we want opened. What we can

be sure of is that we will find God's will for us, and we can be sure the door will open to His path for our life.

8. What are some reasons we may fail to be persistent in prayer?

We may not have a great enough sense of need. We may become absorbed in focusing on the problem rather than on God. Perhaps our own needs seem more pressing than someone else's spiritual need, so we focus on our own needs.

9. Why do we need to be reminded that God will give only good gifts to His children?

Because God's ways are higher than our ways, it might not always.

### **Summarizing the Lesson**

Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,  
Unuttered or expressed;  
The motion of a hidden fire  
That trembles in the breast.

Prayer is the simplest form of speech  
That infant lips can try;  
Prayer the sublimest strains that reach  
The Majesty on high.

Prayer is the contrite sinner's voice  
Returning from his ways,  
While angels in their songs rejoice,  
And say, "Behold, he prays!"

Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,  
The Christian's native air,  
His watchword at the gate of death—  
He enters heaven with prayer.

—*James Montgomery*

### **Research Guide**

1. In *Doctrines of the Bible*, read the chapter titled "Prayer."
2. In the book *The True Christian*, read Chapter 10, "Will Commune With God."