

# TEACH US TO PRAY

## LUKE 11:1-13

THE FIVE COMPONENTS OF A HEALTHY PRAYER LIFE

### INTRODUCTION:

This passage contains our Lord Jesus teaching on prayer. The disciples observe him praying and then ask him to teach them to pray, and so he does. In this sense we have an overview of a healthy prayer life.

Jesus employs a variety of tools to teach:

- A PRAYER which we know as the “Lord’s Prayer”
- A PARABLE about a friend who comes to his neighbor friend at midnight for 3 loaves of bread to host his guests
- A PROMISE which is really a prompting to ask!
- A PICTURE which compares God to earthly fathers.

I suggest to you that properly understood these four sections direct us to five components of a healthy prayer life. Why 5 and not 4, because the final sentence, the capper, is a bit surprising and carries an important emphasis that we need to highlight.

I find this passage to be one of the most important in the entire bible on this important topic. It is, I believe, intended by Jesus to provide an overview of the subject.

It is a little surprising, I think, what is here. I am not so sure that we emphasize the things that are here and that might explain some of our failure in prayer – that perhaps we do not think as we ought when it comes to prayer.

**AND SO IMAGINE IF YOU CAN JESUS COMING ALONG SIDE OF YOU;** you are there tomorrow morning and hoping to have a little time of prayer with God, and Jesus pulls up a chair and says to you, ‘let me teach how to pray!’ How fantastic!

## 1. A MODEL (11:2-4) JESUS USES A PRAYER TO TEACH US

If this example prayer were not followed by the teaching in verses 5ff then we could easily miss the importance of what is here. I think we can do that sometimes with the Lord's Prayer. It is seen as the whole of what Jesus had to teach on prayer. Or it is viewed as a sort of magical prayer that is to be repeated multiple times on end.

It is wonderful to pray together, corporately, this prayer that the Lord has given us as an example. And yes I think it is appropriate to actually pray this prayer.

### A. IT HELPS TO HAVE A PLAN.

The importance of it is an example for us. It is a model prayer. Jesus is teaching us that it is helpful to have a model or a form when we come before God in prayer. It is not so much that we are bound to follow this form.

It is helpful. It is wise. Sometimes you will go to pray and it simply flows. Other times you will go to pray and nothing comes to mind. At these times you can find yourself leaving the place of prayer having not really prayed. You intended to pray and you set out to pray, but you were unable. A simple tool such as this, a model can help you. It reminds you to start here, and to include this, and to follow this simple progression. It gives you the headings, the subjects, which are to be included in prayer.

### B. THE PLAN SHOULD CONSIST OF THEMES – OF TOPICS IF YOU WILL.

#### SOMEONE CHANGED THE LORD'S PRAYER!

You may notice that the version here is a bit different than what you may have expected. It is abbreviated. "Which art in heaven" and "Thy will be done" and "deliver us from evil" and "For thine is the kingdom and power and glory" – these phrases are not included here.

This teaches us that it is not the precise form of the prayer that is important, but the themes which Jesus lays out for us in prayer. It is not a formula.

#### NOT JUST ANY MODEL!

I am not suggesting that as long as you have a model that any model is as good as another. Some are better than others and I think we are hard pressed to find one better than the Lord gave us.

#### KENNETH BOA BREAKS DOWN THE LORD'S PRAYER INTO 8 PARTS.

The eight forms of adoration, confession, renewal, petition, intercession, affirmation, thanksgiving, and closing prayer are all illustrated in this model prayer:

1. "Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name"—The prayer principles of ADORATION (praise for who God is)
2. And THANKSGIVING (praise for what He has done).
  
3. "Your kingdom come; Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven"—The principle of AFFIRMATION, that is, agreeing with God's will and submitting to it.
  
4. "Give us our daily bread"—The principle of supplication, in which we make requests both for ourselves (PETITION)
5. And for others (INTERCESSION).
  
6. "And forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors"—The principle of CONFESSION in view of our need for forgiveness of sins.
  
7. "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one"—The necessity of RENEWAL as we face the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil.
  
8. "For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever"—A CLOSING PRAYER that honors the Lord and completes our thoughts.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. BOLDNESS (11:5-8) JESUS USES A PARABLE TO TEACH US TO PRAY

A. A STORY IS TOLD HERE TO DEPICT A VIVID PICTURE OF WHAT IS CALLED IN VERSE 8, IMPUDENCE.

THAT IS WHAT THE GREEK WORD, USED ONLY HERE IN THE ENTIRE NT, MEANS. Someone who is impudent is bold and persistent.

Some would hold this point, in fact, to be persistence. It is that, but it is more. It is shamelessness; boldness.

Some see here only persistence because of the similarity to the story recorded in Luke 18, where the emphasis is truly on persistence.

B. CULTURE GAP: A CULTURAL DIVIDE MUST BE CROSSED.

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<sup>1</sup>Boa, K. (1997, c1993). *Handbook to prayer : Praying scripture back to God*. Atlanta: Trinity House.

Remember that food would not have been as available nor held in the abundance we often are accustomed to. And it was a serious blunder to not be a good host when guests arrive. So the man at the door has a real problem. But his boldness is huge. He is without shame; what nerve!

It's midnight. The kids are all in bed – one room no doubt, one mat on the floor, the door is shut and bared. The nerve to come intruding at this hour.

For what – for bread!

### C. THE ARGUMENT IS FROM LESSER TO GREATER:

if this friend will respond with what is asked for, not because he is a friend, but because of the boldness, then how much more will God respond to our boldness.

### D. THIS IS INDEED WHAT JESUS HAS ACCOMPLISHED FOR US AT THE CROSS.

We have a bold access to come before God.

#### **HEBREWS 10:19 ESV**

**19** THEREFORE, BROTHERS, SINCE WE HAVE CONFIDENCE TO ENTER THE HOLY PLACES BY THE BLOOD OF JESUS,

#### **HEBREWS 10:22 ESV**

**22** LET US DRAW NEAR WITH A TRUE HEART IN FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH, WITH OUR HEARTS SPRINKLED CLEAN FROM AN EVIL CONSCIENCE AND OUR BODIES WASHED WITH PURE WATER.

#### **HEBREWS 4:16 ESV**

**16** LET US THEN WITH CONFIDENCE DRAW NEAR TO THE THRONE OF GRACE, THAT WE MAY RECEIVE MERCY AND FIND GRACE TO HELP IN TIME OF NEED.

#### **ROMANS 5:1-2 ESV**

**1** THEREFORE, SINCE WE HAVE BEEN JUSTIFIED BY FAITH, WE HAVE PEACE WITH GOD THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

**2** THROUGH HIM WE HAVE ALSO OBTAINED ACCESS BY FAITH INTO THIS GRACE IN WHICH WE STAND, AND WE REJOICE IN HOPE OF THE GLORY OF GOD.

### E. APPLICATION:

WE ARE OFTEN RELUCTANT TO REALLY SAY WHAT WE WANT TO SAY IN PRAYER:

- **BECAUSE OF WHO GOD IS...** We might be prone to think that we cannot really approach God. He is so awesome, and indeed he is. He is to be feared, and he is. He is holy.

- **BECAUSE OF WHAT GOD HAS ALREADY DONE...** We are so blessed. Let's not bother God and be ungrateful
- **BECAUSE OF WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE HAVE DONE...** Who am I to ask God for anything?

PRAYER IS MADE POSSIBLE BY THE WORK OF JESUS AND THE MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN BRINGING THE PERSON, LIFE AND WORK OF JESUS TO LIFE IN OUR HEARTS AND MINDS.

The blood of Jesus makes it possible for us to come and Jesus here teaches us that in him we are to come not timidly but boldly.

I suggest to you that this means an asking that is courageous and bold.

JOHN OWEN REMINDS US THAT WHERE THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS THERE IS LIBERTY (2 COR. 3:17) AND THAT IN PRAYER THIS MANIFESTS IN TWO-FOLD BOLDNESS:

1. **THERE IS ENLARGED LIBERTY AND FREEDOM OF SPEECH IN PRAYER UNTO GOD** – speak your mind! “In everything by prayer let your requests be made known unto God.” (Phil. 4:6)
2. **THERE IS CONFIDENCE OF ACCEPTANCE** – not necessarily that God will say yes to my request every time, but that I am accepted.

In the parable, the friend, any real or true friend, doesn't lie there and say, 'I am done with you; leave and never come back; you are no longer my friend.' He gets up and gives you the bread. You may hear about it tomorrow. Well the parable is to teach us that God is without the human limitations. You have not awakened him. He is not irritated. He is not worried about waking the children. He will grant your request without reproach (James 1:5).

### 3. KNOCKING (11:9-10) JESUS USES A PROMISE TO TEACH US

#### A. ASKING IS AT THE HEART OF PRAYER:

True prayer involves knocking.

It is a promise. Nothing motivates like a promise. The point here from Jesus comes in the form of a promise. If you ask you will receive.

It is a command. But Jesus gives a command – ask – and he commands us to do so. If we ask we will receive.

It is continual – it is present tense. In essence, “ask and continue to keep on asking”.

It is repeated – ask, seek, knock – in that Jesus tells us to basically ask with the use of three synonyms.

It is doubled – in verse 10, it is doubled when it is all repeated again this time telling you if you do what he had told you to do that what he has told you will happen will indeed happen. Do this, and this will happen. And if you do do this, then this will happen.

You could not say any louder and any clearer the importance of an ongoing lifestyle of asking from God. This is what prayer is at its heart. It is coming to receive from God.

So, the point is that you should ask and keep on asking!

## B. VERSE 9 BEGINS, “AND I TELL YOU...”

*NEXT, NOTICE THAT THIS SECTION BUILDS ON THE PARABLE THAT IT FOLLOWS.*

It is an interpretation if you will or an explanation. He is saying that if you understand the parable, then this is how you will apply it.

This is what you do with your boldness. This is what he has in mind when he commends boldness to us. It is not just a general brashness, but a confidence to boldly ask from God.

## C. ASKING IS NOT A GOOD WORD, SO I HAVE USED KNOCKING.

Knocking carries the idea better for, as does seeking. Probably we are to see the terms as saying the same basic thing but building as they go. We ask, seek and knock.

We ask for what we don't have.

We seek what we can't find.

We knock on the door that is closed to us.

Knocking represents the most intense level and best sums up what Jesus has in mind here.

### ***JOY UNSPEAKABLE: POWER & RENEWAL IN THE HOLY SPIRIT BY MARTYN LLOYD-JONES (SOMETHING WORTH STRIVING FOR - PG.167)***

True asking, I am suggesting, is the knocking. In other words, asking does not mean a casual request. You suddenly feel like it and you make your request, then you forget all about it by the next morning. That is neither true asking, nor true seeking. In true asking there is a kind of urgency, there is a refusal to be content with anything less than the answer. That is where this knocking comes in. You do not merely shout from a distance, you go on and you approach nearer and nearer, and at last you are, as it were, hammering at the door.

This is clearly the teaching of the Scripture itself. Our danger, all of us, is to reduce the great blessings of the Christian faith to some almost automatic process. I have often compared it to the slot machines into which you put your coin and draw out your chocolate or drink – there it is. That is simply not true in the Christian life. It is not true at all. There is this element of real seeking, 'hunger and thirst'. 'Blessed are they

that do hunger and thirst after righteousness.’ That does not mean that in a service you wish you were living a better life and you would like to be better, or when you are at a funeral you feel the same thing, and then forget all about it and go back and live the same old life. No, hungering and thirsting after righteousness! ‘Asking; seeking; knocking!’

This is why I ask you to tell me what you are praying for – if you cannot, then you are not yet knocking!

#### 4. FAITH (11:11-13) JESUS GIVES A PICTURE TO TEACH US THE LAST TWO THINGS

The last section gives us two more components.

##### A. FAITH IS THE POINT OF THE PICTURE.

We spent time last week trying to look at the specific way that faith connects to everyday life. Faith is assurance and conviction.

Here we look at the more general aspect of faith that it trusts God for good things when we ask.

##### B. AGAIN THE ARGUMENT IS LESSER TO GREATER.

An earthly father gives good gifts to his children, how much more will God if we ask him.

You must set aside all of you “what if’s” and all of you disclaimers and think simple. You must be dumber than a fifth grader for a minute. Don’t over think this or over complicate it. God gives good things to his children who ask him.

This is all really common sense. You will not approach God if you believe the lie that he will use your request as a chance to make you pay.

##### C. SOMETHING HAPPENS IN THIS PROCESS.

We can have faith to ask of God and to keep on asking because God gives good gifts. If I boldly come and outrageously ask, and I keep on asking with great boldness, then in the process my Father is good and who gives perfect gifts will change me along the way and refine the request in process so that I move in my desire to a higher place. It is not just that I want this when I should want something better, then God gives me the better thing and I settle for it because I don’t know better. No, it is that God actually helps to pray and be changed in prayer so that I want it and enjoy it all the better and this is part of the picture. God is not evil as we are; he gives perfect gifts!

#### 5. SPIRITUAL WISDOM (11:13) THE PICTURE ENDS WITH A PUNCH LINE

Please do not miss the shock that comes at the end. It is a bit shocking but it shouldn't be. Jesus is telling us what to ask for, but more than that he is letting us know that the kingdom of God is received and experienced all by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Without the Spirit you will not receive the things of God. They will not even make sense to you.

### **1 CORINTHIANS 2:11-12 ESV**

**11** FOR WHO KNOWS A PERSON'S THOUGHTS EXCEPT THE SPIRIT OF THAT PERSON, WHICH IS IN HIM? SO ALSO NO ONE COMPREHENDS THE THOUGHTS OF GOD EXCEPT THE SPIRIT OF GOD.

**12** NOW WE HAVE RECEIVED NOT THE SPIRIT OF THE WORLD, BUT THE SPIRIT WHO IS FROM GOD, THAT WE MIGHT UNDERSTAND THE THINGS FREELY GIVEN US BY GOD.

It will all be strange to you. The gospel will not make sense.

The ways of God will not make sense to you.

The purposes of God and the glory of God will not be important.

And of course this is especially true in prayer and remains true for the believer as he/she learns to walk with God.

### **ROMANS 8:26-27 ESV**

**26** LIKEWISE THE SPIRIT HELPS US IN OUR WEAKNESS. FOR WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT TO PRAY FOR AS WE OUGHT, BUT THE SPIRIT HIMSELF INTERCEDES FOR US WITH GROANINGS TOO DEEP FOR WORDS.

**27** AND HE WHO SEARCHES HEARTS KNOWS WHAT IS THE MIND OF THE SPIRIT, BECAUSE THE SPIRIT INTERCEDES FOR THE SAINTS ACCORDING TO THE WILL OF GOD.

## **CONCLUSION:**

Jesus employs a variety of tools to teach:

- A **PRAYER** which we know as the "Lord's Prayer"
- A **PARABLE** about a friend who comes to his neighbor friend at midnight for 3 loaves of bread to host his guests
- A **PROMISE** which is really a prompting to ask!
- A **PICTURE** which compares God to earthly fathers.

These tools help us to pray:

1. Following a model/plan

2. With boldness
3. While knocking
4. In faith
5. With spiritual wisdom and understanding