

To Seek and To Save the Lost

The Lord's Prayer

Luke 11:1-13

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Scripture

Jesus taught his disciples many truths on his way from Galilee to Jerusalem. After teaching on the nature of mission and the importance of commitment, Jesus taught his disciples about various relationships. In three steps, Jesus worked from one fellow's human inward to our most important relationship with God (Luke 10:25-11:13). First, in Luke 10:25-37, Jesus taught his disciples about loving one's neighbor in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Second, in Luke 10:38-42, Jesus taught his disciples about the priority of the word of God. And third, in Luke 11:1-13, our text for today, Jesus taught his disciples about the practice of prayer in our relationship to God. Commentator Darrell Bock notes, "With this three-part sequence, Luke stresses the inherent interrelationship between how one reacts to people and how one relates to God."¹

Let's read about the Lord's Prayer in Luke 11:1-13:

¹ Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." ² And he said to them, "When you pray, say:

**"Father, hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come.
³ Give us each day our daily bread,
⁴ and forgive us our sins,
for we ourselves forgive everyone
who is indebted to us.
And lead us not into temptation."**

¹ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke: 9:51-24:53*, vol. 2, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1996), 1017.

⁵ And he said to them, "Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves, ⁶for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; ⁷and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything'? ⁸I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs. ⁹And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ¹⁰For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. ¹¹What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; ¹²or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Luke 11:1-13)

Introduction

The great Welsh preacher, Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, once said that prayer is "the highest activity of the human soul."² If this is true, then why do so few pray?

In a column called "Go Figure," in *Christianity Today* magazine, Ted Olsen notes that the percentage of Americans who say that they pray daily is 59%.³ Worse than that, the time the average American spends per day in religious and spiritual activity, which includes more than prayer, is a paltry 9 minutes!⁴

Now some may say, "I wish I spent 9 minutes a day in prayer! I am glad when I spend 9 minutes a week in prayer!"

Is it possible that our Christian lives are so anemic be-

² Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, 2 vols. (London: InterVarsity Press, 1960), 2:45.

³ Ted Olsen, "Go Figure," *Christianity Today* (December 2009), 15.

⁴ Ted Olsen, "Go Figure," *Christianity Today* (August 2010), 13.

cause our prayer lives are so paltry?

Jesus' disciples perhaps struggled with the same question because they asked him to teach them how to pray. And so Jesus gave his disciples some important teaching on prayer.

Lesson

The analysis of Jesus' teaching on prayer in Luke 11:1-13 teaches us that impudent prayer is essential to a godly life.

Let's use the following outline:

1. The Request for Teaching on Prayer (11:1)
2. The Exposition of Teaching on Prayer (11:2-13)

I. **The Request for Teaching on Prayer (11:1)**

First, let's look at the request for teaching on prayer.

Luke said in verse 1 that **Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples."**

I would like to note a couple of points. First, Luke recorded Jesus praying on a number of occasions. Jesus prayed at his baptism (3:21-22). He often withdrew from the growing crowds in order to pray (5:16). He prayed before choosing the twelve apostles (6:12). Jesus spent time in prayer after feeding the five thousand (9:18). Jesus prayed on the Mount of Transfiguration (9:28-29). And Jesus prayed when the seventy-two returned from their short-term missions trip (10:21-22). Jesus' disciples noticed that Jesus was committed to prayer.

Second, noticing his commitment to prayer, Jesus' disciples asked him to teach them to pray, just **as John taught his disciples** to pray. Disciples learned from their leaders. They learned how to follow the teaching given by their leaders. Apparently, John taught his disciples how to pray, among other things. And Jesus' disciples also wanted to learn how to pray.

We learn from this the importance of example, don't we? Parents, your children learn a lot about how to follow Jesus from the way you follow Jesus. So, do you teach them to read God's word? And do you teach them to pray?

And third, this is the only request for teaching that the disciples asked Jesus. They did not ask him to teach them to preach or to evangelize or to worship or to study God's word. They did, however, ask him to teach them to pray. That is not to say that the other disciplines are less important, but rather to stress the vital necessity of learning how to speak to God.

II. The Exposition of Teaching on Prayer (11:2-13)

And second, let's examine the exposition of teaching on prayer.

Notice four key points from Jesus' teaching on prayer.

A. *Jesus Teaches His Disciples a Pattern for Prayer (11:2-4)*

First, Jesus teaches his disciples a pattern for prayer.

And Jesus said to them, "When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation'" (11:2-4).

Immediately, you will notice the similarity between this prayer and the prayer in Matthew's Gospel (6:9-13). However, you will also notice that the prayers are not identical. The reason is that the prayers were taught on different occasions. Jesus taught the prayer in Matthew's Gospel in the Sermon on the Mount, whereas Jesus taught the prayer in Luke's Gospel on the way from Galilee to Jerusalem.

Second, you will also notice that there is a difference between the two prayers. I believe that highlights the fact that the

two prayers were taught on separate occasions.

Third, this prayer is usually called “The Lord’s Prayer.” It is the Lord’s Prayer in the sense that the Lord Jesus taught this prayer to the disciples. However, strictly speaking, the Lord’s Prayer is Jesus’ High Priestly Prayer in John 17, which Jesus prayed in the Upper Room on the night of his betrayal. This prayer in Luke 11:2-4 (and the one in Matthew 6:9-13) is better called “The Disciples’ Prayer” because it is the prayer that is prayed by the disciples. However, we are not going to change a custom that is two millennia old, and so we will continue to call the prayer in Luke 11:2-4 “The Lord’s Prayer.”

Fourth, this prayer may be prayed in unison with others. Jesus **said to them, “When you pray, say. . .”** and then he taught them what to say. Some people object to saying prayers in unison, but Jesus taught his disciples to pray a prayer in unison. Of course, that is not the sum total of our praying, but it does give us a pattern for prayer.

Finally, I am not going to give you a detailed exposition of the Lord’s Prayer in Luke 11:2-4. Many, including myself, have preached detailed expositions on the Lord’s Prayer. So, today I simply want to point your attention to one key idea.

The key idea in the Lord’s Prayer is in the first word of the prayer: **Father**. Although anyone can say the prayer, only the child of God can truly pray the prayer. Jesus intended that the prayer be used by those who have been adopted into God’s family by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Philip Ryken has a wonderful summary of the Lord’s Prayer:

It is on the basis of God’s love for us as our Father that we come to him in prayer. The opening word of the Lord’s Prayer governs everything that follows. When we pray for God’s name to be hallowed, we are seeking our Father’s honor. When we pray for his kingdom to come, we are praying for the establishment of our Father’s authority. When we pray for our daily bread, we are asking our Father to meet our needs. When

we pray for forgiveness, we are asking our Father to show us mercy. When we pray against temptation, we are asking our Father to keep us safe. As we bring each of these petitions before the throne of grace, we are praying to God as our loving Father, who loves to do what we ask in his name.⁵

Is Jesus' Father your heavenly Father?

B. Jesus Teaches His Disciples the Eagerness of God to Hear Prayer (11:5-8)

Second, Jesus teaches his disciples the eagerness of God to hear prayer.

Having given the disciples a pattern for prayer, Jesus went on and then gave an absurd parable. Jesus described something that would never happen in that culture to illustrate God's eagerness to hear prayer.

And Jesus said to them, "Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'" (11:5-6). It is helpful to keep Jesus' culture in mind and imagine the scene. People in those days often lived in small one- or two-roomed houses. The family all slept in the same room, usually on a large mat on the floor. Travelers had very few options. Motel Six had not yet started leaving the light on for guests! So, travelers would travel late in the day and into the night because of the heat, and they would arrive well after sunset. Not providing for a visiting traveler was considered extremely improper, and travelers were usually provided with a simple meal before bedding down for the night. When the man's traveling visitors arrived, he discovered that he had no bread, and since there

⁵ Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke*, Vol. 1: Chapters 1-12, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 574.

were no QuickMart stores in those days, he went to his neighbor for bread.

But the neighbor answered **from within** his house, **“Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything”** (11:7). The neighbor gave four excuses for not getting bread, and none of them were good excuses.

But, the man did not give up. He was persistent. Jesus said, **“I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs”** (11:8). Clearly, the man did not stop after he was initially rebuffed. He persisted. The Greek word for **impudence** (*anaideia*) is used only here in the Bible, and it means “insolence, audacity, impudence, shamelessness.”⁶ The idea is that the man had a shameless boldness in going to his neighbor and pressing him until he got the bread to feed his traveling guest.

Jesus was teaching his disciples how to pray. And he was encouraging them to go to God with shameless boldness. Unlike the reluctant neighbor, God is eager to hear our prayer. As commentator Leon Morris said, “We must not play at prayer, but must show persistence if we do not receive an answer immediately. It is not that God is unwilling and must be pressed into answering. The whole context makes it clear that he is eager to give. But if we do not want what we are asking for enough to be persistent, we do not want it very much.”⁷

The diary of George Mueller, Christian social reformer from the Victorian era, chronicles his impudence in prayer:

In November 1844, I began to pray for the conversion of five individuals. I prayed every day without a single intermis-

⁶ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 627.

⁷ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to St. Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 195.

sion, whether sick or in health, on the land, on the sea, and whatever the pressure of my engagements might be. Eighteen months elapsed before the first of the five was converted. I thanked God and prayed on for the others. Five years elapsed, and then the second was converted. I thanked God for the second, and prayed on for the other three. Day by day, I continued to pray for them, and six years passed before the third was converted. I thanked God for the three, and went on praying for the other two. These two remained unconverted.

Thirty-six years later he wrote that the other two, sons of one of Mueller's friends, were still not converted. He wrote,

But I hope in God, I pray on, and look for the answer. They are not converted yet, but they will be.⁸

In 1897, fifty-two years after he began to pray, these two men were finally converted, after he died. Mueller understood what Jesus meant when he told his disciples that they should pray with impudence because of the eagerness of God to hear prayer.

C. Jesus Teaches His Disciples the Certainty That God Will Answer Prayer (11:9-10)

Third, Jesus teaches his disciples the certainty that God will answer prayer.

It is hard to keep praying on and on for something that God does not seem to be giving. Bishop J. C. Ryle wrote, "It is far more easy to begin a habit of prayer than to keep it up. . . . Thousands take up a habit of praying for a little season, after some special mercy or special affliction, and then little by little become cold about it, and at last lay it aside. . . . Let us resist

⁸ Ben Patterson, *Deepening Your Conversation with God* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1999), 106-106.

this feeling, whenever we feel it rising within us. Let us resolve by God's grace, that however poor and feeble our prayers may seem to be, we will pray on."⁹

To encourage us to pray on, Jesus gave some of the most encouraging words in the entire Bible regarding impudent prayer. He said in verses 9-10, "**And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.**" Jesus used three different words, in growing intensity and in the present tense, and he repeated himself so that we may have certainty that God will answer prayer.

D. Jesus Teaches His Disciples the Goodness of God to Answer Prayer (11:11-13)

And finally, Jesus teaches his disciples the goodness of God to answer prayer.

To press home the point about the goodness of God to answer prayer, Jesus said in verses 11-12, "**What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?**" Of course, the answer is self-evident. Fathers provide for their children.

Jesus ended his teaching on prayer with a surprising twist. He said in verse 13, "**If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!**" It is surprising because Jesus did not mention the Holy Spirit in the prayer. It is also surprising because the prayer does seem to deal with material needs. Nevertheless, the greatest gift that God gives is the Holy Spirit. For as Bishop

⁹ J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on Luke*, vol. 2 (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1879), 11.

Ryle said, "The Holy Spirit is beyond doubt the greatest gift which God can bestow upon man. Having this gift, we have all things, life, light, hope and heaven. Having this gift we have God the Father's boundless love, God the Son's atoning blood, and full communion with all three Persons of the blessed Trinity. Having this gift, we have grace and peace in the world that now is, glory and honor in the world to come."¹⁰

Do you see the goodness of God in answering prayer? He delights to hear and answer prayer. And he will give the greatest of all gifts – the gift of the Holy Spirit – to anyone who will ask for him.

Conclusion

Therefore, having analyzed Jesus' teaching on prayer in Luke 11:1-13, we should pray with impudence.

One of the great shaping personalities of Protestantism was Martin Luther. We sometimes have the impression that all this brilliant monk did was nail a list of protests on the church door in Wittenberg. Nothing could be further from the truth. He worked as a motivated man, preaching, lecturing, and writing daily. The complete edition of his papers runs into thousands of pages. He worked inconceivably hard, and yet in spite of all this, Luther managed to pray for an hour or two every day. He said he prayed because he had so much to accomplish. We are recipients of this hope, and in a world that is so corrupt and needy, we also need to pray.¹¹

So, let us commit ourselves to prayer. And let us pray with impudence. Let us pray with shameless boldness. Let us pray that the Lord's Prayer will be fulfilled in our lives. Amen.

¹⁰ J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on Luke*, vol. 2, 12.

¹¹ G. Curtis Jones, *1000 Illustrations for Preaching and Teaching* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1986), 174.

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equip them for their ministry in the church
and life mission in the world,
in order to magnify God's name.*

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PRAYER:

Father, thank you for the Lord's Prayer. Thank you for Jesus' teaching on prayer to his disciples.

Thank you for the pattern of prayer that Jesus gave us in the Lord's Prayer.

We also thank you that you are eager to hear our prayer and also that you will answer our prayer. And you do so because of your infinite goodness.

Help each one of us to pray with impudence, with shameless boldness.

And for this I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

BENEDICTION:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and always. Amen.

CHARGE:

Now, brothers and sisters, go and serve God wholeheartedly!