

Luke 11 (Part 1): 1-13 • Insights on Prayer

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Open your Bible, please to Luke chapter 11, as we continue here on Sunday morning, our study through the New Testament, and right now, the Gospel according to Luke. This is part 1 from Luke chapter 11, and we're going to be looking through the first 13 verses. Luke chapter 11, verse 1 through 13. All right. Follow along as I read. It says,

“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.”

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, ⁶ for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; ⁷ and 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’? ⁸ 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.

⁹ 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. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. ¹¹ What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; ¹² or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? 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!” (ESV)

Stop there. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we open our hearts to You, and we invite You to speak to them. We just, Lord, we need You. We need Your Word, and we need understanding from it. We believe that it is You who give that understanding. Lord, we just want to have our spiritual eyes and ears open today to hear Your voice. Equip us and direct us, we ask, in Jesus precious name, amen.

Well, as you can see from the text that we're looking at here today, we're going to be talking about prayer. And we're going to be looking at three main points from this section here in Luke chapter 11. I'll put them up on the screen for you so you can see them. Oh, by the way, parent 902, your pizza is ready.

- The Content of Prayer
- The Persistence of Prayer
- The Object of Prayer

All right, here we go. We're going to be looking at the Content of Prayer, the Persistence of Prayer, and we're going to be looking at the Object of Prayer.

Before we get into the first point, which is that issue of the content of prayer. I want to look again with you at verse 1. Look in your Bible with me again, because this is where it tells us that Jesus was praying, and when He had finished, and I think that's significant. One of his disciples. came up to Him and asked Him to instruct them in the area of prayer.

Let me ask you a question. Have you ever felt that you needed help with your prayer life? Yeah, I know, stupid question. I think it's probably a fairly universal need. I think we all recognize that our prayer life could stand some improvement, but I think that it's significant that this request made to Jesus about prayer came right on the heels of Him praying because here He is doing it. And the disciples saw that in His prayer time, that is when He connected, that is when He communed, that is when He filled up on that relationship with the Father for all that He was called to do, and they wanted what He had.

I don't know if you've ever looked at another Christian and thought, man, I want what you've got, but that's the way they were thinking about it. And I think that the disciples are a reflection of all of us as it relates to this need that we have in our hearts to be better prayers. Like the disciples we all know that prayer is important, and that's why they came and asked Him to help. But they also knew that they were struggling. They knew that, I'm just not getting the job done. It's just not working. Prayer is a struggle. Prayer is hard work. I think we can relate all of us to long periods of prayerlessness in our lives. I know I can.

Even as a pastor, there have been too many seasons where I have not prayed as I ought. And so these Bible verses and these sections here in Luke chapter 11 are given to us to help us get on track. And I think that these important points that Jesus is covering are all critical, so let's highlight the first one that we're going to look at, and that is the content of prayer.

- **The Content of Prayer**
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You'll notice in verse 2, Jesus began to say to them, when you pray, say, and then you and He goes through it and Luke gives us a shortened version of it. But we all recognize this as the Lord's prayer. And probably every single day Christians gather around the world to recite the Lord's prayer, which I believe is not at all what He intended for it. I don't think Jesus gave us this as something to recite.

This is an outline, you guys. And an outline is meant to be a guide, if you will. It emphasizes key points that we're to cover. But I don't think Jesus meant us just to stand in one place, and we've all probably learned the Lord's prayer, and you don't have to even think about it.

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed, and most of us even do it from the King James. I mean, how long ago was that, that we learned that? And it just rolls off the tongue, without really even passing through the mind, let alone making its way to the heart. That's not at all what, Jesus meant when He gave us this. He gave us this outline to say, when you pray, pray this way. Begin by addressing the Father. Notice it begins with Father. That means, He wants you and I to remember that when we begin to pray, we're talking to a person.

And I know that sounds like a duh moment, but sometimes we forget it. Sometimes we divorce God from just a person. I mean, He's God after all. And it's like, how do you begin to talk to God? Well, you talk to God like any other person. But the point about this is that prayer time is meant to be a personal time. It's a time of intimacy. It's a time of communion. It's a time of connecting.

We're talking to our Father, and I think way too often as Christians, we forget the fact that only those who are born of God even have the right to call Him Father. Do you know that? Have you ever noticed that when you're talking to people who don't know the Lord, they don't call Him Father usually?

They use all kinds of dumb things like the man upstairs or the big guy or something dumb like that. But Father is a term of endearment. It's a term of intimacy. More than that, it's a term of family. It's a term of family. And while we were taking communion, I even quoted that passage from John chapter 1 that says, *"To all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God."* Do you understand Christians that it's when we become Children of God that He becomes our Father and not before.

Before that He's just your God. He's your Creator. But there becomes this important dynamic that changes. It shifts when you and I come to know Christ in our hearts and we receive what He did on the cross. He, God becomes our Father and we begin to speak to Him on that personal, intimate level. Father, I come to you. And notice that Jesus didn't give us all these fancy adjectives that man over the years, has added to addressing God. Oh great, holy and high. Not that He isn't deserving of every holy adjective that you can add, I'm not saying that. I'm just saying that this is a prayer of intimacy, and that's an important thing to remember.

And then after addressing Him as Father, we're to say, *"hallowed be your name."* And again, that's not something to be said by rote memorization, because hallowed means holy, or set apart, sanctified. And when we say, holy be your name, we have to remember that in antiquity, the name of somebody meant everything about them. To you and I, we think of names as, we look up online or in a book, what does my name mean? Well, my name means, and we love it when it says something nice, my name means courageous. That's not what my name means, by the way. Paul means little. I'm serious. Yeah. Paul means little.

Yeah, thank you. But that's really about as far as we go when it comes to understanding the meaning of a person's name. But in Bible times, to say you must receive the name of Jesus it meant you had to receive everything about Him. It means every declaration, every word that He spoke, everything that He is bound up in his name.

That's why it says in John, to those who received Him, to those who believed in His name, to those who believed in everything about Him, He gave the right to become children of God. Right? So when we're saying to God, hallowed be your name or holy be your name, we're just saying, holy are you.

Holy are you God. And we remember that it is the angels that are before the throne of God who are constantly, day and night we're told, crying out holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty. Constantly. And I understand that

holiness is a concept that you and I have a difficult time laying hold of, but we are to begin our prayer time magnifying the Lord. And when we declare His holiness and even meditate on the fact that He is holy, we are doing just that. And then we're to say, your will be done. Simple prayer just for God's will to be accomplished on earth.

I'm convinced that this is one of, if not the most powerful things that you and I can pray. In fact, I've got to tell you, there's a lot of times when I'm faced with a situation and I don't know how to pray exactly. And to just be able to say, , Lord, I don't know what's going on here, but I just pray your will would be done. I want your will in this. I don't even know what your will is exactly, but I know that you're good. That I know. And so I pray for your will to be done. Guys, if you don't know what to pray, if you're sitting around twiddling your thumbs like, I got to pray, I don't know what to pray for. Pray for God's will. What a glorious thing to pray for. We get to participate in God's will.

Isn't that crazy that He allows you and I to actually help in that process somehow through our prayers? And it's a weird thing to even think about, but what a beautiful thing to be able to pray, and really a very simple thing. Then He says, if you look at verse 3, we're to go on and we're to pray, *"give us each day our daily bread."*

And again, this is a very simple request for God to meet our needs. And by the way, your daily bread might not be anything you put in your mouth. Your daily bread might need, might mean the strength that you need that day.

I've prayed for the daily bread of strength many times, or the daily bread of courage, or the daily bread of wisdom. I mean, whatever it may be, God invites you and I to come to Him so that those needs might get met, so He tells us to pray. *"Lord, give me this day my daily bread,"* and you'll notice that it's a daily thing. It's not like God's limited. It's not like He can't give you what you need for tomorrow, today or even for next week or next month.

It's not like He can't do that. I mean if you were to say to Him, Lord coming up here next month I got something going on and I'm really going to need Your strength.

He can do that, but He wants you to come to Him every single day. Why? He wants to have a relationship with you. He wants to have an ongoing relationship that is bound up in more than just, I need, I need, I need, and you give and I need you to give, which is frankly what most of us, I don't know if most, I don't have any way of knowing that for sure. I'm willing to say for many of us, our

relationship with God is limited to, I need, I need, you give. And that's what we talked to God about in prayer. But the fact of the matter is when we come to Him every day, there's a greater impetus to begin just to talk and to pour out your heart. And really lay it before Him.

Verse 4, We're then to say, "*Lord, and forgive us our sins.*" Why do we have to pray this? I thought when I came to Jesus, I was forgiven. Past, present, and future. So why does Jesus tell me to pray ongoingly for forgiveness? Does that mean I have to get saved again? Of course not. Has nothing to do with it. You are saved. And in Christ, and by faith you are forgiven for all of your sins from that eternal perspective of being held accountable from anything you have ever done or ever will do related to what Jesus did on the cross for you. That's not what you're praying about.

You're praying for that relationship that you have with the Lord to have no barriers, nothing standing in the way, no issues, no problems. And that's what sin does. We've talked this many, many times. We've talked about the fact that the Bible says sin separates us from God, and it can even separate you relationally as a believer from God. We've all felt distant. We've all felt distant from God. We've gotten involved, we've not come to the Lord like we should. We've not prayed for forgiveness, we've been involved in doing junk that we know we shouldn't have done, and we just let it sit there, and we didn't repent, and we didn't come to God, and now there's this distance. There's this coldness.

And what do we need to do to get that taken care of? We've got to come to the Lord and ask for forgiveness. Lord, forgive me. I know that I haven't lived the way I should. I know that. I'm asking you to forgive me and to strengthen me and help me to live for you. I'm not praying for forgiveness so that you'll love me and bring me to heaven. That's already done. That was settled on the cross. You guys get that? Your eternal salvation was settled at the cross. Jesus did it. He said it is finished. It is done. You are praying for forgiveness now to make sure that there's not a distance between you and the Lord, because that distance comes all too easy.

And believe me, the enemy wants to jump on it and exacerbate that as much as he possibly can. So the best thing you and I can do to maintain a heart of intimacy with our Father is to make sure that we come before Him and say, Lord, forgive me.

But there's another part of this forgiveness. He says that we are also to forgive, assuming that we are forgiving others for the things that they've done against us, and I frankly like how it's worded here in Luke. It says, "*Lord, forgive us our*

sins as we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us.” I like that word indebted because that's the essence of forgiveness. I bring that up with people on a fairly regular basis when we're talking about forgiveness. It's like, I owed you money, a lot of money and couldn't pay, and so you forgave the debt. Okay, you don't have to pay me back. That is forgiveness. That's the essence of forgiveness. Do you know why Christians don't forgive? It's not because they can't.

It's because they think forgiveness means I have to jump right back into that situation that I was in that got me in this place in the first place. For example, somebody will say, there's this person who really hurt me and my family. They're a very toxic individual and they did things and said things and they really hurt us bad, I mean, we were wounded, offended, hurt by this individual, and I just can't forgive them because, I can't go back and do that again. And I always look at him and say, what does going back and letting that person into your life have to do with forgiveness? That is a misunderstanding of what it means to forgive.

Jesus told that parable about that man who forgave this servant of this incredible amount of money that he could no way he could pay back. He said, the guy begged him for mercy and he forgave him. Do you think the master turned right around and lent him more money after that? I seriously doubt it. There's a point in our lives, you guys, where there is a need to say, I can't go back there. But you know what? I'm going to forgive you. I am going to forgive you. I choose to release the debt. Right? And so we've got to understand what that means. Lord, we have forgiven.

I'm free to forgive, even if I can't connect with that person any, anymore, because it's just, there's never been any repentance on their end, and they're still living the same destructive lifestyle they were living before. Right? But that doesn't stop me from forgiving. Jesus didn't say forgive others if you're capable or if you're able to. Go ahead and forgive them. No, no, no just forgive. It's really important that we understand that.

And then the end of verse 4 it's, *“lead us not into temptation.”* The word temptation literally means testing. So this is a prayer that we might be delivered from the temptations and the tests and the challenges that so quickly and easily come our way in this dark world and can so quickly plunge us into sin.

Again, this is an outline. I believe it's something that the Lord would have us to look at and meditate on and not just recite mindlessly, but rather look at it as an

outline. Then we come to the second point that we're going to be looking at here, which is the persistence of prayer.

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And it is my considered opinion, which frankly isn't worth anything, but it is my opinion that for those who do pray, this is probably the biggest challenge that most Christians face. Persistence, consistency, staying at it, not giving up in prayer. And Jesus, to make this point, tells a very simple parable about a man who goes to his neighbor asking for some bread to help feed an unexpected guest who had just arrived at a late hour. And in the story, the man who is awakened is initially unwilling to help out. He's like, Hey, what are you doing, man? We're all in bed and lights are off and what are you talking about bread?

Just, I'm not going to give you anything. And yet it tells us here in verse eight, that although he's not going to get up and give him anything because they're friends, he will get up and actually take care of him just so he can go back to bed. Now that's an example. And it says, *"Because of his impudence,"* which is an interesting word, it's translated that way here in the ESV. It literally means, check this out. It means, shameless persistence. I like that because of his shameless persistence, this man will ultimately get what he needs. And it's talking about that determination to knock and keep knocking.

I mean, to the point of being obnoxious about it and the whole promise here From this verse for our shameless persistence is summed up in verses 9 and 10 look with me in your Bible verses 9 and 10 He says, *"I tell you ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and it will be open to you, for everyone who asks receives and the one who seeks finds and the one who knocks it will be opened."*

Now let me ask you a question. How long does Jesus say you have to ask, seek, and knock before you get what you're looking for? He doesn't say, does He?

And yet we all have, in our minds, in our hearts, we've got this idea of how long it ought to take. And we pray, and when we get to our expectation of how long it ought to take before God answers, we just say, well, there you go. I prayed and nothing happened. I prayed, God didn't answer. Big deal, huh? Yeah, so much for His promises. People have never been quite that obnoxious about it when they say it to me, but I have had people say to me quite often, well, I

prayed, and the inference is, nothing happened pastor. Is there a warranty on this thing because I think I have a refund coming.

He doesn't say how long to pray. He says just keep praying, and because guys, this is one of the most glorious promises in all the Word of God, to be completely honest with you. But so few believers are ever willing to lay hold of this promise because they will not pray with shameless persistence. There's an old Puritan saying that goes like this, pray until you pray. And I like that. What they're saying is, pray and keep praying until you're really praying. And the truth is, can I just say that I think as Christians, most of us don't get past the ground floor of prayer.

I know there are some here who have a gift of intercession and we love you and we need you in the body of Christ. But for the rest of us, we struggle to get past first base as it relates to praying and really praying. And too often, our prayer time resembles a hit and run accident rather than a real time of communion, and intimacy, and connection with the Father. I found a quote. Let me show you this on the screen. D.A. Carson wrote this, or said this, or, he said,

"If we pray until we pray, eventually, we come to delight in God's presence, to rest in His love, to cherish His will. In the Western world, we urgently need this advice, for many of us in our praying are like nasty little boys who ring front doorbells and run away before anyone answers." – D.A. Carson

"If we pray until we pray, eventually, we come to delight in God's presence, to rest in His love, to cherish His will. In the Western world, we urgently need this advice, for many of us in our praying are like nasty little boys who ring front doorbells and run away before anyone answers."

I thought, man, boom, he hit it, didn't he? Yeah, it's like, and that's what people are often saying when they come, and they say, well, I rang the doorbell and ran. It's really important, persistence in prayer, shameless persistence. Keep praying, pray until you break through. There have been some occasions in my life where I've prayed until I broke through and I can tell you that there's nothing better than breaking through. There's nothing better than meeting with the living God in a breakthrough of prayer. I wish I could, I wish I could stand up here and tell you that every time I pray, I do that, but I can't.

I wish I could. And I would say it, except I know that God would strike me dead where I stand. Finally, our third point that we're highlighting here, which is the object of prayer, and this is an important thing to remember because, the object of prayer, when we talk about the object of prayer, we're talking about the one

to whom we are praying, and that is really one of the most important points about prayer as Jesus goes on to explain.

If you look with me again in verse 11, He begins to ask, *“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?”*

He gives us these rather bizarre examples to highlight the difference between the character of our heavenly Father with our earthly human fathers. And we all know that earthly human fathers, and I'm one of them. We've been corrupted by the influence of sin. But even with that corruption, when our kids ask us for something that they need we still give them what they need. And His point is by comparison, here's God who is not corrupted by sin, who is perfect in compassion and kindness and love and wants the absolute best for you.

He says, listen, if you guys, are willing to do good things for your kids when they ask you, how much more can you expect God to bless you and give you good things? That's what He basically says in verse 13.

Now you'll notice that Luke says, records it as, *“How much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?”* This was something Jesus repeated on several occasions. He also repeated this idea on the Sermon on the Mount, and Matthew records it there. Let me put it on the screen for you from Matthew 7. He says,

Matthew 7:11 (ESV)

If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father, who is in heaven, give good things to those who ask him!

If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father, who is in heaven, give good things to those who ask him!

Whether He's giving us good things or giving us His Holy Spirit, it's all meant to reinforce the point that God responds differently than earthly human fathers, because, you see, He's never mean or bad tempered or in a hurry. He's certainly never cruel. Jesus wants to communicate to you and I that it is God's character that is our highest motivation to come to Him in prayer. Do you get that?

If I was going to go ask something of a cruel ruler, world ruler, and I had a very important request, but I knew that this individual almost always turned people

down and/or tortured them if he didn't happen to like them, I probably would be pretty hesitant about going before that individual and laying my request at his feet.

In fact, I might even say you know what, I don't think it's worth it. I think I'm just going to forget it. He's going to say no. I wonder how many people think that's like, that's what God is like. I'm not even going to ask because He's probably just going to say no. How sad is that?

What Jesus is trying to communicate to you and I is that the character of God, if we would but know that character, we would be drawn to the place of prayer. We would come running to the place of prayer.

We couldn't wait to get into His presence, to talk to Him about our needs if we really, truly understood His character, and his absolute love for you and I. Let me end with one final thought about prayer. And it comes from Acts chapter 9, and I'm going to put it on the screen for you.

Acts 9:11 (ESV)

And the Lord said to him, "Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying,"

And the Lord said to him, "Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying,"

These words that you're seeing there, and let's leave them up there for just a bit if we could. They were spoken to a man by the name of Ananias. Ananias lived in Damascus and he was being told to go and find a man named Saul of Tarsus and to pray for him. But what Ananias wasn't told was that God had met Paul on his way to Damascus and Paul had seen the glory of Jesus.

And that glory was such that Paul was blinded, knocked to the ground. But more than that, Jesus revealed Himself to Paul in that meeting, and He did it in such a way that Paul was now a broken and repentant man for the way he'd been living.

Instead of telling all that to Ananias, instead of giving him all this information about Paul, now let me explain to Ananias what's going on here. He gave one qualification for why Ananias should feel fine about going to do this, and he said this, *"for behold, he's praying."*

Now that's interesting, isn't it? Paul was praying. So during this time when he was blind, and we're told he didn't eat anything during that time, he was praying. So was that a big deal to Paul? I mean, I want to remind you of something about the apostle Paul before he was the apostle Paul. He was a very religious man, from the standpoint that he strictly observed the law of Moses.

We know that he was a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee, and as a Pharisee, he would have kept the regular Jewish calls to prayer three times a day. He would have gathered with other people to pray. So, yeah, Paul was no stranger to prayer and the demands of prayer. But here's the clincher.

Even though Paul was accustomed to spending time in prayer, he remained a stranger to the one to whom he prayed. Crazy, isn't it? You can pray and not know God. But something happened in Paul's life and that's when he met Jesus on the road to Damascus, and he was revealed to, it was revealed to him who Jesus was and on, and on, and on.

And that was when that religious man, Saul of Tarsus, that was when he died. And that was when the new man, the man that we would come to know as the apostle Paul, the broken man, the repentant man, the new man, was born. And it was about that new man that God said to Ananias, behold, he's praying. I got to tell you something, I get a lot of requests, and I bet you do, too. I get requests to say prayers for people or for situations, and they actually word it that way. They'll say, pastor Paul, would you say prayers for such and such?

And I'll be honest with you, I don't ever want to just say prayers, because saying prayers is empty religion. It's what Saul used to do. He did it because he had to do it. And I really want no part of it. As children of God, we don't say prayers. What we, and that's not what we need to do. What we need to do is break through. What we need to do, is we need to cry out from the depth of our souls to God. We need to commune with Him in intimacy and brokenness. And we need to pray until we pray. I'm done saying prayers. I got to be honest with you. I don't even like it when we get into a public gathering and they ask me to pray because I'm the pastor.

I really don't like that at all, because what they want me to do is perform a ministerial function. And I'll be honest with you, I hate it. It's like, you pray. Hey pastor, you want to say a prayer? No, you do it. Sometimes I'm bold enough to say that, other times I just go ahead and pray. But I don't like it, because I don't want to say prayers. It's not what I'm interested in doing. Prayer is more than that. It's not a religious exercise. It's either going to be the cry of

the heart, or it's going to be nothing you guys, because the cry of the heart is the cry of intimacy.

A son or a daughter to their Father that says, Lord, I need you. I need you now. And I'm not going to make it without you. I've got no time to say religious prayers, and frankly, neither do you. It's time for us to start crying out to God because I tell you something, I want to be a person about whom God says, behold, he is praying. It's the kind of man I want to be. I'm not there, but that's the kind of man I want to be. And I hope that's the kind of person you want to be.