

Let's Pray: How We Should Pray

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Date: 29 March 2014

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[0 : 00] On page 1042, Luke chapter 11, verse 1 to 13. One day Jesus was praying in a certain place.

When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, Lord, teach us to pray just as John taught his disciples. He said to them, when you pray, say, Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come.

Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us, and lead us not into temptation. Then he said to them, suppose one of you has a friend, and goes to him at midnight and says, Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.

Then the one inside answers, don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are in bed. I can't get up and give you anything. I tell you, though he will not get up and give him bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness, he will get up and give him as much as he needs.

So I say to you, ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you. For anyone who asks, receives, he who seeks, finds, and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

[1 : 23] Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will we give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will we give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in Heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask of him?

Thanks, Lucy.

Well, I haven't made a mistake. In case you're wondering, you're thinking, didn't we read this last week? Yes, we did. And we're using it simply as a basis, a launch pad, to help us understand prayer.

So we looked at it in depth last week. And next week we'll be focusing in particular on the prayer, Father Hallowed Be Your Name, and just following that through.

But today we're going to be looking at some parts from it and launching us into other texts to help us understand prayer. So let's pray again and ask for God's help.

[2 : 38] Father, we ask for your help in understanding your words. You say we can ask for the Holy Spirit and so we pray for your Holy Spirit that he may fill us afresh so that these words that we see on the page are not just ordinary words but life-changing words.

Words that enter our lives, as it were, and change us on the inside, helping us to understand who you are and our place before you.

So please encourage us. Father, please help us. And Father, please bless us. Amen. As we start, I want to ask a couple of questions.

When we pray, how long do you think we should pray for? So if I pray for one hour, is it more powerful than praying for just two minutes?

Or where should I pray? If I prayed in a church building with candles and some nice soft music, is that better than praying in the car with the radio blaring?

[4 : 13] Or what should I say in prayer? If I pray using complicated theological language and threw in a few these and thous, do you think it's better than praying like you would talk to a friend?

Well, when it comes to prayer, it's not about the words we use, it's not about the place we go to, or the length of time that it takes.

As one writer has put it, prayer is nothing more or nothing less than a child asking her father for help.

And that can take five hours or two seconds. It could happen in a church or in a car.

It could be carefully prepared or it could be a sudden outburst of emotion. So when the disciples in verse 1 came to Jesus and they said, Lord, teach us to pray.

[5 : 17] In verse 2, Jesus said to them, when you pray, say, Father. That word, Father, is the same word a child would use when they are calling out to their earthly father for help.

Dad! It's one of intimacy. It's a relationship. So here Jesus is inviting us to join him in relationship with his father.

And as we thought of earlier at the beginning, because of Jesus' death on the cross, we now have access to the father. So the relationship that Jesus had with his father is now our relationship.

Prayer is not some duty to perform. It is a relationship between a child and their father. So in verse 9 we read, So I say to you, Ask, ask the father, and it will be given to you.

Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened to you. You see, in prayer we are coming to a father who listens and who answers and who generously gives good gifts.

[6 : 35] Verse 13, If you then, though you are evil, and this there is talking about earthly fathers, if you though are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your father in heaven give?

So prayer is nothing more or nothing less than a child asking their heavenly father for help.

But how we ask is all important. And that's what we're going to consider. Two big things we're going to look at this morning.

First, we pray in dependence. We pray in dependence. When we pray, yes, we are talking to our father.

But look at what kind of father he is. We saw this last week. In chapter 10, verse 21, it says this. Chapter 10, verse 21. At that time, Jesus, full of joy, through the Holy Spirit said, I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth.

[7 : 53] Our father is the sovereign, all-powerful Lord. The fact that he is Lord means he is the creator of the universe.

He controls all that he has made and he rules over all that he has made. He is Lord of heaven and earth.

The disciples themselves learnt this very early on as they prayed. So keep your finger in Luke chapter 11 and jump to Acts chapter 4.

Acts chapter 4. Acts, of course, is the second book that Luke wrote.

And in Acts chapter 4, it's, Jesus has gone back to heaven. He has sent his spirit. And there's been a lot of persecution and struggle for the disciples.

[8 : 51] And they've been put in prison and they've just been released. So in Acts chapter 4, verse 23, we read this. On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them.

When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. So they're in a time of crisis, a time of difficulty, and immediately they turn to God in prayer.

And look what they say. Verse 24, Sovereign Lord, they said, you made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them.

Our Father is the Sovereign One. He rules over the entire universe. He controls the weather patterns when it rains and where it is sunny.

He upholds the forces of nature, the movements of the planets, the seas and the tides. And our Father rules over the actions of people.

[9 : 55] So as we read on in their prayer, verse 27, they remember the time when Jesus, where the plot was to get rid and kill Jesus. So verse 27, Indeed, Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant, Jesus, whom you anointed.

And they did kill him, but look what they say next. Verse 28, They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen.

God, our Father, decides what people do and he makes it a part of his plan. He controls the evil actions of people and he uses it for something good, in this case, the salvation of the world.

And not only that, our Father rules over the lives of every single person. So jump to Acts chapter 17. Acts chapter 17.

This isn't a prayer, but it's reminding us of who God is. Acts chapter 17, verse 24.

[11 : 21] The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth. That same phrase. And he doesn't live in temples built by hands.

You can't constrain him. You can't box him in. Verse 25, And he is not served by human hands as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else.

He is the all-sufficient one. And he sustains everyone else and everything else. But look at this, verse 26. From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth.

And he determines the time set for them and the exact places, the exact places where they should live. Our Father controls where you and I live and for how long we live.

He decides when we are born and whereabouts we were born. Our Father is Lord of heaven and earth.

[12 : 36] He rules over all things and all people. So when we come to pray, yes we are praying to our Father, but we come to our Father in dependence, recognising that I am not in charge, but he is.

knowing that I can't control life, but he does. We come to our Father in heaven who holds everything in his hands, the entire universe, every detail about our life is in his hands.

Nothing is outside of his sovereign rule. So we pray to our Father in dependence, but with confidence.

Go back to Luke chapter 11. You see, if our Father is Lord of heaven and earth, then we can pray with confidence.

We can say, verse 9, I say to you, ask and it will be given to you. Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be open to you.

[13 : 52] We are invited to come and ask our Father, who is all-powerful and all-controlling. So we pray with a confidence. Not a confidence in us, but a confidence in our Father.

We pray with this expectation that God can intervene into this world, into any situation, and he can intervene into our lives and into the lives of other people.

That's why we pray for rulers and authorities. That's why we pray for countries, because he can change the heart of a ruler. He can change the direction of a nation.

He can change the actions of evil people and he can turn it to good. He can change the lives of ordinary people so that they too become followers of Jesus and that they become like Jesus.

And he can change you and me. He can change our sinful habits so that we become the kind of people he wants us to be. You know, sometimes we don't pray because we don't really believe our Father is Lord of heaven and earth.

[15 : 14] Do you believe he's Lord of heaven and earth? That he's all powerful and all controlling? A writer put it like this.

We overestimate what we can do and we underestimate what God can do. We don't pray simply because we think it's all about what I have to do and somehow that God is just not able to do it.

We overestimate what we can do and we underestimate what God can do so we don't pray. But here we have this wonderful invitation.

That's what Luke 11 is about, this invitation to pray independence on an all-powerful, all-controlling God. we can come with confidence, we can come with an expectation that God who made the universe can intervene in our lives and in our world.

Verse 10, for everyone who asks receives and he who seeks finds and to him who knocks the door will be opened.

[16 : 30] So, prayer is nothing more than a child asking their father for help. We pray as children to our father independence but with confidence and expectation.

And second, we pray in humility. When we pray we are talking to our father but we don't come demanding and insisting from our father that we get everything that we ask for.

It doesn't work like that. Look how Jesus prayed. So, in verse 1 of chapter 11 we just get this little insight. One day Jesus was praying in a certain place.

Now, if you read through Luke, you'll discover that Jesus prays in all kinds of different ways. In Luke 5, 16, we read there that Jesus prayed on his own and in a solitary place.

In Luke 9, verse 28, we read that Jesus prayed up a mountain and with his disciples. Sometimes he prayed really short prayers, sometimes he was praying all night long.

[17 : 45] But the place of prayer and the length of prayer is not the issue. Look at Luke chapter 22. Jesus was a prayer.

And if Jesus needed to pray, how much more do we need to pray? And here in Luke 22, we see how Jesus prayed with humility.

Verse 39, this is just before his death. He's facing into his coming death. Chapter 22, verse 39, Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives.

That was one of the places he often went to pray. And his disciples followed him. On reaching the place, he said to them, pray that you will not fall into temptation. He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down, and prayed.

And here's what he prayed. Father, it's that same word again, this cry of help. Father, help. If you are willing, take this cup from me.

[19 : 02] Jesus is about to face into the most horrendous, the most difficult situation in his life. He is about to face the rejection of all his family and his friends.

He's about to face the insults and injustices of false accusations. He is about to face the physical torture, of beatings, of a crown of thorns being crushed in his head, being nailed to a cross.

And most of all, he is going to face the judgment of God for us, being abandoned by the Father for us.

This is physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual suffering in its ultimate and greatest form. and so he prays, verse 42, Father, help me.

If you are willing, take this cup from me. Do not let me have to go through this. He knows his Father is Lord of heaven and earth.

[20 : 10] He knows that his Father is all-powerful and all-controlling. He knows he can do anything, but look what he says in his prayer. Look at the last part of verse 42.

Yet not my will, but yours be done. Incredible. Jesus doesn't come demanding and insisting.

He doesn't whine and whinge. He's not stamping his feet in protest like a spoiled child. He humbly submits himself to his loving Father who always does what is right and best even in times of great suffering.

Not what I want, but what you want, Father. Not what pleases me, but what will please you, Father. Not what I demand, but what will bring glory and honour to you, Father.

you see, all of our prayers should be prayed with humility. Not demanding and insisting and telling God that he should do this and he should do that, but a simple not what I will, but what you will.

[21 : 35] Back in Luke 11, we are told what we can ask for and know that we will receive it. In verse 13, we are told how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.

Now why would he be telling us to ask for the Holy Spirit? What's the Spirit got to do with prayer? Well this is really important and I want us to follow this through in line with our Romans chapter 8 And we see here the reason or the purpose of asking for the Holy Spirit when we come to pray.

Romans 8 verse 26 In the same way the Spirit helps us in our weakness so it's talking about times of real need and struggle the Spirit helps us in our weakness we do not know what we ought to pray for but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express and he that's the Father who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit because the Spirit intercedes for the saints people like you and me in accordance with God's will to pray and they don't know what we ought to pray for have you ever been in that time in that experience the situation is just so big it seems to be so out of control we cannot put a finger on what the problem is we are just overwhelmed with everything that is going on in our lives and all around us and we don't know what to pray for we don't even know where to begin.

And at that moment, within our hearts, it's almost as if it comes out in groans and agonies of cry or perhaps a shout of frustration. At that moment, verse 26, the Spirit himself intercedes for us.

It's literally saying to us, he joins with us. The Spirit comes alongside us. And he begins to pray for us on our behalf what is good and what is right.

[24 : 32] Because he knows our hearts, he knows what we need right then in our lives and he prays for that, what is good and right. But there's more than that.

You see, even if we do pray, sometimes in those moments of crisis and difficulty and struggle, sometimes what we do pray, we can even pray for the wrong thing.

Or we even get our prayers in the wrong way. But the Spirit takes those prayers. Look at verse 27, the end of verse 27. And the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.

It's telling us that he takes our prayers, even the wrong prayers that we say. But he knows the motive.

He knows the heart. He knows that we're genuine. He knows that we want what's right and good. And he takes our prayers, even the wrong ones, and he translates them.

[25 : 35] He brings them to the Father so that the prayers we pray are the right prayers. And they are according to God's good and perfect will.

Isn't that incredible? The Spirit comes alongside, joins with us, and prays what we should pray, and even takes our wrong prayers and makes them the right kind of prayer so that they are in line with God's will.

This is a prayer of humility. That is saying, I don't always know what is God's will. I don't know what is right or best in this situation or in my life or in their life, but the Spirit does.

And because the Spirit knows what the Father wants and what the Father wills, the Spirit will always pray what the Father wants and what the Father wills.

So that's why we come in humility and we pray with that simple request for the Holy Spirit. And he will pour out that Holy Spirit generously upon us so that all of our prayers are according to God's good and perfect will.

[26 : 55] Now that means we don't always get what we ask for or what we want. Our Father doesn't hand out everything and anything that we say we want.

But it does mean that he will always give to us what is good and right and best for us. He will always give what is according to his good and perfect will.

He knows his children. He knows what we need. And he will give us and not withhold what we need. And so we pray in humility.

But we also pray continually. Back in Luke 11 as Jesus taught his disciples to pray he says to them in chapter 11 verse 9 I say to you ask and it will be given seek and you will find knock and the door will be opened.

In reading through this and studying it it became clear that this is a present continuous asking.

[28 : 10] It's not just a one off ask and then forget about it and never ask again. In other words it's an encouragement to us to keep on praying and not give up.

We continually ask we continually seek we continually knock we continually speak to our Father. You see as we ask sometimes the answer might be simply this not yet my child not yet.

And so we pray continually trusting in God's timing. Our Father will always give us what is good when it is right.

Always gives us what is good when it is right. And so sometimes our experience will be like this we pray for something and we receive it right now.

We receive it straight away. We pray for an end to some kind of suffering or difficulty in our lives. We pray for God to do a work in somebody's life and God intervenes and it happens.

[29 : 24] The suffering ends. The person becomes a Christian. We pray for a change in a circumstance and God works to bring something different about. He answers.

He does it. But sometimes what we ask for the answer will be not yet it will come later.

Tim Chester in his book *You Can Pray* I recommend it to you as a very easy read.

He says this about waiting and praying continually. God is waiting until the time is right.

when you pray for justice the ultimate answer may be the final judgment. When you pray for peace the ultimate answer may be the reign of the Lord Jesus.

[30 : 28] When you pray for health and healing the ultimate answer may be your resurrection body. When you pray for joy the ultimate answer may be the wedding feast of the Lamb.

And when you pray for a sense of God's presence the ultimate answer may be the day when heaven comes to earth and a loud voice from the throne says look God's dwelling is now among the people and he will dwell with them they will be his people and God himself will be with them and be their gods.

we pray continually because we can be assured that God will always give us what is good when it is right and when it is best for us.

Verse 10 For everyone who asks receives and he who seeks finds and to him who knocks the door will be opened.

we are invited to come to a father as children who pray to their father asking for help he gives good gifts but we come to him with dependence he is the sovereign lord of heaven and earth he is the one with all power who controls all things we can come with confidence with an expectancy that he can intervene into this world and into our lives but we pray with humility not what I want but what you want what will bring you glory what is best for you and what will be best for me and we do not give up in our prayer because he will always give what is good when it is right let us pray our father god forgive us for the times where we overestimate what we can do and we underestimate what you can do for you are lord of heaven and earth all power and all authority belongs to you you control all things you are in charge of our own lives so teach us to come and pray in confidence but father help us to get our relationship with you right help us that we might come in humility that every prayer will be not what I want but what you will and what you desire change us so that we fit in with your purposes and your plans and thank you that all of our prayers prayers whether we pray once or pray for many many years you will answer and you will give all that is good and right thank you that we can come to you as father thank you that you give us help when we ask and help us that we may go on talking to you through this week in jesus name we pray amen do need to care where you your train or you