

**Text:** Luke 11:1-4

**Title:** The Lord's School of Prayer: How to Pray

**Truth:** Jesus teaches us God-centered, spiritually-focused prayer.

**Date/Location:** June 16, 2024 at FBC

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## Introduction

The Lord gives plenty of practical instruction about prayer to His disciples by *demonstrating* it. Then, in response to a question, He teaches directly about it. Jesus gave more details in the Sermon on the Mount, recorded in Matthew. 6:5-8. The Lord there exhorted us to pray not for the recognition of others lest we lose reward. Instead, we are to pray privately and know that God will reward because He sees our secret prayer. We are not to use empty words with repetition because this will not induce God to hear. Recognize that God already knows our needs before we pray.

Also, the Lord Jesus told the disciples to “pray like this” or to pray “in this manner.” He is not giving a formula that you must memorize and recite. He gives what I call *a model prayer*. Most would call it “the” model prayer, and I see that, but I want to ensure you understand this is not “THE” only way to pray or “THE” only words to use when you pray. Matthew 6:5-10 disabuses us of the notion that this prayer is to be used rotely (machine like). Instead, it is a model for us.

Here is an overview of Luke 11:1-4.

- A. The Lord regularly prayed, v. 1. As has been said a million times, if the perfect Lord Jesus had to pray, then we need to pray. For spiritual life, prayer is as essential as breathing and drinking are to physical life. It is sustaining, foundational, life-changing, purifying. For the Lord Jesus, it had nothing to do with purification as He was already perfectly pure. But it represented His human dependence upon the Father, and it was communion, fellowship, connection, and communication with the Father. We need all of it.
- B. One of the disciples desired to pray, and he wanted to do so in a correct manner. He asked Jesus to teach on prayer. Imagine for a minute his mindset and his question. Maybe he was asking how to pray in a way that is not mere recital of a memorized prayer. How

do we pray “extemporaneously” like Jesus without repeating what the rabbis told us to say? How can our prayer be meaningful and not rote? How to pray with impact, effect, meaning? If you are a Christian, those questions will resonate with your heart. He wanted to pray like Jesus!

Let us examine ourselves to see if we have a similar desire to this disciple.

- C. Is Jesus teaching us *how* to pray, or teach us *to* pray? I take it that the questioner is asking about the manner and content of prayer, not the fact of prayer to begin with. Yet, we must learn *to* pray before it is ever going to matter to us *how* we pray.
- D. We learn that John the Baptist had also taught his disciples to pray. We do not know the content of his teaching on prayer, but we can be certain that he was a man very experienced in prayer to God for many years. He had some personal experience and knowledge of God to pass on to his listeners. So did Jesus.
- E. Then Jesus gave His model prayer. We understand this to be a template, a general pattern, a prototype, an outline, a guide. You can pray it exactly as written—after all, what could be wrong with it coming from the Lord’s mouth as it did? Whether or not you use the exact words, you must use the *ideas* in it.

And now, about some of the details about the prayer itself.

## **I. Address God Reverently, v. 2a**

- A. The prayer opens with an address to “Father.” This word is powerful—it indicates both reverence and love, exaltation, and trust. It indicates a familial relationship, that you are a child of God.

Many copies of Luke do not include “our” Father. It is in the original text penned by Matthew in his gospel at 6:9. Setting aside the textual transmission issue, “our” Father is not necessary in every prayer. How about “Father” or “my Father” or “Great God” or “God in heaven” or “God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” or other variations that demonstrate true reverence.

- B. Hallowed – sanctified, set apart, recognized with the office or position that He really does hold. For those praying especially, but also that God would be held in high and holy regard by all the world.
- C. A note about the verbs in the prayer: they appear in a “command” or “let it be this way” style. What is implied is a “May it be” or “Please” preceding the verb (please give, please forgive, please help us against temptation). We do not order God around!

## **II. Focus on God’s Work in the World, v. 2b**

- A. Not your own work! What God is doing should be the ultimate concern of your prayer life, and how you are involved in that.
- B. Kingdom of God. This is not the generic “rule of God” in one’s heart, in the church, nor even God’s sovereignty over all things which is always operational. Rather, it is a petition that the long-awaited kingdom promised in the Old Testament prophets would come to pass. This will occur when Jesus returns to the earth to rule the entire world.
- C. When the Kingdom comes, God’s will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven, to a nearly perfect extent. In heaven, there is no disobedience, no grumbling, no rebellion, and God’s will is done with perfect faith and love. In the kingdom on earth, not everyone’s heart will be right before God, but there will at least be external conformity to the King of kings. Then in the eternal state God will remove all those whose hearts are not aligned with His, and what is left will be perfect—the will of God will be done!
- D. Since we are kingdom citizens-in-waiting, we can implement God’s will here and now in our lives. We need not wait for the kingdom to come globally to have a local place where God’s will is done. We have a role to play, a way to live, daily decisions to make that will make our lives and homes more in concert with God’s kingdom.

## **III. Demonstrate Dependence on God for Sustenance, v. 3**

- A. Start prayer with a focus on God. Then, move to your situation. And do not forget the spiritual aspect of your life when you do so!

- B. God’s power and providence are not just for the future kingdom. They are for today as well.
- C. If you can pray to God for something as basic as food—and Jesus urges that upon us—then every area of real necessity to do the will of God is subject matter for prayer. This includes everything needed for life like food and drink, clothing and shelter, family, and work. Our bread is to be used for sustenance to do the will of God.
- D. If you are asking God for something, then are you relying on your self? I think not! You are demonstrating a recognition that you depend on God’s provision every single day. God most usually answers this prayer through your labor. But notice that this means He gave you the health, the mind, the strength, the wisdom, and all other resources required to do that work. You err if you are a conservative and you say, “I built that...by myself.” You also err if you are a progressive leftist and you say, “You did not build that...except with the help of others (labor, slaves, etc.)” No, actually, “You did not build that apart from the help of **God.**”

#### IV. Seek Forgiveness for Sins, v. 4a

- A. “Forgive me.” “For what?” Asking for forgiveness implies confession as well. In fact, the Scripture does not instruct us in 1 John 1:9 to ask for, much less beg for, forgiveness. God is more than willing to grant forgiveness upon our confession of sins based on the sacrifice of Jesus. The Lord’s model prayer here shows us that it is OK to also request forgiveness. God understands the disposition of the heart that genuinely asks forgiveness.
- B. Sins are spiritual debts, not financial debts. If you have financial debts, pay them. A person who borrows and does not repay as agreed is morally in the wrong--either in the initiation of the loan, or in the (non)payment of it, or in both.
- C. Ensure that you too are forgiving those who wrong you. If you say this in prayer, you had better *mean* it in prayer!
- D. God grants forgiveness purely based on His grace. It is not earned by forgiving others. Those who understand the grace of God will be willing to forgive others; and those who do not forgive others demonstrate they do not know the grace of God, nor appreciate it.

Your forgiveness toward others is on the same basis upon which you seek it from God—grace.

## **V. Ask for Help Against Temptation and Sin, v. 4b**

- A. Be solid in your belief that God does not tempt anyone to sin. He does permit us to encounter situations that test us. We ought to be savvy enough to know that when such situations arise, we are vulnerable, and we are spiritual enough to know that we do not want to fall sin. We too easily do that.
- B. Recognizing all that, we ask God to providentially guide us through life so that our vulnerabilities are minimized, so that we make good choices, so that we think straight. God, please do not hand us over to our own uncleanness, to vile passions, and to our reprobate minds.
- C. Instead of letting us go down that road, Christians ask that God would lead us in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake (Psalm 23:3). We want that all the time; certainly, far more than we fail and go down the path of temptation and sin.
- D. The last phrase of the prayer (missing in some copies of Luke, but present in Matthew 6:10) is a request to deliver us from the evil one. He desires to trouble us, devour us (1 Peter 5:8), accuse us (Rev. 12:10), mislead us, lie to us, harm us, even kill us, or sift us like wheat (Luke 22:31). God can protect us from the devil's schemes. Eventually this will become a non-issue because God will finally crush Satan into permanent submission and render him inoperative (Rom. 16:20).

## **Application and Conclusion**

- A. The model prayer, or any prayer for that matter that is patterned after it, is of no value if the heart of the person praying it is not walking with God. "If I cherish iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (loose quotation of Psalm 66:18).
- B. The question and the Lord's answer concern private, individual prayer. The Lord is not talking about public prayer offered in a gathered worship service. That topic is addressed elsewhere in Scripture (1 Cor. 11:4-13, 14:13-17; 1 Thess. 5:17, 5:25; 1 Tim. 2:1-

8). Paul in particular gives reports about the content of his prayers. I do not believe those things violate the Lord's prohibition about public prayer in Matthew 6 because Paul is not giving the prayer report to seek praise from people as the Pharisees were doing. He is giving the report to edify and encourage the church. Those who pray publicly in church also must pray with similar motivation. We also see examples of the first church praying together in Acts 1:14, 4:24-31, 12:12, 13:3, 14:23, 20:36, 21:5, 27:29.

- C. The model prayer gives us a template, an outline if you will, that shows our focus in all things it to be heavenward—toward God as holy Father, toward God's kingdom and will, toward God's provision, toward God's mercy in forgiveness, with respect to our similar godly attitude toward others, and toward holiness in our conduct.
- D. The model prayer does not accomplish its design if we do not pray very much or often.

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