



THE GOSPEL OF
Luke

SESSION OBJECTIVE: LUKE 11:1-13

To understand better how to pray.

A Crash Course in Prayer

Prayer is an interesting practice. Some surveys showed recently that an upwards of 71% of Americans pray with some sort of regularity. It even revealed that some self-described atheists and agnostics occasionally recite the Lord's Prayer. Prayer straddles across a variety of not only denominations but entire religions. And yet still, many people if they were asked would not be confident in showing someone else how to pray.

In Luke chapter 11, we get a simple layout for how to pray. Jesus was committed to prayer, and spent time regularly praying off on His own. In the beginning part of this chapter, while Jesus is "praying in a certain place," one of his disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples" (Lk. 11:1). This moves Jesus to begin teaching the disciples how to pray through what is commonly referred to as the Lord's Prayer, although it might seem a little bit different to you than what you normally are used to hearing, presumably because... it is?

Notable Differences

The way in which the Lord's Prayer is spelled out in Luke's Gospel is shorter and more abbreviated than the more often read Matthew version of it (Matthew 6:7-13). Beyond that, the place in the Gospel narrative in which the Lord's Prayer occurs is different in Luke than it is in Matthew. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus shares the Lord's Prayer during the Sermon on the Mount, but here in Luke's Gospel, Jesus shares it while they are en route to Jerusalem while Jesus is praying at an undisclosed location. There are a few reasons that have

been offered by various scholars as to why this might be the case. Some argue that Luke rearranges the details of the prayer to make it fit more cohesively into his narrative. However, given the emphasis on his careful research into the stories he has compiled into this Gospel (Lk. 1:1-4), it seems unlikely that he would take such liberties simply for a “better flow” in his writings. Others have suggested that the differences between the prayer are due to differences in oral traditions that both Luke and Matthew borrowed from. However, if we believe the Bible’s own claims along the early church’s conviction that the Bible is perfect, and that behind every human author is the Holy Spirit, this seems less convincing too.

The simplest and most convincing explanation for the notable differences between Matthew’s account of the Lord’s Prayer and Luke’s account of it can actually be explained by the difference in location, in that it is likely that Luke’s account recalls a different offering of the Lord’s Prayer than Matthew’s does. It is not unreasonable to believe that Jesus taught His disciples how to pray at various time. Though the wording is slightly shortened, all of the main elements are in tact, and thus this prayer can be seen as a sort of pattern for all Christian prayer. There is nothing wrong with reciting the Lord’s Prayer (in fact, sometimes it can be quite helpful), but it is likely that this prayer was not meant to be recited as much as it was to pattern the Christian prayer properly. Below are quick breakdowns of some of the important aspects of it.

GOD, OUR FATHER

Christian prayer is to be understood from the context of a Father and child relationship. When we petition God, we do so not as a ruler or king (both of which adequately describe Him to be sure), but as a benevolent and loving Father. This doesn’t mean we don’t recognize Him as a king or ruler, because the next line of prayer calls upon His “kingdom” (Lk. 11:2), but the primary type of relationship that Christian prayer hinges on is the Father and child relationship. The admission of God as a Father also amplifies a Trinitarian conviction; rightly recognizing God as Father also implicitly recognizes the Bible’s claims that God is Son and Spirit.

HOLY

Christian prayer is also established on the holiness of God. Jesus says, “Hallowed be Your Name” (Lk. 11:2). This is a Greek word (ἁγιάζω) that means “to separate, consecrate, or sanctify.” In other words, when we pray, we are to acknowledge the holiness of God, which is a defining characteristic of Him throughout the Old Testament (Lev. 11:44, 21:8; Ps. 99:1-3). The command to sanctify God’s name is explicit in Leviticus 22:32: “And you shall not profane my holy name, that I may be sanctified among the people of Israel. I am the LORD who sanctifies you.” It’s also mentioned in Isaiah 29:23 and Ezekiel 36:23.

GOD’S WILL

Christian prayer should also yield itself to the will of God. Jesus prays, “Your kingdom come” (Lk. 11:2). This is to ask God to establish His will and world economy on the earth in place of our own. This is to ask for God to fulfill what the prophet Zechariah spoke in Zechariah 14:9: “And the LORD will be king over all the earth. On that day the LORD will be one and his name one.” Prayer is never to demand God to grant us our own will, but to align our will with His such that our desires begin to reflect His desires.

PROVISION

Christian prayer is also a petition to God for provision. Jesus prays, “Give us each day our daily bread” (Lk. 11:3). Some of the early fathers of the church such as Origen and Tertullian spiritualized this into meaning the bread of the Eucharist or the Word of God, but this misses the context in which Jesus is praying this prayer. They are traveling ministers in need of hospitality to survive. However, God works through human agency and provides through our obedience to be hospitable. When we pray, we should not pray for people to be hospitable, but for simply God to provide us what we need. The same is true, in a different context, of healing. If we pray for healing, and a person goes to the hospital and receives treatment and is healed, we can rightly

thank God for healing through the agency of modern medicine. Ultimately, all life and breath comes from Him (Is. 42:5).

FORGIVENESS

Christian prayer also should focus on forgiveness. Jesus prays in verse 4, “and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us.” This line of the prayer ultimately demonstrates that Jesus is teaching us how to pray, but is not necessarily praying this prayer, for Jesus is sinless and is not in need of forgiveness. However, for the Christian, we are to ask for forgiveness in a manner that is directly correlated to the forgiveness we dispense to others who have sinned against us. This does not mean that God’s forgiveness of sin is ultimately tied to our willingness to forgive others, for God forgives based on His own merits and will (Eph. 1:7). Rather, it means that the way in which we have been completely forgiven should motivate the way we forgive other people. Prayer forces us to consider how we forgive others.

PROTECTION

The final element of Christian prayer in Luke’s account of the Lord’s Prayer is God’s protection. Jesus says, “And lead us not into temptation” (Lk. 11:4). When we pray, we are to ask God to protect us from temptation, and from the schemes of the evil one (Matt. 6:13).

PERSISTENCE

Verses 5 through 13 include an illustration of sorts to describe the providence and kindness of God. Jesus argues that if you were to show up in the middle of the night to a friend’s house in need of provisions, your friend will eventually wake up and give you what you need if you keep knocking on his door (Lk. 11:8). In the same way, when we pray, we should pray persistently. Jesus says, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you” (Lk. 11:9). The verbal tense of each of these verbs (ask, seek, knock) indicates that we should “ask, and keep on asking; seek, and keep on seeking; knock, and keep on knocking.” His words convey a persistent approach to prayer. If God is truly our Heavenly Father (Lk. 11:2), He must be better than our worldly friends and family; “how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him” (Lk. 11:13). Christian prayer, then, should be persistent, trusting that our loving Father is kind and will hear and respond.

What About Now?

The main takeaway from this passage is the importance of forming our prayers around the elements Jesus gives to us, and not our own opinions. When we pray, we ought to pray in the way that Jesus teaches. Our prayers need not be verbatim to this passage (nor the one in Matthew’s Gospel), but they *should* include at least some of the basic emphases of these prayers each time we pray.

Study Questions

Day One

1. Read Luke 11:1. Where was Jesus at and what was He doing? What did one of His disciples ask Him?

2. Read Luke 11:2. What does this verse teach us about prayer?

Day Two

1. Read Luke 11:3. What does this verse teach us about prayer?

2. Read Luke 11:4. What does this verse teach us about prayer?

Day Three

1. Read Luke 11:5-8. What does Jesus' parable illustrate about the nature of persistent asking?

2. Read Luke 11:9-10. What does Jesus say we should continue to do? Why?

Day Four

1. Read Luke 11:11-12. What does this example illustrate?

2. Read Luke 11:13. What is the Father compared to, and what is the point of the example?

Week 42 Discussion: Prayer

The main theme throughout this passage is prayer. Talk as a group about the different aspects of Christian prayer that are present in Jesus' teaching. What aspects do you struggle with? What aspects do you find yourself regularly including in your prayers?

1. Icebreaker: Do you value prayer? If so, how often do you pray?
2. Which of these aspects of Jesus' prayer (the Fatherhood of God, holiness, God's will, forgiveness, etc.) do you find yourself including the most in your prayers?
3. Which of these aspects of Jesus' prayer (the Fatherhood of God, holiness, God's will, forgiveness, etc.) do you find yourself including the least in your prayers?
4. At what time of day do you find yourself most often praying? Why?
5. As a group, recite the Lord's Prayer in Luke 11:2-4 together. Now, recite the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13 together. What differences stand out to you the most?

Takeaways:

1. Jesus teaches us what Christian prayer should include.
2. Jesus teaches us that the persistence in prayer is important.