

Owning a Faith That Matters

Session 4

February 11, 2024

**Praying Faith**

**The Point:** Faith looks to God to provide what we need.

**Session Passage:** Luke 11:1-13

**Luke 11:1-4**

**Connection to The Point:** Jesus invites us to pray and pray as an expression of faith and trust.

**He Jesus was praying** (v. 1). Prayer is one of Luke's favorite themes. Only Luke recorded that Jesus prayed at His baptism (3:21) and all night before choosing the Twelve (6:12). Additionally, only Luke noted that Jesus prayed before He questioned His disciples regarding His identity (9:18) and climbed a mountain to pray at the time of His transfiguration (vv. 28-29). Prayer constituted a vital, habitual part of Jesus's life (5:16). Thus, Luke viewed prayer as essential and indispensable for Jesus's followers. In Luke 11:1-13 he recorded the Model Prayer, Jesus's response to His disciples' request that He teach them to pray (vv. 1-4); a parable encouraging prayer (vv. 5-8); and Jesus's encouragement to persist in prayer (vv. 9-13).

**"Lord, teach us to pray"** (v. 1). This request came from an unnamed disciple. Hearing Jesus pray motivated His disciples to learn about prayer. He taught them by both words and example.

**As John also taught his disciples** (v. 1). Jesus's disciples apparently knew John the Baptist had taught his disciples to pray. In fact, certain of these men had followed John before they became Jesus's disciples (John 1:35-40). Some Bible scholars believe John's followers had a distinctive prayer, so Jesus's disciples were requesting Him to teach them a prayer by which they could be identified as Jesus's followers.

**Whenever you ye pray, say** (v. 2). This introduction suggests this prayer should substantially be repeated. However, Matthew introduced the prayer with Jesus's words, "You should pray like this This, then, is how you should pray After this manner therefore pray ye" (Matt. 6:9), focusing on the prayer as more of a pattern from which to learn principles of prayer. In any case Jesus never intended prayer to be a mechanical or ritual performance. In His teachings preceding the Model Prayer, Matthew reported that Jesus warned against empty words and formalism in prayer (vv. 5-8).

**Father** (v. 2). This designation for God introduces the Model Prayer as exclusively a believer's or disciple's prayer. It assumes those who pray it have experienced new birth into God's family and therefore enjoy the privilege of addressing God as Father (Gal. 4:4-7). The early church understood this to be a disciple's prayer—new believers would pray it immediately after being baptized and participating in the Lord's Supper for the first time. To address God as Father suggests an intimate conversation between persons who love and trust one another. It also indicates that prayer is not a dialogue between equals. This is clear by the immediate reference to God as holy or set apart from humans.

**Your name be honored as holy, Hallowed be thy, your name** (v. 2). The first part of the Model Prayer focuses on God (v. 2), the second part on believers (vv. 3-4). Before we request anything for ourselves, God and the reverence due Him come first. Only when we give God the first place He deserves will other things take their proper places. In biblical thought a person's name represented far more than a moniker by which to address the individual. Rather it signified a person's character and reputation. God's holiness includes His perfect moral purity. This petition expresses the desire to recognize and serve God in His Self-revelation as the Holy One (see Isa. 6:1-8). It is a prayer that God receive the honor and praise rightfully belonging to Him. While we can honor God through our own prayers and actions, this appeal will not fully be fulfilled until the end of history and the consummation of His kingdom.

**Your Thy kingdom come** (v. 2). *Kingdom* in the Scripture typically refers to someone's reign or rule rather than to the territory controlled. Jesus proclaimed God's kingdom as both a present reality and a future hope. Although the kingdom has already come in Jesus's earthly ministry, it also awaits the final consummation when Jesus returns. Believers long and pray for this final consummation (see Rom. 8:23). The petition for God's kingdom to come will be fulfilled by Him, not by human effort. The two requests of Luke 11:2 provide an example of synonymous parallelism, a literary feature where the second line repeats the thought of the first line using different words.

**Give us each day by day our daily bread** (v. 3). The prayer's focus shifts from the Father to His children. Possible meanings of *daily bread* are "the bread necessary for living" or "the bread that suffices for each day." Bread reflects a literary device in which a part of something substitutes for the whole. Thus the request is for the basic necessities of life, not just bread. This prayer is not based on our own merit but on God's grace in providing for our needs. It calls to mind God's provision of manna for His people in the wilderness (Ex. 16:11-21). The Israelites were to gather only enough for each day's needs. This encourages us not to worry about the unknown future but to trust God one day at a time.

**Forgive us our sins** (v. 4). The word translated *sins* means "missing the mark." The New Testament defines sin against the backdrop of Jesus as the standard for righteousness (Heb. 12:2). We all miss that mark of purity and perfection. We think and act in ways we shouldn't and fail to think and act in ways we should. The term rendered *forgive* basically means "to send away." God provided a visual of His forgiveness or sending away of sins with the live goat or scapegoat on the Day of Atonement. Aaron confessed all the Israelites' sins over a live goat that was then sent away into the wilderness (Lev. 16:20-22). Jesus recognized our daily need to confess our sins and to experience God's forgiveness (see 1 John 1:9). The context of the Model Prayer is a family setting in which God's children confess sins, not to become or remain part of His family but in order that nothing should spoil our fellowship with Him.

**For we ourselves also forgive everyone in debt to us, For we also forgive everyone who sins against us, For we also forgive every one that is indebted to us** (v. 4). This does not turn praying for forgiveness into a business transaction in which we forgive others in order for God to forgive us. We receive God's forgiveness because of His grace. However, an attitude of humility and sincerity is required for receiving that forgiveness. That attitude includes the willingness to forgive others. Among the Jews, debt became a common analogy for sin. Luke used *sins* and *debt* interchangeably to make his meaning clear to Gentile readers (see Matt. 6:12).

**And do not bring us lead us not into temptation** (v. 4). *Temptation* in this context refers to anything that might lead us into wrongdoing or unfaithfulness. *Do not bring Lead us not* conveys the idea of not allowing us to enter into temptation rather than of not causing us to enter into temptation (see Jas. 1:13). Perhaps the intent might be expressed best as "keep us from yielding to temptation."

#### **Luke 11:5-10**

**Connection to The Point:** Faith asks—and keeps asking—trusting that God will answer.

**He Jesus also said to them** (v. 5). Luke followed the Model Prayer with Jesus's parable about being boldly persistent in prayer.

**Goes unto him at midnight** (v. 5). In this parable a person whose pantry is bare knocks on a friend's door at midnight requesting the loan of some bread to feed a hungry traveler who has just arrived. The midnight timing of the request greatly inconvenienced the householder from whom the person wished to borrow bread.

**Three loaves of bread** (v. 5). The request for bread ties the parable neatly to the petition in the Model Prayer (see v. 3). Three loaves most likely constituted the amount needed for a meal. Bread was typically baked in the home, and only enough for the day's needs was baked at a time to prevent it from becoming stale. Observe two things about the

request. First, a friendship existed between the two householders. Second, the request for bread was not a selfish appeal.

**“I don’t have anything have no food to offer him” I have nothing to set before him** (v. 6). People in biblical times regarded hospitality as a sacred duty everyone was expected to observe. Even strangers were to be treated hospitably (Heb. 13:2). Thus, the friend would be dishonored if he could not set food before the traveler who had arrived at his house.

**“Don’t bother me!” Trouble me not** (v. 7). The neighbor demonstrated his aggravation at being disturbed by not returning the greeting “friend.”

**“The door is already locked, and my children and I have gone to are in bed.” The door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed** (v. 7). To understand this parable, we need some understanding of the first-century world in biblical Palestine. First, no one would knock on a door that was already shut unless he was experiencing a crucial need. A householder opened his door in the morning, and it remained open all day. A shut door served as a clear sign that the householder did not want to be disturbed. Furthermore, houses generally consisted of only one room. Families were typically large. Family members slept on mats and lay close together for warmth. Additionally, animals the family owned were brought into that room at night. No wonder the householder did not want to arise and answer the knock! To do so would disturb the entire sleeping household.

**He won’t get up and give him anything because he is his friend He will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship He will not rise and give him, because he is his friend** (v. 8). This householder refused to act from a motive of concern for his friend’s need.

**Because of his friend’s shameless boldness Because of your shameless audacity Because of his importunity** (v. 8). The Greek word rendered *shameless boldness audacity importunity* also can be translated “persistence.” The requestor’s shameless boldness demonstrated in persistent knocking compelled the sleeping householder to respond and meet his friend’s needs. In contrast to the sleeping householder, God is not a reluctant giver. Neither are we forcing His hand through our perseverance. Nevertheless, this fact does not exempt us from intensity and persistence in prayer. The passion with which we pray demonstrates the reality and sincerity of our desires.

**Ask . . . Seek . . . Knock** (v. 9). The form of these three Greek verbs indicates continuing action. We could render Jesus’s instruction, “Keep on asking . . . , keep on seeking . . . , keep on knocking.” Repeatedly admit your need and depend on the Father’s love and goodness. The concept *seek* appears in the Old Testament in the context of seeking God (Deut. 4:29; Isa. 55:6; Amos 5:4). To seek God’s face means to pray (see 2 Chron. 7:12-14). Verse 9 provides an example of synonymous parallelism, a literary device in which the same basic thought is repeated in three different ways. Furthermore, the number three often signifies completeness in biblical thought. Thus, Jesus’s repetition of one teaching with three phrases of similar meaning underlines the importance of persistence in prayer.

**Knock, and the door will be opened to you and it shall be opened unto you** (v. 9). This reference to persistent knocking for the door to be opened neatly ties the instruction to the preceding parable where continuous knocking achieved the desired results.

**Everyone who asks receives; and the one who seeks finds;, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened Every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened** (v. 10). In this context the reference to *everyone* presupposes the one praying has a relationship of friendship with God. It also presumes the request originates from a real need, not from false motives. Again, the threefold repetition of phrases with similar meaning signifies the importance of persistent prayer. Jesus’s teaching assumes our prayers will be in accordance with God’s will. He also presumed our prayers will include our readiness to accept His will if it differs from

our desires even as His own prayers did (see Luke 22:42). Additionally, Jesus's words do not mean every request will be answered the way we want. Rather, our perseverance will be rewarded with an answer that God in His wisdom and love knows is best for us.

### **Luke 11:11-13**

**Connection to The Point:** Trust God to answer out of His goodness.

**Fathers . . . Son . . . father** (v. 11). In verses 11-13 Jesus employed a literary device of arguing from the lesser to the greater to emphasize God's nature as a gracious giver. In this case, since the contents of verses 11-12 are true, how much more are the contents of verse 13 true! If imperfect human parents provide for their children's basic needs, how much more our perfect, loving heavenly Father can be trusted to meet the genuine needs of His children. With the use of the terms *fathers* and *son* Jesus indicated a personal relationship existed between the two individuals involved. They belonged to the same family.

**Fish . . . snake serpent** (v. 11). A fish and a snake serpent could look similar in appearance. A snake or serpent was a well-known symbol for evil. The Greek term was used figuratively of a sly, malicious person. No human father of any worth would meet his child's request for food with something that would frighten or harm the child.

**Egg . . . scorpion** (v. 12). *Scorpion* is a transliteration (substituting English letters for the equivalent Greek letters) of the Greek word. This arachnid was known for its venom and sting in its narrow segmented tail. The Lord protected His people from scorpions as they wandered in the wilderness (Deut. 8:15). Later the term applied to an insidious instrument with lashes and spikes King Rehoboam used to enforce his policies. (See 1 Kings 12:11 and 14, "barbed whips" is literally *scorpions*.) A scorpion with its tail and claws rolled up resembles an egg in appearance. A scorpion was also a well-known symbol for evil in first-century biblical Palestine. No decent human father would respond to his child's request for nourishment with a dangerous, stinging scorpion.

**If you then, who though you are evil If ye then, being evil** (v. 13). The word rendered *evil* can be used of either a bad nature or condition. It can apply in a physical sense to someone who is diseased or blind. It can be applied in an ethical sense to someone who is wicked. The term in Luke 11:13 differs from another major Greek word for evil. The term for *evil* in Luke 11:13 possesses a stronger meaning, whereas the other major term has a wider meaning. Of the two words, the word in verse 13 is the one applied to Satan and could be rendered "the malignant one." The term also appears in the Model Prayer in Matthew 6:13., which has been translated "the evil one." John used the Greek word twice in 1 John 3:12 to depict Cain as both a person who performed evil deeds (murdered his brother) as well as being one who belonged to "the evil that wicked one."

**Know how to give good gifts** (v. 13). In contrast to God, we are all evil sinners. We cannot begin to compare our love evidenced in gift giving with God's love demonstrated in giving the greatest gift of all—His Son (John 3:16; 1 John 4:9). Yet most parents know how to give their children what they need.

**How much more will the heavenly Father your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?** (v. 13). Jesus stressed how much better the heavenly Father's gift is to those who request the Holy Spirit. If imperfect parents typically meet their children's needs, we can expect our perfect heavenly Father to provide what we need, above all the most important and indispensable gift—the Holy Spirit—the best gift of all! We need not fear the answers God gives because we can trust Him to answer out of His goodness (Jas. 1:17).

**Holy Spirit** (v. 13). This Third Person of the Trinity convicts people of sin, calls them to the Savior, and effects regeneration or the new birth. The Holy Spirit comes to live within us at the moment of conversion. He helps us cultivate Christian character, comforts us in sorrow, and gives spiritual gifts by which we can serve God through His church. He

seals us as believers unto the day of final redemption, thereby making us eternally secure in Christ (John 10:27-30). His presence in our lives is the down payment, guaranteeing our heavenly inheritance (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5). Jesus promised the empowering presence of the Spirit to His disciples following His ascension (24:49; Acts 1:8). Believers since then have experienced the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit at the moment each received Christ as Savior. Thus, Jesus's followers no longer must be in close physical proximity to Jesus to benefit from His wisdom, comfort, encouragement, strength, or power. All are present within those followers in the Person of the Holy Spirit who accompanies them 24/7/365.