



Unit .23

Session .03

Jesus Teaches About Prayer

Scripture



Luke 11:1-4, 9-13; 18:1-8

1 He was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John also taught his disciples.” **2** He said to them, “Whenever you pray, say, Father, your name be honored as holy. Your kingdom come. **3** Give us each day our daily bread. **4** And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone in debt to us. And do not bring us into temptation.” ... **9** “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. **10** For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. **11** What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead of a fish? **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?” ... **1** Now he told them a parable on the need for them to pray always and not give up. **2** “There was a judge in a certain town who didn’t fear God or respect people. **3** And a widow in that town kept coming to him, saying, ‘Give me justice against my adversary.’ **4** “For a while he was unwilling, but later he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or respect people, **5** yet because this widow keeps pestering me, I will give her justice, so that she doesn’t wear me out by her persistent coming.’” **6** Then the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. **7** Will not God grant justice to his elect who cry out to him day and night? Will he delay helping them? **8** I tell you that he will swiftly grant them justice. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?”

How can you remind yourself of God's glory when you pray?

When have you seen God uniquely meet your physical and/or spiritual needs?



99 Essential Doctrines

Prayer and Providence

If God is in control and already knows the future, why pray? The Bible teaches that although God has a plan for this world that He promises to fulfill, prayer is often the means God uses to accomplish His divine purpose. Even though God knows the end result, the means that lead to that end result will be accomplished through prayer. In this sense, it is true that “prayer changes things,” and it is also true that God uses prayer to change our hearts so that our will comes into conformity with His.

Main Point

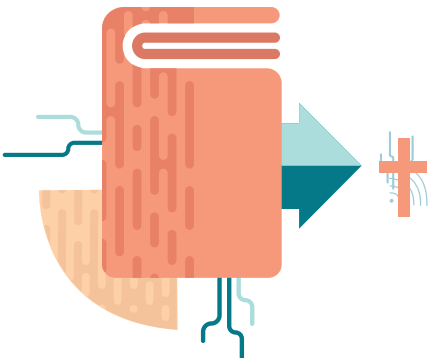
Jesus taught His disciples to pray with faith, persistence, and dependence on God.

Have you ever found yourself hesitating to ask God for something?

What are some additional reminders in Scripture that teach us that God is good and cares for His people?

Christ Connection

Jesus taught us to pray with dependence on God, recognizing our physical and spiritual needs which only He can supply; faith in God, knowing He is our good and loving Father; and with persistence to God, remembering He is just. It is through the death and resurrection of Jesus that we have access to the Father so that we can pray in faith.



How would you assess the persistence of your own prayer life?

not persistent seldom persistent somewhat persistent notably persistent



In Defense

Prayer is the act of our going to God in worship, confession of sin, thanksgiving, and in expressing dependence upon Him. However, Scripture teaches that God is so holy, He cannot even look upon sin (Hab. 1:13). Further, if we accept sin in our lives instead of continually turning away, the Lord doesn't even hear our prayers (Ps. 66:18). In fact, in order to approach God, He requires that we are perfect—and none of us are. But Jesus is!

As Jesus celebrated the experiences of His disciples, He recognized that God's purposes were being realized, and His natural response was to offer praise and thanks to God. Jesus has a relationship with the Father the way God intended for all people. For those who trust in Jesus, we have the privilege of approaching God, not just once a year like the earthly high priests, but any time we choose. Jesus did everything necessary for us to come to God. Let's never neglect this privilege.



Head

How can prayer help prepare our hearts to respond when God answers our requests with a “no?”

Why might God’s response of a “no” be an incredible act of His mercy and grace?



Heart

What are some important things that should be on our prayer list each day?

How encouraging is it to know that the Holy Spirit intercedes on behalf of believers?

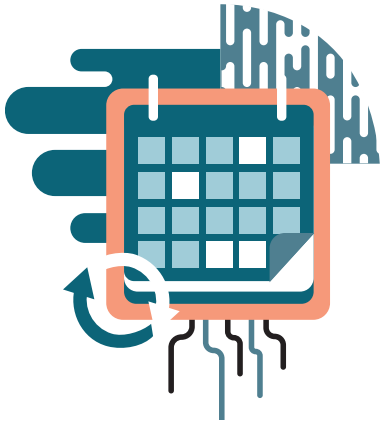


Hands

How has your prayer life been challenged by this session?

What are some things you can do this week to have a more disciplined and vibrant prayer life?

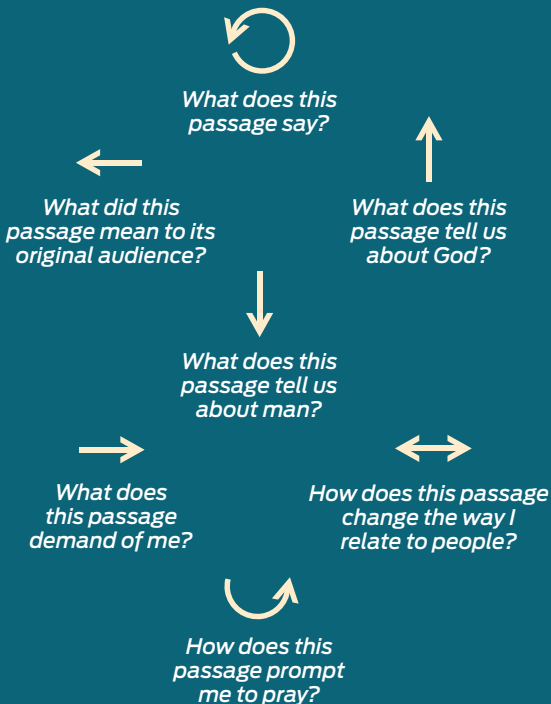
Daily Devotions



Day 1

Luke 11:1-4

The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



The model of prayer that Jesus teaches here is a shorter version of the “Lord’s Prayer” that most believers know. In fact, if you grew up in the church, you could probably finish each phrase without even thinking about it: “Our Father, who art in _____, hallowed be thy _____.”

By giving us this prayer, Jesus isn’t giving us the formula that we must use every single time we pray. If that were so, the psalms would likely not be included in the Bible since the psalmist tends not to phrase things in this way. Rather Jesus is giving us a model for prayer and teaching us several important truths: we pray to a sovereign God whose soon-coming kingdom is advancing every day, and yet even in the midst of His lofty, heavenly kingdom, He is concerned with forgiving us of our sins and growing us in His likeness as we forgive others. These simple words are the bedrock of our theology and practice, and as we pray them to the only one worthy of them, we end by asking Him to help us not to be tempted to take our eyes off Him.

As you re-read this well-known prayer, how can you see the gospel embedded in its words?

Luke 11:5-8

Think of your very best friend in the world. Maybe you grew up together or go to school together. You would do anything for this person because your love for him or her is so great.

Now, imagine that this person banged on your door in the wee hours of the morning for some flour.

The man in Jesus' story even mentions the fact that his children are asleep—if you become a parent, you'll realize how important this particular point is in the story. No matter how much you love your friend, at this point you may not want to give him or her any bread.

In Jesus' story, though, it isn't because of one friend's love that he gives the other bread but because of the other friend's persistence. Jesus uses this story to contrast the love of the Father that is so great that there is no hour too late for Him to hear the cries of our hearts.

When was the last time you prayed persistently about something?

Luke 11:9-13

We all know the story of Aladdin and his magic lamp. The genie who popped out of that ancient light fixture owed whoever rubbed the lamp three wishes with very few exceptions. Anything Aladdin dreamed of—from fame, to riches, to power—was literally at his fingertips.

When we read the way that Jesus teaches about prayer in today's passage, we might be tempted to picture God a bit like this magical genie. All we have to do is ask, and we'll be given whatever we want, right? Whatever door we knock on, God will open, and whatever we seek, it will be given to us.

This would be a very dangerous proposition, but of course, it isn't what Jesus is teaching. Notice that Jesus refers to God as Father here. And, just like a father, God sometimes has to tell His children "no" when they make a request. Like pouting two-year-olds, we may not always like the answer that God gives us, but the point Jesus is driving home is that God will answer. Because of His love for us, we can trust whatever His answer might be.

How can prayer reveal God's will to us?

Luke 18:1-8

The widow in Jesus' story does not give up easily.

Again Jesus is teaching His listeners a lesson in persistence. God is not a cruel judge whose arm has to be twisted in order to do right by us. He is an all-wise Father who delights in caring for His children, but our persistent prayer is a way for us to grow more and more in reliance on God. It constantly refocuses our hearts as we cry out to Him, keeping His name on our tongues and His promises on our minds. It increases our faith by consistently reminding us whom we serve and who we are to submit every desire of our hearts to.

As we pray and read God's Word, these heart desires become more and more in line with God's will for us. Through prayer, we are not convincing God to do the right thing. He is already going to do right by us. Instead we are reminding ourselves to endeavor to understand and appreciate the will of God.

How can prayer teach us to trust the Lord?

Matthew 6:5-8

Before launching into the how-to of prayer in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells His listeners how not to pray.

Our prayers are meant for the glory of God alone, not the glory and honor of ourselves. Jesus is not telling us to avoid praying in public. We know this because Paul gave instruction about public prayer in his epistles (1 Tim. 2:8). Rather Jesus is telling us to guard our motives when we pray, whether we're in public or in private. Our goal is not to be seen for our eloquence or piety but to communicate with God in a way that blesses His name and blesses those who might hear us. We are not praying for the earthly reward of a pat on the back but to communicate with the Father who has already secured our eternal reward in Jesus.

How can we make sure we are praying for God's glory and not man's?