

Luke 11/1-13: JESUS TEACHES ON PRAYER

Introduction (v1)

Jesus' teaching on prayer brought about by disciples' request, which in turn brought about by Jesus' example.

A pattern for any Christian seeking to lead/disciple another: inspiration => instruction.

Although any man can pray instinctively (cf. an unsaved/unchurched man calls out to God in a crisis), we have to learn to pray well.

Unusually, there is no time or place location ("one day...a certain place"): the teaching is universal and timeless.

Jesus teaches them: what to pray, how to pray, and why to pray.

I : A Model for Prayer (v2-4)

"When you pray, say..." – here Jesus is teaching us *what* to pray.

Often called 'The Lord's Prayer' but really it is 'The Disciples' Prayer'. (Jn 17 might be called The Lord's Prayer Template or liturgy? Can be prayed as is but also a model for our prayer – in 5 parts:

[i] Address: "Father,"

All prayer is essentially a communication between a child and his/her Father. (Let's keep it that simple!)

Strictly speaking, all prayer is addressed *to* the Father, *through* the Son, *by* the Spirit

Ro 11/36: For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory for ever! Amen.

1 Co 8/6: yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.

Ja 1/17: Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights...

When Jesus taught the disciples how to pray (Mw 6/9-), he contrasted it with how not to pray: like the Pharisees (v5-6) or the pagans (v7-8). The essential difference between pharasaical, pagan and Christian prayer is the kind of God we pray to: "Our Father in heaven" (Mw 6/9) – someone who is personal, loving and powerful.

Jesus is not putting our sonship on a level with his. He never says 'our Father' of God's fatherhood to him and us. Here he says, "When *you* pray, say '*Our* Father'." Cf. Jn 20/17: "I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." God is Father to him in a unique way, as he is Son in a unique way.

[i] Worship: "hallowed be your name,"

"hallowed" (2x) tr. Gr. *hagiazō* (28x), normally tr. as: make holy, make sacred, sanctify, set apart, consecrate. i.e. Your name is holy, I make/keep your name holy, I worship you as holy, make your name holy in the earth. Holiness is central to the revelation God has given us of himself. Holiness: separateness/distinctness/otherness => light/brightness/purity. It is the one attribute of God Jesus instructs us to name when we pray.

[ii] Intercession: "your kingdom come."

We are to pray that God's rule and reign will break into and spread through the world, for his fame and glory.

Some mss (& Mw 6/10): "May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." This is a parallel prayer: as God's kingdom (rule) comes in a place/life, his will will be done there rather than man's/ours.

[iii] Petition: "Give us each day our daily bread."

We are then to pray for our own needs.

We only get bread/grace for one day, so we have to get it each day.

[iv] Confession: "Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us."

We are to confess and ask God to forgive our sins – but Jesus has us pray the second line so we are always

mindful of his teaching (Mw 6/14-15) that God will only forgive us our sins if we are forgiving others theirs.

"everyone who is indebted to us" [NIV fn]: when someone sins against us we have a claim against them, they owe us, but we forgive those indebted to us – just as God has forgiven us who are so indebted (in debt) to him!

[v] Consecration: "And lead us not into temptation [some mss & Mw 6/13] but deliver us from the evil one."

This last sentence needs some explanation, lest it seems like we need to ask God not to do what he might otherwise do (tempt us). Scripture is quite clear that God does not tempt us (Ja 1/13-15); it is the devil that tempts us

(Lk 4/1-2), using our evil desires. The sense is rather: ‘Do not allow us to be led to sin – but deliver us from it.’ The Christian, having had to deal with his past sin, is eager to avoid future sin. The sinner whose evil in the past has been forgiven longs to be delivered from its tyranny in the future. It is the devil who is in view, who tempts God’s people to sin, and from whom we need to be rescued. The prayer is more that we may overcome temptation, rather than that we might avoid it. ‘Do not allow us so to be led into temptation that it overwhelms us, but rescue us from the evil one.’

P.S. When we review the whole prayer Jesus taught his disciples to pray, we see it falls into two clear parts. *First*, God’s concerns are given priority – our concern for God’s glory in relation to his name, rule and will. *Then* our own needs are committed to him – material, spiritual and moral. These express our dependence on God – respectively, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit – in every area of life.

II : Requirements of Prayer (v5-8)

Having taught the disciples *what* to pray, Jesus then proceeds to give them some instruction on *how* to pray. Scripture as a whole points to certain key requirements of all effective prayer – e.g. faith, sincerity, humility. In the Parable of the Unwilling Friend (to give it a name), Jesus makes clear another key ingredient: boldness or persistence – or, to use the old-fashioned word that captures both of these ideas, importunity. We ask at any time, no matter how bad the timing might seem, and we keep on asking till we have what we ask for. The point of the parable is not that God is unwilling to answer our prayers but that, if a selfish person can be prevailed upon to grant his friend’s request, “how much more will our Father in heaven” (v13) not do so. On a later occasion, “Jesus told his disciples [another] parable to show them [exactly the same truth:] that they should always pray and not give up.” (The Parable of the Persistent Widow: 18/1-8) Even though we may not understand theologically why we sometimes have to ask God many times for something, the lesson is plain: we do. Prayer that prevails is prayer that perseveres, a crying out to God “day and night” (v7). “However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?” (v8) Will he find those who still have faith and so are still calling out to him in prayer for things that they have not yet seen the answers to?

III : Assurances of Prayer (v9-13)

Lastly, Jesus encourages us to pray by underlining *why* we can and should pray: because God is a God who can and does answer prayer (cf. Ps 65/2). He uses six repetitive statements to emphasize this assurance (v9-10). The message here is plain: God wants us to ask, and God will give when we do. If the selfish man “will get up and give [his friend] as much as he needs” (v8), how much more God: “*So* I say to you – ask”! (v9) Jesus underlines the assurance of prayer yet further by comparing our heavenly Father with human fathers (v11-13). Human fathers, though they are evil, know how to give good gifts to their children and will not give something harmful instead of the good thing their child asks for. [Note: even though humans are capable of good things, they are evil even as they do them: no room for ‘Christian humanism’ or self-esteem here!] How much more will our perfect Father in heaven give good (and not harmful) things to those who ask him (Mw 7/11); and, as one of the best things we can ask him for (after receiving Jesus and his salvation), how much more will he not give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him (v13). God wants us to ask and God will give when we do – because he is a good Father. In saying this, Jesus ends his instruction on prayer exactly where he began: “When you pray, say ‘Father...’” From first (v2) to last (v13), prayer is something between a father and child.

Application

What amazing testimonies of prayer do we have or know of?

Where have we given up praying? Could we start praying again for that thing?

Where have we persevered in praying for something when we wanted to give up – and have seen an answer?

Gospel

Do you know (want to know) God as Father?

Do you want to be able to pray to him like this, as a child to a Father – and be answered by him?

Do you want to be able to ask for and receive the Holy Spirit?

P.S. ASK FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT!

For Jesus to say “how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him” tells us that *we can ask the Father for the Holy Spirit!* This often comes as a surprise to some Christians.

The Holy Spirit was at work in us even before we came to Jesus, convicting us of sin (Jn 16/8) and drawing us to Christ (Jn 6/44). And when we believed, the Holy Spirit gave life to our spirits (Ep 2/1cf.v5) – he gave birth to our spirits so we were ‘born again’ (Jn 3/3-8) – and thereafter indwelt us as sons of God (Ro 8/9,15).

But after that we are encouraged to seek (ask) God for his Spirit, first that Jesus might baptize us in/with the Spirit (Lk 3/16, Ac 1/5), and thereafter that we might ‘keep on being filled with the Spirit’ (Ep 5/18 lit. trans.). Many of these fillings/impartations of the Spirit may be imperceptible, but some are felt and tangible.

A balloon can be full of air yet by blowing into it more it can become more full. God can always fill us with his Spirit – for life and ministry, holiness and power – beyond what we have previously known.

There is no need to be fearful about asking God to fill us with his Spirit. (1) We have just seen that even human fathers, though they are evil, do not give their children something harmful when they ask for something good. How much more can we trust our perfect heavenly Father to give us, his children, good things.

(2) We do not fear Jesus – and the Spirit is just like Jesus. When he was about to depart, Jesus said he would send us “another Counsellor” to take his place (Jn 14/16). He did not use the more common word *heteros* for ‘another’, meaning another of a similar kind, but the word *allos*, another of exactly the same kind. The Spirit is exactly like Jesus – in nature and character – so we can trust him and receive him, just like receiving Jesus.

Jesus said he would send us *allos Paracletos*, another Comforter/Counsellor/Advocate, i.e. One who comforts/strengthens, guides/teaches and protects/defends us. Who would not want God the Spirit to fill them so he might be and do these things in their lives?

Jesus said he would not leave us as orphans but would send the Spirit in his place. The Spirit comes to be our constant companion and help through life. God the Father and God the Son are with/in/through/for us by God the Spirit. And this is in no way inferior to having Jesus on earth rather than the Spirit; Jesus said it is for our good that he is going away and the Spirit is coming (Jn 16/7) – the HS can be with and in all of us all the time.

The Spirit works in the church and world, but most of what the NT says about his work has to do with the individual believer. He is responsible for taking us by the hand and leading us from convicted sinner to presented saint. It is thus God the Spirit that we have fellowship with throughout our lives (2 Co 13/14, Pp 2/1).

So let’s be thankful for the coming of the Spirit, for his work in our lives before and at our conversion; *and* let’s ask God to baptize and ever after continually fill us with the Spirit so we can be&do all God wants us to be&do.

1. *Believe* that the baptism and filling of the Holy Spirit is biblical, vital, good and for you.
2. *Thirst* for and desire the baptism and filling of the Holy Spirit (Jn 7/37-39).
3. *Trust* the Father that he is giving you something and Someone who is good (Lk 11/11-13).
4. *Surrender* your life – and control of every area – to the Holy Spirit.
5. *Ask* the Father to give you the Holy Spirit (Lk 11/13)
6. *Receive* the Holy Spirit (Jn 20/21c, Ac 3/4-6 [look at me, what I have I give you, take it], 1 Co 12/13 [drink])