

Lord, Teach Us to Pray (Luke 11:1-13)

Background

As Jesus travelled towards Jerusalem, one of his disciples asked him how to pray. Jesus responded by giving his disciples a model prayer (2-4) and a threefold encouragement to pray (5-13).

Points to Ponder

The Lord's Prayer can be divided into two parts: the first part concerns God's glory; the second part concerns our needs. We should not only be concerned with our individual needs; we must also pray for others.

Father

The context of this prayer and its opening address show that it is a prayer for disciples of Jesus. Such disciples have the privilege of addressing God as Father. We must not neglect or abuse this privilege. We should come to our Father confidently, knowing that he loves to give good gifts (13).

Hallowed be Your name.

We should also remember that we are coming to a holy God. In the first petition, the word translated "hallowed" is expressed elsewhere as "sanctified". When applied to us, it means to be set apart for the service of God. When applied to God, it means that God's holiness should be made known and revered.

This petition is echoed throughout the Scriptures. The Israelites were commanded to know God and to make him known to the next generation (Deut 6:4-9). The knowledge and praise of God was to spread to all nations (Psalm 67:3-4). And we are called to take part in that mission (1 Peter 2:9). Is this the primary concern of our prayers? Is this the primary focus of our lives?

Your kingdom come

The second petition concerns the coming of God's kingdom. In one sense, the kingdom of God has already come. It came with the coming of Christ, as displayed by the miracles that he and his disciples performed (10:9, 11:20). In another

sense, the kingdom of God is yet to come because his rule is not yet established in every place.

So what are we praying for when we pray “Your kingdom come”? We are praying that God would extend his kingdom through the spread of the gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit. We are also praying for the return of Jesus Christ since only then will God’s rule be fully established.

Give us day by day our daily bread

God taught the Israelites to depend on him by sending them manna from heaven. Although we may not realise it, we also depend on God for our daily food. Thinking about our physical needs should lead us to think of our spiritual needs. We feed on Jesus Christ through faith; he strengthens us through His Word, the Bible, and through the Holy Spirit.

And forgive us our sins

Jesus taught his disciples to ask for forgiveness. If we are his disciples, we must do the same because we have also sinned.

When we pray for forgiveness, we are declaring that we want our relationship with our Father, which was disrupted by our sin, to be restored. Such a prayer should always be accompanied by repentance. If we confess our sins, we can have confidence not only that we are forgiven but also that we will be cleansed from the ongoing effects of our sin.

For we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.

Jesus repeatedly taught his disciples that forgiveness depends on our willingness to forgive others (Matt 6:14-15; Luke 6:37). We do not earn forgiveness from God by forgiving others. We are forgiven by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. However, by forgiving others, we show the genuineness of our faith. Is there anyone that we need to forgive?

And do not lead us into temptation

While God is not the author of sin, he sometimes uses Satan as an agent of his wrath to stir up sinful desires (1 Sam 16:14; Rom 1:28). So in this petition we are asking that God would not in any way hand us over to the devil, or to our sinful desires, but rather that he would deliver us from them.

And He said to them, 'Which of you shall have a friend...'

Jesus asked his disciples whether, if they were in need of bread, they would dare to disturb their neighbour in the middle of the night. Jesus concluded that boldness in such a situation is rewarded. So, if we are in need, what should we do?

So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you...

Jesus made three related exhortations. He then supported these exhortations with three related reasons. So, in total, the disciples were told the same thing six times! If we are in need, what should we do? What will be the result?

If a son asks for bread from any father among you...

Jesus asked his disciples more questions, making an argument from the lesser (a human father's willingness to give good gifts) to the greater (our Heavenly Father's willingness). If we ask our Heavenly Father for good gifts, he will certainly give us the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the provider and guarantee of all physical and spiritual blessings.

Points to Remember

Prayer is a wonderful privilege. We should pray confidently, knowing that God is our heavenly Father. We should pray reverently, seeking God's glory before all else. We should pray earnestly, realising our physical and spiritual needs.

Prayer is sometimes difficult and so we should also remember Jesus' threefold encouragement to pray: dare to ask; ask and it will be given; God is willing to give.

Luke 11:1-13

¹Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.” ²So He said to them, “When you pray, say:

Our Father in heaven, ¹
Hallowed be Your name.

Your kingdom come.

Your will be done

On earth as it is in heaven.

³Give us day by day our daily bread.

⁴And forgive us our sins,

For we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.

And do not lead us into temptation,

But deliver us from the evil one.”

⁵And He said to them, “Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves; ⁶for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; ⁷and he will answer from within and say, ‘Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you’? ⁸I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence² he will rise and give him as many as he needs.

⁹“So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ¹⁰For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

¹¹If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? ¹²Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? ¹³If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!”

¹ The words in grey appear to be part of a later tradition. In particular, words appear to have been added to later copies of Luke’s account to make it conform more closely to Matthew’s.

² Or *impudence*, i.e. his disregard of social conventions