

27. Teach Us to Pray

Luke 11:1-13

Luke: A Walk Through the Life of Jesus

Jesus' training of the disciples was one of mentoring. He taught the disciples by living up close and intimate with them. They learned by on-the-job training as they experienced walking with the Savior. Although their training only lasted around three years, and possibly less, their training was of a higher quality because it was experiential. Experiential knowledge is something one has experienced and not just learned in a book. If training is merely head knowledge gained from a book, the things learned are more easily forgotten. Jesus' teaching was mostly through modeling and mentoring. He lived out His life in front of the twelve, and when they asked questions, He taught them out of His experience and knowledge.

Ted Engstrom, in his book *The Fine Art of Mentoring*, published in 1989, contains a forward by Gordon MacDonald, he writes:

Up until recently, mentoring—the development of a person—was a way of life between generations. What breathing is to the body, mentoring was to relationships. Mentoring was assumed, expected, and, therefore, almost unnoticed because of its commonness in human experience. Down through the centuries, mentoring happened everywhere. On the farm, a boy was mentored by their fathers and extended family members. Mentoring was the primary learning method in the society of artisans where an apprentice spent years at the side of the craftsman learning not only the mechanics of a function but the “way of life” which surrounded it.

The way of life that Jesus lived brought out a desire in the twelve disciples to live also in such a way. They soon figured out that the essence of His power was due to His prayer life. The passage we are viewing now is the only time in Scripture where the disciples asked Him to teach them anything:

¹One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.” ²He said to them, “When you pray, say: “‘Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. ³Give us each day our daily bread. ⁴Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.’” ⁵Then he said to them, “Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, ⁶because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.’” ⁷ “Then the one inside answers, ‘Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.’” ⁸I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs. 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. ¹⁰For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. ¹¹“Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? ¹²Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much

more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Luke 11:1-13).

Jesus demonstrated who He was in front of the disciples as they lived, ate, and ministered together. In Luke 11:1-13, we find a teaching moment where the disciples longed to learn something that they saw Jesus regularly practicing: the habit of prayer. Luke, more than any other of the writers of the Gospels, notices the prayer life of Jesus. When Christ was baptized, He was praying (Luke 3:21). Jesus withdrew into the wilderness and prayed (5:16). He went out onto a mountain to pray and continued all night in prayer (6:12). He was alone praying (9:18). Soon after, He went up onto a mountain to pray, and as He prayed, He was transfigured (9:28-29). Now we read that here He was again, praying in a certain place. One gets the idea from Luke that Jesus prayed often.

Question 1) Why would Jesus, God in the flesh, feel the need for prayer? Was this just good modeling, or did he need it?□

One of the disciples asked Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples" (v.1). It seems that this was part of the mentoring deal, i.e., that the mentor would share with the mentoree the regular disciplines of his life. Most of the world looks at this passage as the disciples' asking for a prayer, but that is erroneous. The disciples were not asking Christ for a prayer but to teach them to pray—there is a big difference! What is commonly called the "Lord's Prayer" is not a prayer that Jesus would pray. After all, He never had to pray for God to forgive His sins (v. 4). It should be called the "Disciples Prayer," and even then, it was not a rote prayer but a model prayer. It certainly is not wrong to pray with the same words, but we should understand that any prayer we speak to God should be based on the principles of this model prayer.□

Jesus started the model prayer by calling God by the very intimate term, "Father." This approach to God was not common at the time. God was referred to as the Father of the nation of Israel, but He was never referred to with this name by a singular person. For many Christians, we have become so used to it that we do not understand how shocking this was to people of a different culture who had always viewed God as a far-off God. Daniel Massieh, former Egyptian Muslim who tried to persecute a church in Egypt, planned to mimic what Christians did so that he could infiltrate the church to destroy their testimony. He asked a Christian friend if he would share with him a prayer that he could pray out loud to gain the trust of those in the Egyptian church he was trying to subvert. The Christian friend wrote out for him the disciple's prayer in Matthew that we are now studying. Daniel went into the bedroom to start trying to memorize it, but he had a hard time getting past the first two words— "Our Father." Here in his own words, was what happened:□

I sat on the bed to read over and then memorize the prayer. The first two words, "Our Father," grabbed me! "Our Father? Our *daddy*?" I asked myself incredulously, wondering whether I could have read correctly. Muslims would never dare to address God in this way! As a Muslim, I was taught that Allah was my master, a frightful and distant overseer who would never allow me to approach him in such a familiar way. How disrespectful and foolish for Christians to address God like this. Surely this was

blasphemy! Shaking my head, I casually opened the window, gazed out, and addressed the night sky in a mocking whisper: "God, did you marry my mother? Are you my father?" Suddenly, an inexplicable and overwhelming Presence filled the room. It was a powerful yet comforting Presence that penetrated me to the very core of my soul. The response to my question was almost audible: "*Yes, I AM your Father.*" I was completely suffused [to gradually spread over and be overwhelmed] by God's Presence, enveloped by an indescribable Love. This was God's love *for me, a fatherly love, the love of a daddy!* God was introducing Himself at that moment, saying that He was my heavenly Father!

I felt like a little child who, having been estranged from his daddy for twenty-three years, had at long last been found. The love I felt was so overpowering that I wanted to proclaim it to the rooftops: God is my *Father!* God, the Creator of all, the All-Powerful, the Lord of Lords—is my *Father!*" All through the night, I experienced the sensation of God's love hugging me, and I was desperately hugging Him back. I began to be mindful of all the wrong things I had done and of how they grieved the Father. Every wrong I could recall ever having committed, I confessed to Him. I also expressed my remorse at having entered the church under false pretenses so that I could make fun of the Christians.

Becoming aware of my sins and how they grieved the Father convulsed me in gut-wrenching sobs. I cried so hard that Mamdouh [His friend] heard me from the adjoining room. When he later asked why I had been crying so loudly, he couldn't believe that the Lord's Prayer had so profoundly affected me. That night I slept very deeply. When I awoke the next morning, I felt as though I had shed the weight of a heavy camel that had been riding on my shoulders. Peace and comfort filled my heart. I learned later that this is what the Bible means when it says, "**Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed**" (John 8:36).¹

Mohammad Kamel, who had been an enemy of the Christian faith, changed his name to Daniel Abdul Massieh (Daniel, the servant of Messiah), and he now preaches the Gospel of Christ in many different countries including all over the Middle East Arabic nations as well as in the USA.

The disciple's prayer is very valid in its own right, but it is possible it was meant as a model or an outline for our prayer life. The prayer in Luke is slightly shorter than the one in Matthew 6:9-13, so for this part of our study, we will use the more concise passage in Matthew. There are six parts to the prayer. They are as follows:

- 1) Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.
- 2) Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
- 3) Give us today our daily bread.
- 4) Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
- 5) And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.
- 6) For yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen. □

¹ Daniel Massieh, *Traitor*. Published by Open the Gates Publishing, San Diego, CA 92198. Page 31-33.
Website: www.openthegates.org

One can approach God by elaborating on each aspect of this prayer, such as the following:

1) Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.

- a) Picture yourself coming before a loving Father who has loved us with an everlasting love.
- b) Think on the fact that He has drawn us into a close intimate relationship with himself, calling us His sons and daughters; there should be a sense of wonder that He is our Abba, our Daddy.
- c) Our Father is in heaven, and He has called us into this relationship for eternity, and the glories of heaven are ours!
- d) His name is to be hallowed or set apart as consecrated and sanctified. Just as there is a sense of awe when one walks in the Garden of Gethsemane in Jerusalem, or when one goes to the site of the Twin Towers destroyed on September 11, 2001, in the same way, His name on our lips should be hallowed. We are cut to the heart when we hear His name spoken in vain.
- e) There should be a sense of thankfulness and praise for Who God is and what He means to you. You may want to sing to Him in this time where you are entering His presence.

⁴Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name (Psalm 100:4).

2) Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

- a) Pray for the furtherance of the Gospel in your nation as well as the missionary enterprise to other countries. Pray for Satan's kingdom and his influence over people and nations to be broken.
- b) Pray that God's kingdom will come to all those around you. Take time to pray specifically for individuals that God has placed on your heart, i.e., those you sense He wants to do something in their lives with needs, such as healing.
- c) Pray for your spouse, your children, and other family members.
- d) Pray for your pastor and for those that lead you in whatever church or house group to which you belong.
- e) Pray for the kingdom of God to come to you in a personal way, i.e., for you to be filled, controlled, and led by the Spirit of God. This approach to God involves putting ourselves on the altar, i.e., offering our bodies as living sacrifices, holy, and pleasing to God. This is your spiritual act of worship (Romans 12:1). God can only use us to the level that we abandon self to Him.
- f) Pray for the leaders of whatever country in which you live that they would allow the Gospel to be freely communicated without hindrance.

¹I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession, and thanksgiving be made for everyone— ²for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

3) Give us today our daily bread.

- a) At this point in your time of prayer, thank Him for His provision to you and your family. Then, pray concerning your work, i.e., that which God uses to supply you and your family with food on your plates. Ask for direction and wisdom on what you do for Him.
- b) Use the time here to remind God of His promises of blessing. Ask for God to expand your area of influence and to open doors of blessing.
- c) Ask Him for specific guidance in the stewardship of your time, energy, and money for His kingdom purposes. Be open for the Lord to speak to you about helping others with material support.

4) Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Question 2) Why does Jesus put these two together, i.e., forgiving others and being forgiven ourselves?

Our time of prayer now focuses on our being in right relationship to God and others. The Lord makes our forgiveness conditional to our also forgiving others. Grace has not truly reached the level of our hearts if we have not forgiven others. The overflow of God's forgiveness in our lives is to such a degree that we, in turn, want to forgive others and set them free from any obligation to us. If we have not truly forgiven others from our heart, we have not fully seen what it cost God to forgive us.

- a) In asking God to forgive us our debts, we are to open our lives to inspection by God; be rigidly honest before God about sin. David prayed for God to “**Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts**” (Psalm 139:23).
- b) Confess your faults to God. Ask Him for specific strategies to overcome your sinful nature. Job did this with God, “**I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl**” (Job 31:1). He thought through specific strategies to overcome, so go and do likewise!
- c) In this time of introspection, ask Him to show to you anyone whom you have not forgiven, e.g., someone who may have hurt you. Ask Him to operate on you so that you can genuinely forgive from the heart. Pray for God’s blessing on those that come to mind.

5) And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

- a) Ask God to deliver you from every occult influence or any curse directed at you because of your desire to live a life pleasing to God.
- b) Pray that the armor of God would be on you. At this time, you may want to ask God for the belt of Truth to be buckled around your waist, and that His righteousness would be as a breastplate over your heart. We need our feet fitted with readiness to walk out the Gospel of peace, that you have a shield of faith with which you can extinguish the flaming arrows of the evil one, the helmet of salvation to protect the mind, and for the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God (Ephesians 6:13-17).
- c) Pray that when temptation and trials of your faith come, you may stand and not fall into compromise.□

6) For Yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

- a) The closing of your time of prayer should be with an acknowledgment of for Whom you live and to what you are committed.
- b) Finish with a song or a psalm of praise.

The Parable of the Friend at Midnight.

Jesus now tells a parable to encourage effectiveness and persistence in our praying.

⁵Then he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.' ⁷ "Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' ⁸I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs (Luke 11:5-8).

In the year 1976, I traveled overland through Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, taking about two months in the process. At one particular town in Pakistan, there were no regular hotels that my friend and I could find, and upon inquiry, we were invited to stay where many other Asian travelers were staying. We were given a price at the front desk, and it seemed pretty cheap until later after we had gotten some food. When we went back, we were shown the room in which we were to stay. It was a large room with about twenty other people sleeping on the floor on a very thickly piled carpet or a sleeping mat. Naturally, we were shocked to find that we were sleeping in the same room with many others already asleep on the floor. It was a communal sleeping room. Many people were asleep around a coal-fired iron stove situated in the middle of the room. It was quite an experience to sleep with about twenty other strangers in the same room! Jesus' parable talks about a similar sleeping arrangement with a whole family sleeping on a communal sleeping mat.

During the summer months in the Middle East, travelers often journeyed late to avoid the heat of the day. Jesus told the story of one such traveler that arrived late at night to stay with a house owner. It was a sacred duty to give hospitality. The house owner had a problem, though. He didn't have any bread to put before the traveler. Only enough bread was baked for each day so that it was not wasted, but he did have a friend that he thought might get up and give him some bread. When he went to see him just after midnight, the friend was very reluctant to try to step over his children in the dark as he stumbled to the door to give the house owner the bread he needed. William Barclay, the commentator, says:

In the east, no one would knock on a shut door unless the need was imperative. In the morning the door was opened and remained open all day, for there was little privacy; but if the door was shut, that was a definite sign that the friend did not wish to be disturbed. But the seeking house owner was not deterred. He knocked and kept on knocking.²

² William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible, The Gospel of Luke*, Published by Saint Andrew Press, Edinburgh, 1975. Page 145

Question 3) What is the point of the parable? What's Jesus getting saying? Are we to understand that God is like a friend who doesn't want to get up?□

The disciples are viewed as the petitioner for bread, and God is seen as many of this world often see Him, i.e., One Who is reluctant to get up and supply the needs of those who are petitioning Him. The traveler and the bread are not crucial to the story, for they only illustrate need and urgency. We all have needs and different levels of urgency, so we can all see ourselves in the parable. Often, though, many of us give up praying before we receive the answer to our prayer. The emphasis in the parable is on the word *boldness* in verse 8, sometimes translated with the phrase *importunity*, which means persistence to the point of annoyance or intrusion. The Greek word is *Anaideia*, and it means to be “without shame, shamelessness, unabashedness, audacity. The word describes the brazen persistence displayed in the pursuit of something, an insistence characterized by rudeness and a lack of compunction” (*Key Word Study Bible*).

Faith and persistence arise in the child of God when the answer is kept from him or her for a season. This overcoming faith is what pleases God. Undoubtedly, the point of the parable is that the man kept on knocking on the door and would not let his friend fall back asleep until he was given the bread he needed. What Jesus is saying in this passage is that, if a grouchy friend can be persuaded to get up and give his friend bread due to some shameless, brazen importunity and persistence, **how much more** will God, Who longs to feed and clothe His people when they ask Him? God is not to be compared but contrasted to the sleepy, reluctant friend. The Lord does not have to be pushed and cajoled into answering prayer; in fact, He is just the opposite. We are to come boldly to the throne of grace and draw near in full assurance of faith as we persist in prayer. This is the kind of faith that perseveres and will not let go of God until one gets what he or she needs.

Jacob illustrated this kind of faith when he needed a breakthrough with his brother Esau's hatred of him. With Esau on his way with 400 men to do him harm, Jacob cast himself on God and wrestled with the Angel of the Lord all night, “The man (the angel) said, ‘Let me go for it is daybreak.’ But Jacob replied, ‘I will not let you go unless you bless me.’ Jacob received favor and a new name, Israel, that morning. The Lord said to him, “**Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and have overcome**” (Genesis 32:24-28).□

The passage does not say so, but I suggest that there is often an element of spiritual warfare in prayer. Intercessory prayer is not to overcome reluctance in God as if we must bend God's arm behind His back, but there is opposition to our prayer by dark, spiritual forces that must be overcome by persistent prayer and intercession. When we pray for God's kingdom to come, what we are asking is that Satan's kingdom is displaced. We should not think it surprising that we have to persist in prayer to overcome. Do you think the enemy will willingly give up territory without opposition? This was what the prophet Daniel experienced when he needed God to give him an understanding of a dream that he had. He had to enter into a time of fasting and prayer until the answer to prayer came to fruition. An angel showed up and told him that the delay was due to hindrance by an evil angelic being in the spiritual realms:

Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me... (Daniel 10:12-13).

God allows some situations in life to test our faith, but we often give up before we get what we need. The Lord loves to see us exhibit faith in Him. In the early 1800s here in America, a man by the name of John Derby heard of a gold strike on the West Coast. He borrowed some money from some interested friends and staked a claim. He found a vein of gold and mined it successfully. He had paid back his friends and covered his investment when the gold ran out. He decided to get out while the going was good. He sold the mine to a man who carried on digging where John Derby had left off, and the new owner hit the biggest gold mine in the West. If only Derby had carried on and persisted.

Question 4) When the going gets tough, do you persist? How does adversity affect you? What keeps you going?

Ask, and it Shall Be Given

⁹So 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. ¹⁰For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. ¹¹ "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? ¹²Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him! (Luke 11:9-13).

Jesus implores us not only to ask first of all, and then to add action to our asking by seeking, but also to add knocking, which speaks of persevering in our asking and seeking. Our English language translations do not bring out clearly what Jesus is saying in this passage. The Greek text reads, "Keep on asking, and it will be given you; keep on seeking, and you will find; keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you." He is carrying on this thought of persistence in prayer, encouraging us to ask so that you receive the very thing for which you are requesting. □

Jesus closes this teaching on prayer by saying how ludicrous for a father to give a snake to his son when he is asking for fish. None of us knows parents who would do such a thing to their child. However, some people suspect that our heavenly Father would be treacherous to us by giving us something wrong for us instead of good things. Will He not protect us? The Holy Spirit makes so wonderfully real the connection and intimacy that we have with the Father. The more we are led and moved by the Spirit in our decisions and actions, the more we are connected to all the good things that God wants to bestow on us.

Prayer: Father, do fill us with Your Holy Spirit; we want to draw near to You so that You also may draw near to us. Teach us how to be persistent in our faith to receive from Your hand.

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