

## Message #51

## Luke 11:1-4

Jesus Christ, by His own example, placed a high priority on prayer and Luke picked up on that in his gospel:

- 1) He was praying at the inauguration of His public ministry. Luke 3:21
- 2) He prayed when He faced great opposition. Luke 5:16
- 3) He prayed prior to making significant choices. Luke 5:12
- 4) He prayed when He was contemplating the cross. Luke 9:18
- 5) He was praying at His transfiguration. Luke 9:28-29

Jesus Christ prayed constantly and apparently the Apostles, who have seen that, were beginning to sense that. We certainly may observe that Jesus was constantly communicating with His Father about His will, His direction and His Help.

In Luke's gospel, the Apostles had been traveling with Jesus Christ ever since chapter 5. They had seen Him do some amazing things and they had been involved in ministry. It had been about two years since they had first hooked up with Jesus Christ and finally they were beginning to recognize the importance of prayer in His life. They saw Him pray often. Luke really stresses this fact in his gospel.

This seems to be a different moment from Christ's Sermon on the Mount instruction recorded by Matthew (Matt. 6:9-15). Christ lectured on prayer in that message, but in this context, it is the disciples who approach Christ.

We are not sure just where this took place, but once again Christ was in a certain place and He was praying and these disciples sensed they needed it in their own lives.

After realizing the significance of prayer, they finally said Lord "teach us to pray." Now don't miss what is requested here. Carefully observe it. **They said teach us "to pray," not simply teach us "how to pray." God's people need to be taught to realize the importance of prayer.**

**There are many things God needs to teach us when it comes to prayer.**

**First, He needs to teach us to pray;**

**Second, He needs to teach us how to pray;**

**Third, He needs to teach us what to pray.**

These disciples were finally beginning to come to terms with some critical things in their own lives and one of those things was the lack of prayer in their own lives. Here is a critical key of real spirituality: we need to learn the importance of talking to God. These men had enough conviction that they knew they needed to be men of prayer and they asked the Lord to teach them to pray.

Now until we come to the place where we recognize the importance of prayer and until we recognize our own ignorance and lack, we will never become skilled at it and we will never take prayer seriously.

Now do not overlook the request in **verse 1**. It is a request for Jesus to teach them to pray “as John also taught his disciples.”

This is a very important point to see. **This is a key dispensational point concerning prayer.** Even though we will learn some wonderful principles about prayer, this is important to see because there are some differences here between this prayer and N.T. Grace Age prayer:

- 1) This instruction concerning prayer is in the context of the O.T. Kingdom promises for Israel and the Kingdom Israel one day will have (**i.e. 11:2**).
- 2) This instruction concerning prayer is given before the Spirit of God was given to the Believer (i.e. 11:13).
- 3) This instruction was given while Christ was on earth, indicating that this was the type of prayer to be offered while Christ was on earth.
- 4) This instruction concerning prayer does not include all of the N.T. Grace Age teaching about prayer (i.e. no mention of praying in Jesus’ name—John 14:13-14).
- 5) This instruction concerning prayer extends through the entire context through **verse 13**.

One part is not more or less significant than another part. This entire context is critical to the subject of prayer. There are many lessons to learn about prayer in this entire context.

Now the key point to see as this opens is this:

**PRAYER THAT IS PATTERNED AFTER CHRIST’S INSTRUCTION ABOUT PRAYER IS PRAYER COMPLETELY FOCUSED ON GOD THE FATHER’S PERSON, POSITION, PROVISIONS AND POWER.**

Prayer instruction directly from Jesus Christ keeps its focus on God. We need to understand this point. Our tendency is to use prayer as a basis for getting ourselves or others out of difficult situations, rather than ascribing greatness to God.

We have every Biblical right to pray about things that make us anxious, but if we can learn to recognize the greatness of God and the sovereignty of God, we will discover many more answers to our prayers.

Jesus begins by telling His disciples that this is the pattern they are to follow: “whenever you pray.” So Jesus is giving His disciples a “prototype” formula for prayer, whenever prayer is made.

Christ begins with four key opening prayer lessons that Jesus begins to teach His disciples:

**PRAYER LESSON #1** – A Christ-like prayer will focus on God’s Person. **11:2a-b**

As the section opens, there are two immediate prayer acknowledgements Luke brings out concerning the Person of God:

**Acknowledgement #1** - Prayer is addressed to God the Father. **11:2a**

Prayer begins by acknowledging that God is the High, Holy, and Heavenly Father. Jesus demonstrated that in His own prayer in Luke 10:21.

Now the term “Father” is used in the context of a family. Prayer that addresses God as Father is a prayer that assumes son-ship. In other words, in order to actually pray to God as Father, one must be His son. That son-ship status is only given to one who has believed on Jesus Christ (John 1:12-13).

Not all people are in a position to be able to address God as Father. In fact, Jesus specifically said that those who rejected Him were of their “father the devil” (John 8:44).

In Psalm 5, David prays and asks God to hear his words in the morning (Ps. 5:1-2) and then he says he bows down in reverence of God (Ps. 5:7). God’s ear is open to those who are His children who reverence Him and bow before Him.

Most religions pray, but only one who is a true child of God has any Biblical right to pray expecting that God will hear and answer. Until one is a child of God by faith in Jesus Christ, he cannot possibly pray to God as his Father.

So the first lesson about prayer is that it must be addressed to the Father, not the Son and not the Spirit.

**Acknowledgement #2** - Prayer acknowledged the hallowed holiness of God’s name. **11:2b**

The word “hallowed” is the word “sanctify” (αγιασθητω) and it is a word that means to be separate or set apart. Now the verb is an aorist passive imperative. What I understand this to mean is that at the point of the prayer (aorist tense) we must make certain that God is the recipient of the specific action of us honoring Him and His name (passive voice), which is a command we are to obey (imperative mood).

One Greek grammarian translated these words “Let your name be sanctified” (David Garland, *Exegetical Commentary on Luke*, p. 461). He also brings out a point that the passive may imply our willingness to want God to bring into existence and perform action that glorifies His name (*Ibid.*, p. 462).

Certainly we may say that prayer that is proper begins with a reverent perspective of the Sovereignty of God. This is a critical point to see. Proper prayer demands that we acknowledge the fact that God is totally set apart in majestic holiness and sovereignty. We have been commanded to honor God that way when we pray.

W. H. Griffith Thomas, the Bible scholar of the first part of this century, said that true Christ-instructed prayer first begins with us functioning as worshippers of God, not as beggars to God (*Outline Studies in Luke*, p. 199).

Now what is stated is if we are going to pray to God, we must reverence not only Him, but His name. When you think of God, you must think reverently even about His name. True Christ-like prayer starts with a high focus on the Holy Majesty of God. He is separate and set apart from all others—“hallowed be Your name.”

Back in our first church in Indiana, we had a young man who went into the military and moved up the ranks. He had become an instructor and leader. We were talking one time when he was home on leave and I asked him what were some of the things that they taught new recruits. He said one of the first things you teach new recruits is to recognize rank. He said new recruits learn very quickly to recognize and honor rank.

That is the way it is in prayer to God. It starts with recognizing the high and holy and heavenly honor God has. God is the Father to whom we pray and God is a majestic and hallowed God.

## **PRAYER LESSON #2 – A Christ-like prayer will focus on God’s Program. 11:2c**

Now John’s disciples and Christ’s disciples were anticipating that God would set up His kingdom for Israel. In fact, when Christ was about to ascend into heaven, these very disciples asked Him “Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6).

This Kingdom in Israel was something every Jew anticipated. However, what the nation did not understand and still does not understand is that in order for that to happen, Christ Himself must suffer and die in order to fulfill all O.T. prophecies and in order to give Israel the righteousness she needed to get into that Kingdom. Israel does not have the righteousness to get into her Kingdom, any more than we have the righteousness to get into heaven.

**To pray for God’s Kingdom to come meant you were asking God to do everything He needed to do in order to establish His kingdom, which included the crucifixion of His Son.** John’s disciples and Christ’s disciples would gladly pray for the Kingdom to come, if it came the way they thought it should come.

But in order for them to pray “your kingdom come” meant that they wanted God to do things His way, which meant Christ would suffer and die.

**PRAYER LESSON #3** – A Christ-like prayer will focus on God’s Provision. **11:3-4a**

Two legitimate areas of provision:

**Area of Provision #1** - We need to realize God is the One who provides for us physically. **11:3**

Ever since the days of Origen (AD 200 in Egypt) and Tertullian (AD 200 in Africa), this has been spiritualized to mean a request for spiritual food every day. But quite honestly, that is not what Jesus is teaching here.

The verb “give” is present tense. So the prayer is a continual prayer for God to continually supply what we need daily. God wants His people dependent on Him every day to supply what they physically and materially need.

Now of course God does not produce manna daily like He did for Israel in Exodus (Ex. 16:11), but He does oversee daily income. If people are going to pray and expect God to answer, they need to understand that we need to depend on God every day for He is the One who meets our daily and weekly and yearly need. God controls economies of nations and individuals.

There is a very wise prayer given in Proverbs 30:8-9. In that prayer Agur asks God to give him neither poverty nor riches. He asks God to feed him with the food that is my portion, lest I be full and deny thee and say who is the LORD or lest I be in want and steal and profane the name of my God.

**Area of Provision #2** - We need to realize God is the One who provides for us spiritually. **11:4a**

What is clear from this part of the prayer is that in order for us to pray and expect God to answer, we must begin by realizing we are a sinner and we do need God’s forgiveness. This was something Jesus Christ never needed to do in prayer. But He is teaching His disciples about the subject.

What is clear from the second part of the verse is that the person admits that he does not deserve God’s forgiveness. In fact, the stress of Luke is that we ourselves forgive those who have wronged us, and we are sinners. So prayer admits all people are in the same boat, in that all people are sinners. We all need God’s forgiveness; we know that because there are some people who need our forgiveness.

Christ’s point is that since you forgive others who need your forgiveness, you may appeal to a Holy God in the same way. Later, Luke will say that God is quick to forgive someone who humbly comes to Him and admits he is a sinner (Luke 18:9-14).

To tap into the forgiveness of God, there must be a very personal realization and admission that one is a sinner who needs forgiveness.

**PRAYER LESSON #4** – A Christ-like prayer will focus on God’s Providence. **11:4b**

The point of this is so foreign to the way most people think. Most people do not realize the need to depend on God’s providential sovereignty, when it comes to temptation. God sovereignly and providentially controls everything that comes into our lives and God’s people need to learn to pray and talk to God about it.

The word “temptation” (πειραζω) is a word that refers to a trial or test that is designed to prove something (G Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 351). This same word is used in Luke 4:2 in regard to Satanic testing or trial.

Satan desires to prove the unfaithfulness and the failure of every child of God and he will come at a believer from different angles in an attempt to turn the believer away from the Word and will of God. **A critical key to not succumbing to the temptation is prayer.**

God has providential sovereign power to deliver a believer from Satanic temptations and failure. He has the power to lead a believer away from things and situations and circumstances that would and could cause them to fall.

One key contextual point is that the believer does not want to get into situations where they must go to God and ask for forgiveness, so they pray that God will deliver them from circumstances and situations where that may happen.

There is much to think about here about prayer. But one thing is certain, we need to pray more.

There is another thing that is certain and that is we are all sinners who need the forgiveness of God.