

# Learn to Pray, Part 1

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You can open your Bibles to Luke 11. We've finally got[ten] there. There are some great things in this chapter. We might just die in this chapter [because] it's so great. So, if you have your Bibles, open them up. If you don't have a Bible, then look in the pew in front of you, [and] you'll find one.

Robert Morgan, in his historical devotional entitled *On This Day*, wrote these words concerning what is often referred to as the "Fulton Street Revival":

The mood of America was grim during the mid-1850s. The country was teetering on the brink of civil war, torn by angry voices and impassioned opinions. A depression had halted railroad construction and factory output. Banks were failing; unemployment soared. Spiritual lethargy permeated the land.

In New York City Jeremiah C. Lanphier, a layman, accepted the call of the North Reformed Dutch Church to a full-time program of evangelism. He visited door-to-door, placed posters, and prayed. But the work languished and Lanphier grew discouraged.

As autumn fell over the city, Lanphier decided to try noontime prayer meetings, thinking that businessmen might attend dur-

ing their lunch hours. He announced the first one for September 23, 1857, at the Old Dutch Church on Fulton Street. When the hour came, Lanphier found himself alone. He sat and waited. Finally, one man showed up, then a few others.

But the next week, 20 came. The third week, 40. Someone suggested the meetings occur daily, and within months the building was overflowing. The revival spread to other cities. Offices and stores closed for prayer at noon. Newspapers spread the story, even telegraph companies set aside certain hours during which businessmen could wire one another with news of the revival.

In all these cities, prayer services began at noon and ended at one. People could come and go as they pleased. The service opened with a hymn, followed by the sharing of testimonies and prayer requests. A time limit of five minutes per speaker was enforced by a small bell, when anyone exceeded the limit. Virtually no great preachers or famous Christians were used. It was primarily a lay movement, led by the gentle moving of God's Spirit.

The revival—sometimes called “The Third Great Awakening”—lasted nearly two years, and between 500,000 and 1,000,000 people were said to have been converted. Out of it came the largest outlay of money for philanthropic and Christian causes America had yet experienced.<sup>1</sup>

I lust after that. Eric Russell, in his biography of J.C. Ryle, speaking about the revival in England, talks about where this same revival got started. It wasn't at Fulton Street; it was actually in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, in 1857. Russell writes:

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Morgan, *On This Day* (Nashville, TN: Nelson/Word Reference, 1998), n.p

A revival of evangelical religion in Great Britain in the mid nineteenth century touched thousands of individuals who joyfully surrendered their lives to Christ. The revival not only changed lives but also led to a new interest in and the support for missionary work overseas and Christian social work among the poor at home. The beginnings of this religious revival may be traced to Hamilton, Ontario, where towards the end of 1857 “a gust of divine power” swept through the Methodist congregation and hundreds were converted.

Within a few months thousands were attending prayer gatherings at all times of the day and night in New York and other towns on the east coast of North America. Evangelistic and prayer meetings multiplied and the spirit of revival spread westward to the prairies.”<sup>2</sup>

It all started, for God’s purposes, in Hamilton, Ontario, wherever that is, in a Methodist church there. That was the epicenter, and it rippled all the way across America, all the way across the Atlantic, and all the way through England and [the rest of] Great Britain. I don’t know about you, but that sounds really good to me. I would like Calvary Bible Church to be the epicenter of something like that.

A lot of times, when we think of revival, we think of people coming to Christ. That’s usually the normal thing—if there was revival, a lot of people would come to Christ. But I want you to think about this: in order to revive something, it has to be alive, or at least [have been] alive [at one time]. You know, [if] somebody has a heart attack, [or] somebody drowns, that person [may] be [able to be] revived because he was once alive, but you can’t revive a rock. A lot of times, when we think of revival, we think of it as people who don’t know Christ coming to Christ, but actually, revival

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<sup>2</sup>Eric Russell, *That Man of Granite with the Heart of a Child* (Scotland, UK: Christian Focus Publishing, 2001), 111.

is when people who know Christ start doing what God wants them to do to begin with. That, in turn, leads to mass evangelism and prayer, which causes many to come to Christ and [to] grow in their faith. [However], it always starts with the believers being revived. You can't revive something that's not first living.

A revival is about Christians being filled with the Holy Spirit, and God's sovereign pleasure is moving upon them [so] that [the Christians] are so energized [that] they begin to do what they should have been doing all along, and as a consequence, God moves with great power, many are saved, and many are sanctified. I am praying for "a gust of divine power" to sweep over Calvary Bible Church so that many are converted, many are sanctified, and many do what they need to be doing as Christians so that the Church will become what God wants it to become. I would like it to start here. I mean, I'm selfish, but why not? Burbank is as good as Hamilton, Ontario.

I just wanted to give you those few examples of revival because in both of them what was the natural outcome, the normal outcome, of people's being swept away by the Spirit of God? It was what? Prayer—massive, continuous prayer. I'm telling you, that does not describe us at Calvary Bible Church. As we get into Luke 11, we're going to be talking about prayer, and I want this to be something that is encouraging to all of us. I know how prayer is. You just mention prayer and our ears go back, our tails tuck between our legs, and we start quivering, because who prays enough? How many people [here] think they pray too much? Raise your hand. Where are they? You see? We don't pray like we should, or as much as we should, or in the way [that] we should. It's convicting. I've got that. Guilt is the gift that keeps on giving. It's like cayenne pepper—a little bit of it goes a *long* way. My hope is that, yes, if there are sin areas in your life concerning prayer that you confess those to God, but more important, [my hope is] that this series that we're embarking on changes you, helps you, encourages you, and thrills you as a believer.

We don't really know the context of Luke 11. It's [similar to] the last part of chapter 10—Luke doesn't give us enough data to really pinpoint

it. The entire chapter, [chapter 11], might be divided up into two different sections. We don't have time to read the whole thing, but if you read verses 1–13, it talks about the kingdom of God, and then the second half talks about the kingdom of Satan. Those are kind of two big divisions. The kingdom of God division, [which is found in] verses 1–13, is focused around prayer, or is discussed in relation to prayer. There are examples teaching us to pray, instructions teaching us to pray, instructions to persevere in prayer, [and] encouragements to motivate us to pray. All of this is found in the first thirteen verses of [Luke] 11, which we are going to work through. [I don't know how long it's going to take, but] we're going to learn from Jesus how to pray.

Look at [Luke 11] and follow along. I'm going to look at the first four verses. We'll stop there [because] we aren't even going to get close to finishing them [today].

It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, “Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples.” And He said to them, “When you pray, say: ‘Father, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.’”

From this text, we are going to encounter three exhortations about prayer—to begin with—that Jesus gives us to instruct us in the proper way to address our heavenly Father [in] the way that gives Him glory according to His will.

What we have recorded in Luke 11:1–4 is a shortened version of basically the same prayer that appears in Matthew 6:9–13. In Matthew, Jesus gives this prayer in the middle of the Sermon on the Mount. [Our text in Luke 11] is about a year later, and Jesus gives the prayer again in relationship to the disciples' asking Him [to] “teach us how to pray.” So, though the

prayers are very similar, and though they are both used by Jesus to instruct us how to pray, one has its context in the Sermon on the Mount, the other in a private conversation [in which] the disciples have come up to Him [and asked Him to teach them how to pray].

As I was reading [the passage from Luke 11], you were probably tempted to insert a few phrases [that] aren't in Luke, right? You know the prayer of Matthew so well—most people do—and it's very poetic and it has these nice little couplets in there. It's very structured and “flowy,” [so] that we just kind of want to say, “Our Father,” instead of just “Father.” Then, we want to say, “Who is in heaven,” but it's not there. Then we want to say, “Thy kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven,” which isn't there. We want to fill in these pieces, but Luke leaves them out.

You may think, “Oh, that's too bad, because those phrases are good, and I'm sure they have some goodies in them.” Well, it's not that bad. Let me just give you a quick comparison [of the two passages to] explain. Matthew say[s], “Our Father,” [and] Luke just says, “Father.” That's fine because when somebody is our father, he is [referred to as] “our father”—he belongs to [us], if he's our father. So, really, nothing is missing there. Matthew's version also adds “who is in heaven,” and, of course, everybody knows that God the Father is in heaven, so that doesn't really tell us anything we don't have in Luke. Both have “hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come.” Luke ends with that; Matthew adds “Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” and yet, really, to ask that God's kingdom come is really to ask that His “will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” so we aren't missing anything [in the Luke passage]. Again, the extra phrase in Matthew is a nice little explanation of what the key thing is: the kingdom come. We aren't missing out, because “Thy kingdom come” includes all of that and more.

Matthew has “give us this day our daily bread,” and Luke has “give us *each* day our daily bread,” and though slightly different—one seems to be talking about a single day, and the other [about] every day in the future—they're both essentially saying the same thing. Matthew has “forgive us our debts”; Luke, thankfully, interprets that and lets us know [that]

it means “forgive us our sins,” and then uses [the word] “debts” after that. Matthew’s version continues, “as we also have forgiven our debtors,” while Luke records, “for we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.” Both phrases are pretty much saying the same thing. Both versions have “lead us not into temptation.” Matthew adds, “but deliver us from evil,” but really, to not be lead into temptation is to be delivered from evil, so there’s not anything added there.

Most translations of Matthew’s prayer do add [another] phrase, and if you have one of the more literal translations of the Bible—maybe a study Bible, RSV, or maybe NASB, or something like that (I don’t know if the NIV has it)—you might see a footnote or brackets there, where Matthew’s [version of the prayer] concludes with the classic “for Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever, Amen,” which doesn’t appear in any of the ancient manuscripts. Sorry. Origen, who was a fanatic translator of ancient manuscripts in the very early Church, and who put together one of the great works that was burned up at Constantinople in the fire when the city was sacked (which all linguists regret), wrote what was called the *Hexaglot*, which was basically a parallel version [of the Bible] in six languages. He said that of all the manuscripts he knew of, that phrase was not in any of the ancient ones.

So, that said, Luke’s prayer is shorter, but it’s just as comprehensive [as Matthew’s], so don’t think we’re going to miss anything, because we’re not.

The Lord’s Prayer, as some call it, or, the Disciples’ Prayer, which is probably more accurate, teaches us some important, critical forms and functions of prayer. It’s really the Disciples’ Prayer, because the disciples have come to Jesus, saying, “Teach us how to pray.” This isn’t really [a] prayer that Jesus [would] pray, because it says, “Forgive us our sins,” and Jesus never sinned. It’s really [a] prayer from Jesus [that is being taught] to the disciples, so the “Disciples’ Prayer” is probably a little bit more accurate way to refer to it. It is incredibly dense with information and implications of that information, though the words are fairly simple.

I've been preaching for about twenty years now, and whenever I decide that I'm only going to preach a sermon on a couple of words or phrases, I get a little anxious at the beginning of the week. I think, "I wonder if I should actually tell [the congregation] that that's what I'm going to preach on. If I do that I might not have enough things to say." See, I always think, "I wonder how much is here. I wonder how much I can find embedded in this passage," even though many times I've preached on a single word for an hour, [or] preached six sermons on half [of] a verse. [I] always kind of wonder [if it will be enough] because [I would] hate to be in the flow, [with] everybody waiting for the full-meal deal, and I just shut it down after fifteen minutes, [saying], "Sorry, I ran out." But, I am telling you that this [passage] is loaded. I was just shell-shocked by how much is here. I knew this—I had studied it a bit and heard some sermons on it—but now I understand why people have written whole books on this. It is just so great.

Friday afternoon, [actually], I guess it was evening—it was 6 p.m.—my wife called me, and said, "Are you coming home?" I'm telling you, I was in the third heaven, I was just in the Zen of studying. Sometimes I forget everything [when I'm studying]. As soon as everybody leaves and the office gets quiet, it's like, "Oh, yes!" I just want you to know that this [series on prayer] is going to totally bless you. I know it will. I am so happy for you because if you get anything out of this even close to what I've gotten out of this, you're just going to leave, thinking, "This is *so good!*"

The Disciples' Prayer, given to [the disciples] by Jesus, tells us [to whom and for what] we are to pray. Those are the two major divisions, and then within [the division of] what we are to ask for is that God's name would be hallowed, His kingdom would come, He would supply our daily needs, He would forgive us our sins, help us to forgive the sins of others, and that He would make sure that we were not led into temptation. It seems pretty easy, and you [may be] thinking, "OK, we're going to go home now." Not on your life.

In looking at the request [for instruction on prayer made by the disciples], you can see some incredible details in Jesus' answer. I have to tell

you these things because they are there. I'm sorry [that] I'm kind of giving you this big pile of mixed salad, but just think about this. The first part of the prayer is about our vertical relationship with God, our Father, who is in heaven. That is about us and God. The latter part of the prayer talks about our horizontal relationships with other people—forgiving them as they sin against us. Encompassed in the prayer are the two great commandments: Love God, and love your neighbor. It's so great and it's just right there.

You might even say that the first part of the prayer is about worshipping God, and the second part is about meeting our daily needs; or, [that] the first [part] is about the kingdom of God, and the second is about kingdom living; or, the first part is about the greatest commandment—love God—and the second [part of the prayer is about the second great commandment]—love your neighbor. All of that is in this prayer. It's also important to note that this prayer is not a formula prayer. Jesus is [not] saying, “Listen, here's the magical prayer. All you [have] to do is whenever you need something from God, you put these prayer tokens in the cosmic vending machine, and then out pops the junk food that you want.” This isn't how you manipulate God, this isn't how you finally, after a time, have figured out that when you really want God to get you what you want, you throw this prayer down at Him, and He [has] to respond because, after all, this prayer is, in fact, Jesus' prayer and [God the Father] could never say “no” to Jesus. That's not what it's about.

We know it's not a formula prayer for two primary reasons. One is that Jesus' prayer in Luke 11 is not identical to [the one found in] Matthew 6. If it was a formula prayer that you had to pray, the [two prayers] would be identical, but they're not. [Two]: In all the prayers in Acts, in all the prayers in all the epistles of the New Testament and the book of Revelation, [this prayer is] never prayed, but all the prayers that are prayed contain the vital elements found in this prayer. We know it is the pattern of prayer, or a model of prayer, or a prayer that teaches us proper perspective in prayer. Yes, it's OK to pray it, but don't think that if you pray this 100 times God is going to finally say, “All right!” or that if you have something you want

from God, you're going to think, "I'm going to throw the Disciples' Prayer on there, and man, that's according to the will of God, and He's going to give me what I want."

I want you to realize that [although] it's not a formal prayer, the principles in this prayer that we're going to be eking our way through are the principles that make prayers acceptable to God. If you have been here since [I started this series at] the beginning of Luke, you may remember back when we were in Luke 5:16. Whether you were here or not, I would encourage you to listen to two sermons that were preached on prayer at that time. One is called "Sneak Away to Pray,"<sup>3</sup> and the other is called "The Purpose and Practice of Prayer."<sup>4</sup> Those two sermons talk about the mechanics of prayer and how prayer works with a God who has already determined the end from the beginning. I mean, why pray if all of that has already been decided by God? OK? If you want to know [the answer to] that question, and you want to know the mechanics of prayer, how prayer works, then listen to those two sermons—they're online and you can [also] get them from the office. I'm not going to cover those things again except just briefly.

Whenever I'm preaching in a book [of the Bible], I try to [determine the major themes. For instance], prayer is a major theme of Luke, so [I know] I'm going to encounter prayer over and over again. [Therefore], when I hit each passage on prayer, I want to build upon what I've already said, not say the same thing over and over again. So, please listen to those [sermons from Luke 5:16] as it will help you have an understanding [of prayer], and help inform your understanding of what we're looking at in [the rest of] Luke.

It is God's desire that all of us, as individuals, be devoted to prayer. I think we all know that. That's like, "No duh, we all need to be praying." I think we all realize that we could do a better job [of praying, too]. I think we all realize that prayer is not the fire alarm that we only pull the handle on when there's an emergency in our lives, though we often use it in that

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<sup>3</sup><http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/Sermons.aspx/audio/sermon/2004/20040725>

<sup>4</sup><http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/Sermons.aspx/audio/sermon/2004/20040801>

way. It is also obvious that it is God's desire that Calvary Bible Church be a place committed to group prayer. It's interesting that in Matthew's version of the prayer, Jesus, in preaching in the context, says, "When you pray, enter into your prayer closet and pray to your heavenly Father" where? In secret. It seems like in that prayer Jesus is emphasizing individual prayer in secret before God. Here in Luke [11], though we can't be certain [of His exact intent], all the pronouns He uses are plural: "When you," plural, "pray, say 'hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Give us,'" plural, "each day our," plural, "daily bread," and so on. It's all plural, so it seems like the emphasis in Luke is a little bit more toward corporate prayer, but both prayers are essentially the same, so whether you're praying in private [or] you're praying corporate[ly] in a group, you need to have the same principles governing your prayer.

My fear for Calvary Bible Church is this: That we are going to forget God. I think we already have to a degree, because I think we would be praying more if we loved God and were depending upon Him more. In Deuteronomy there is this warning that appears over and over again. Do you remember what that warning is? Let me just give you an example of it [in] Deuteronomy 6:10–12. [The Israelites are] about ready to enter the Promised Land, they're going to have incredible blessing, [and] God is going to finally bring them into the land that they've been trying to get into for forty years. This is what Moses says:

Then it shall come about when the LORD your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you, great and splendid cities which you did not build, and houses full of all good things which you did not fill, and hewn cisterns which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant, and you eat and are satisfied, then watch yourself, that you do not forget the LORD who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

That appears over and over again. You see, the basic principle [is] that when Israel was in the desert, and they had no option[s]—they would starve if manna didn't fall from heaven every day [see Exodus 16:4–31], they would run out of clothing if their clothing [wore] out [see Deuteronomy 8:4], they would get scorched in the sun if a big canopy of cloud didn't cover them during the day, and it would be dark in the desert if there wasn't a pillar of fire by night [see Exodus 13:21–22], [they would die of thirst] if God hadn't brought them water out of the rock [see Exodus 17:1–7], and [of hunger if God hadn't provided] quail [see Exodus 16:11–13] and [done other] things to provide for their every need—[they] continually depend[ed] upon God. Now, [in Deuteronomy 6], God was sending them into a land of incredible blessing, and they were going to enjoy all this blessing, and [Moses] says, “I just want you to know: Beware because as soon as we get blessed,” like Calvary Bible Church has been blessed, with people coming to the Lord, and people growing in their faith, and people giving, and just great things happening, “as soon as that starts happening we can begin to become satisfied not in God, but in God's blessing. We can become content with the things God provides rather than [with] God Himself.” When we sit back, and we say, “Oh, aren't we doing well? Look at all the programs we have, and look at the people who are being baptized, and look at the people who are being saved, is this not Babylon the great that we have built?” [see Daniel 4:30], we [will] have forgotten the Lord.

Instead, when God blesses us, we need to then realize that to whom more is given, more is required [see Luke 12:48], and that when God gives us more, it requires that we seek Him more diligently because the blessing of God is a call to pray harder, not to forget about the Lord or to trust or be satisfied in the blessings themselves. [We are] to praise and thank the God who gives the blessings. [Do] you know what happened to Israel? They moved into the land, they conquered the enemies, they settled down, enjoyed the vineyards, and cisterns, and orchards, and houses filled with stuff, and they were satisfied in those things, and they forgot about the Lord. By the time you get to [the book of] Judges, the theme verse is: “There was

no king in Israel” [see Judges 17:6, 18:1, 19:1, etc.], which of course, there was—the Lord God—but they had totally forgotten about Him. “Every man did what was right in his own eyes” [Judges 17:6]. There was total anarchy, chaos, and sin when God blessed them super abundantly.

It is my fear that as God is pouring out this blessing upon us—conversions, spiritual growth, [a] building project, programs, and all these things—that instead of driving us to our knees and making us realize, “Man, we’ve got to swim against the current here, we have to go against complacency, we need to pray harder, pray more, trust God, praise Him, and draw close to God,” we will draw back. Then this is what happens: God says, “Well, since I’m not getting your attention through My Word, then comes the paddle of circumstances.” If He can’t get your attention through His Word, He uses circumstances, and man, it is painful. Then He will bring some catastrophe upon us as a church, or as a city, or as a nation, and then we will be clinging to God, won’t we?

Think of the times you really cling to God: when things are really bad, when you don’t know what to do, [when] you can’t do anything, [when] you’re at the end of your rope and you realize [that] the only way out, the only person who can do anything about it is God. You’re just clinging to Him, [saying], “Help me! Help me!” Well, that’s how we are to be all the time. Yet, when blessing comes, we tend to [think], “Yeah, God’s out there,” and then we use God as the fire alarm. We see the red switch on the wall, [and] if an emergency comes into our lives, we’ll run over there and [ring it, crying], “I’m here, and I need something!” That’s not what God wants; He wants a life devoted to prayer. It is my desire, it is God’s desire, to see Calvary Bible Church be known as a church of prayer, where we have prayer in the morning, prayer during the service, prayer after the service, prayer during the week, individual prayer, corporate prayer, and prayer, prayer, prayer.

OK. That’s my Martin Luther King[, Jr.,] speech: I have a dream. I just had to get that off my chest so you know where we’re going and what we’re

trying to achieve in this [series], and what I'm praying for. I hope you pray along with me.

Point one: Follow Jesus' example and pray. Look at [Luke 11:]1: "It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place." Just stop there. We're not going to spend a lot of time here because I covered Jesus' example as a man of diligent prayer in those two previous sermons [from Luke 5:16] I mentioned. But, everybody knows that Jesus would often escape to pray. He would go to a mountain; He'd go to a lonely place a stone's throw away; He would get away so He could pray uninterrupted[ly].

[Imagine] you [know] a young lady who is in college, and she's with four other roommates who are having a great time together. [Then] her boyfriend calls her on her cell phone. Is she going to sit there in the midst of her [four] cackling roommates and talk to her boyfriend? Not on your life. She's going to get up and she's going to go find someplace where she won't be interrupted while she talks to her boyfriend. That's what we need to do as Christians. That's what Jesus did. That is His example: When Jesus wanted to talk to the Father, He would get up and go someplace away from the cackling of the world, society, and the disciples.

My question to you is: Are you doing that? Again, I'm not trying to heap any huge guilt on you. You're probably already thinking, "Oh, no. Should I even come the next four weeks? Maybe I can go to a different church." Listen, if you're not spending time in prayer, you need to confess that sin to God, and say, "Lord, I'm not praying like I should, and I just want to confess this to You." This is what I want you to do: If you're not spending time with God in prayer on a regular basis, a time alone—I don't care where it is, what your routine is, or what time it is—just commit to [praying for] ten minutes a day. Can you do that? Just ten minutes a day. That's all. That's three commercials, OK? Maybe just hit the mute [button], and bow your head in between whatever [you're watching and the commercials]. Set an alarm and just [take] ten minutes [to pray]. Just ten minutes.

I want you to do that because I want you to develop a pattern of setting aside undistracted time to [talk with] the Lord. Once you get the pattern

established in your life, that every single day [you] pray for ten minutes, then you can stretch it out to twelve or fifteen [minutes]. The pattern is the hard thing to get started. Once you get the pattern started, then you can expand the time and [work on] how you pray. We're going to figure out how to do that [as this series progresses]. So, I want you to try and get your ten minutes in—at least—if you aren't doing that.

Second point: Be willing to learn how to pray. Notice in the middle of [Luke 11:]1, we read: "After He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, 'Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples.'" Several of the disciples—we don't know who they are, maybe they're part of the seventy, maybe they're part of the Twelve, we don't know, it doesn't say—have been watching Jesus pray from a distance. You can just imagine their conversation. It probably went something like this: "He's been over there a long time."

"I know."

"Yeah, and have you noticed that whenever He prays, He's always kind of just rocking. It's like He's got a gut ache or something. It's like He's got so much passion that when He's praying He's just... it's like His life depends on it."

Another says, "I know, isn't that convicting? Do you do that?"

"No, I don't do that."

"And, often, He gets up when it's still dark. I mean, it's the middle of the night. I get up early, and sometimes when I get up, and it's just light outside, He's just returning from prayer after being gone for who knows how long."

"I know. It's convicting."

Then another finally says, "Well, I know what I'm going to do. When He comes back, I'm going to ask Him to teach us how to pray like He does."

That's what's happening here [in this passage]. The [disciples] want to know how to pray. They even bring up this thing with John, [that] John's disciples were taught how to pray by John. What's that about? Commentators—people who know more than I do—say that it could be one

of two things. One is that at that time, rabbis often created prayers that their little discipleship group would pray. So, if I was a rabbi, I would write out this prayer, or maybe a series of prayers, and I would teach my disciples to memorize [the prayer, or prayers], and that's [what] they would pray. Those prayers would then distinguish them as my disciples because they prayed the Jack Hughes' prayer[s]. It could be that these disciples, knowing that John the Baptist actually taught his disciples a form of prayer, are asking Jesus, "Could you give us Jesus' disciples' prayer?" Or, [two], it just could be that John taught his disciples, in general, how to pray, and that's what [Jesus' disciples] are asking [to learn].

Regardless of the motive, the lesson that you want to learn here is [that] the disciples *wanted to learn how to pray*. My question to you is: Do you want to learn how to pray? Terry L. Johnson, in his excellent work on the Disciples' Prayer, [which] I would encourage you all to read—it's very simple, very wonderful, very good—called *When Grace Comes Alive*, says this:

It matters to [God] how we pray to Him. Again, one might have thought that the truly important thing is that we pray. Just so long as we are sincere, so long as we try, so long as we pray on occasion, that's all that matters. Given how busy and distracted we are, God should be pleased that we find time to pray at all. He's not. He's not pleased with any concept of Himself which we might have. He's not pleased with any prayers that we might offer. We might think that it ought not to matter to God, but it does. He is not pleased to receive any scraps of religious interest that we might offer Him. He requires that we think of Him rightly, and that we approach him rightly. Consequently, we must be taught. We need instruction.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Terry L. Johnson, *When Grace Comes Alive* (Ross-Shire, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2003), 24–5.

That is so right on. God doesn't accept every prayer. You know when the 9/11 thing happened and all the people of the nation were praying? Most of those prayers were not heard by God—were not accepted by God. When an unbeliever prays, God does not hear the prayer of the wicked [see Proverbs 15:8, 29], period, unless it's a prayer of repentance and faith in Christ. He doesn't [answer] a lot of the prayers of Christians because they don't pray according to His will. They don't even know what His will is, and that's why we're doing this series.

We need to make an effort to learn how to pray so that our prayers are not just those same things we do over and over again. We kind of just get stuck in a rut, and [say something like], “God's neat, let's eat,” which is the hungry man's prayer. “God is good, God is great, thank You for this food, Amen,” eat! “Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep, if I die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take. Amen.” Those are little prayer-ets, for little occasions that we can just throw out there.

You know, in some respects, prayer comes naturally to a Christian. If you grew up in a Christian home, and you came to Christ at an early age, you probably [didn't] have [the following] experience, but those of you who came to Christ later know exactly what I'm talking about. Before you came to Christ, you lived in a world where a lot of times you never even thought of God, you didn't care about God, you'd go whole days and never even think about God. Then, through a series of circumstances, you came to understand Christ, you came to understand that He died on the cross for your sins, that you're a sinner, that He's holy and He's going to punish you unless you repent of your sins, turn from them, and place your faith in [Him], and His death, His burial, His resurrection alone to save you. You committed your life, you were saved, you were born again.

Then what happened? God was everywhere. You were driving around, and all you did was think of God. Do you remember that? You were just driving down the road and all you [could] think [was], “Oh, God, this is great. Oh, help me not to crash with that person. Help me not to yell at that person. Help me not to do this. When I do this, and when I do that. . .” and

pretty soon you had this God consciousness. It's normal. That's what happens when you receive the Holy Spirit. That's what happens when you're born again. All of a sudden you have this experience where in your life you are aware of God, and [it] just seems like He's everywhere. You're taking your little teaspoon of information of what you know from the Bible, and you're comparing it with everything in life. Do you remember that?

Then, a lot of times, after a time, what happens is [that the] excitement, [the] thrill, can begin to wear off if we don't have somebody discipling us and teaching us how to practice the godly disciplines of prayer, Bible reading, meditation, study, corporate worship, serving, evangelism, and all those different disciplines God gives us to maintain the fires of our lives—especially devotions with God, which we talked about last week—the one thing necessary.<sup>6</sup>

This is what Paul describes when he's talking about praying without ceasing [see 1 Thessalonians 5:17]. [You might wonder], "What does that mean? Does that mean that we get in the corner of our living room and turn our face to the corner and get out our prayer journal that looks like the phone book, and we just go through it forever and that's all we do and waste away there praying, praying, praying without ceasing?" No. It means having a continual consciousness of God so that, as we're doing our work, we're saying, "Lord, help me do a good job, let me be a good witness here, help me to walk with you here, help me to be a light in my community, my job, and my house. Help me to be a good mom, a good dad," whatever. Wherever you are, wherever you're driving, eating, sleeping, whatever you do, you "do all to the glory of God" [1 Corinthians 10:31]. You're thinking of God; you're letting God permeate your life.

As you wake up in the morning, [your] first thought is, "Lord!" Do you have that experience? Then, as you get up, and you're taking your shower, "Lord," and as you're brushing your teeth, "Lord," and as you're getting ready, [you're thinking], "Lord," and as you're driving to work, "Lord,"

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<sup>6</sup><http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/Sermons.aspx/audio/sermon/2007/20070909>

and as you get there, “Lord.” You’re just talking to God, you’re asking Him, you’re praising Him, you’re thinking about Him all day long. Do you have that experience? You should. That is normal, basic Christianity. If you don’t have that, then something is wrong—you don’t know Christ, or there’s sin in your life, or you’ve developed bad habits, or you’ve never been disciplined correctly.

There should be this constant desire to pray, [which] comes with salvation, with having a relationship with God. But, having said that, that’s not enough. Though salvation causes us to be aware of God, makes us want to talk with God, and gives us this closeness with God that we’ve never had before, it’s a thrill, and it’s wonderful, [but] it’s not enough. Jesus tells us in this text [in Luke 11 that] there is a way to pray. Other texts tell us [that] there is a way to pray that pleases God, and ways to pray that don’t please God. As you grow in your walk, you need to learn how to pray. If you’re a Christian, hopefully, that is your desire. Some people have developed little methods, like the ACTS method, where each letter stands for [something]—adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication—which is a good little thing, but it’s only good if it conforms to the Word of God, not [just] if it works for you. It must conform to the Word of God. Jesus must have a say over our prayer lives. If you’re truly born again, you *want* to learn how to pray.

Having said that, [the] third [point is]: We are to pray to our heavenly Father. Look at [Luke 11:]2: “And [Jesus] said to them, ”When you pray, say. . . .” I just want to make a note here. Jesus has been asked to teach the disciples to pray, and I just want to make this little, tiny distinction here, which I think is important. The disciples have not come to Jesus, saying, “Can you give us some information so we can leave with information about how to pray.” [Instead], they’re coming to Jesus, saying, “Teach us to engage in prayer. We want to *do* it. We want to *do prayer*.” That’s what they’re after. They want to do prayer. I know that may sound like splitting hairs, and it is, but it is a very important hair splitting. There’s a whole difference between sitting in a classroom in high school learning [what] the traffic laws

are and [actually] driving the car in the traffic. [The disciples] are not saying, “Teach us to pass the drivers’ [license] exam.” They’re saying, “We want to drive. We want to pray like you pray.” That’s what they’re after. The disciples wanted to learn to pray like Jesus prayed.

Look at the first thing they are to say. Jesus says, “When you pray. . . .” You [can] just imagine what’s going through their minds right [then]. They know all these rabbi prayers, they know all these things in Judaism, [so] what is it that they’re really looking for right now? What do you think Jesus is going to say? They’re thinking, “Oh, what’s He going to tell us?”

Jesus says, “Father,” and I’m telling you, their jaws dropped when He said this. They were hammered by this statement. You [may wonder], “Why?” [It is] because in the Old Testament God is referred to as “Father” [only] fourteen times in thirty-nine books—three-fourths of the Bible—and in every one of those instances, He is the Father of the nation, or the Father of all creation. Never does anyone, ever, refer to God as “Father” directly, except in prophecies that talk about the Father’s relationship to God the Son. [Yet here], Jesus says, “Now, when you pray, say, ‘Father.’”

You need to know that when He says this, He is saying the equivalent of the Aramaic “Abba,” [which means] “Daddy.” As a matter of fact, if you went to Israel today, wandered around the streets, and listened to kids [talking to their dads] in some language you didn’t understand, you would hear them say, “Abba.” It’s still being used. It is the standard term that any child who wants to address his dad uses. This is just radical. Follow me here. Paul, in Romans 8:14–15, says:

For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!”

“Daddy.” Paul knew what Jesus was saying, and said, “When you go to God, since He’s your [heavenly] Father—if you’re saved—speak to Him that way because [that is what] He is.”

In Galatians 4:6, Paul says, “Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’” Amazing. *Amazing!* It’s amazing for this reason: God the Father, obviously, has a special relationship with Jesus, Jesus being God the Son. In the New Testament, just in the gospels alone, Jesus refers to “Father” over sixty times, personally. He says [to His disciples], “Here it is. This is how we all are to address God. I want you to address God like *I* address God, and I want you to say, ‘Dad. Father.’” [Isn’t] that radical? The Jews wouldn’t even say the name of God. They wouldn’t say, “Yahweh.” Instead they would substitute “the Name,” or “Adonai,” in place of that, [yet] here, Jesus says, “When you pray, say . . .” and out comes this shell shocker: “Father.”

That is amazing because the Jews never had this concept of God. God was high, exalted, lifted up, mighty, distant, transcendent, and Jesus is saying, “But when you pray, since you’re a child of God, you come before the throne of grace, and you say, ‘Father.’ I want you to address Him just like you would your father since He is your father, since through faith in Me, you are a child of God. You are my brother [or] sister in Christ, and we have equal standing before God the Father through Me.” Is[n’t] that just radical, that because you have placed your faith in Christ you are adopted into the family of God, and God now, through Christ, makes you perfect so you can approach [Him], God Almighty, the Father, Creator of heaven and earth? You can approach Him and you can just talk to Him.

Rudolf Bultmann was a German theologian from the Lutheran persuasion who had some bad views on the gospels, Bible authority, and inspiration. [However, he] did accurately observe the great contrast [between] the Disciples’ Prayer [and] the common prayers of Jesus’ day. Bultmann contrasted: “The ornate, emotional, often liturgically beautiful but often overloaded forms of address in Jewish prayers with the stark simplicity of ‘Father! The Prayer of Eighteen Petitions,” which, as a side note, [was a prayer created] during the first century, [when] eighteen prayers the Jews were to pray [were developed], “for instance, which the devout Jew is expected to say three times daily, begins, ‘Lord God of Abraham, God of

Isaac, God of Jacob! God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth! Our Shield and the Shield of our fathers!”

Jesus just says, “Set all that aside—all the Abraham, all the Isaac, the Jacob, Most High, Shield—just go for ‘Father.’” Bultmann goes on to say, “God is near; He hears and understands the requests which come thronging to Him, as a father understands the requests of his own child.”<sup>7</sup> What comes to your mind when you think of God, anyway? Granted, “God is spirit” [John 4:24], and we aren’t to make idols of Him, but what comes to your mind, what comes to your thoughts? When you go to your heavenly Father, what’s there? Who are you talking to, anyway? What is your picture, your mental picture, your mental thoughts about God? Do you picture Him as you would a loving father? If not, you’ve got the wrong picture, for we are to call God, “Father,” which is a term that is very intimate, very close, very personal, and easily accessible, like any father.

We need to make sure, though, that we don’t anthropomorphize God. Somebody came up after last service, and said, “Could you say that word again?” [It is] “anthro” meaning “man,” “po” meaning “toward,” [and] “morphize,” “to morph,” [or “change into”]. [It means] to “morph” [or “form”] God into man’s image. We aren’t to take sinful [aspects], or qualities, that are unworthy of God and foist them upon Him. Nevertheless, God wants us to approach Him, and talk to Him, since He isn’t *like* a father to us, He *is* our Father. We are His children. If we’re saved, He is our heavenly Father. It’s not like He’s *like* a father; He *is* a father. He’s not like a sinful human father; He is a perfect father.

[Do you] remember in John 14:[9], when Philip came to [Jesus], and said, “Show us the Father”? Do you remember what Jesus said? “Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, “Show us the Father”?’” [Jesus is saying], “Get a life, Philip! Don’t you know that ‘God is spirit’ [John 4:24], that ‘the heavens and the highest

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<sup>7</sup>Payne, com. Lk. 243–244.

heavens cannot contain Him?’ [2 Chronicles 2:6], that ‘no man has seen God at any time’ [see John 1:18]? But God has sent Me forth to be clothed in humanity so that as much as God can be pictured in human flesh you have seen [Him]. All of My teachings are from the Father. All of My works are from the Father. All of My character [is] from the Father so that when you see Me, you’re seeing as much of the Father as anybody has ever seen. So, what do you mean, ‘Show us the Father?’ What are you looking for? He’s invisible, and I am the exact representation of His nature.” That’s amazing, and Jesus is saying [that] our thoughts of God need to be of a father.

A lot of you have [had] bad experiences growing up, granted. Your dad, your father, was absent and/or wicked. You didn’t have a close relationship, you didn’t have a loving relationship, and maybe you’re thinking, “Well, when I think of ‘father,’ I think of bad, mean, absent, gone, harsh,” whatever. Those are the kind of anthropomorphisms we should never foist onto God because He is none of those things. When you look in the pages of Scripture, which is what you need to do to learn what your heavenly Father is like, you will learn that He is perfectly loving, perfectly compassionate, perfectly gracious toward you, and He loves you so much [that] He sent His Son to die for you [see John 3:16]. What more could He give? Like Paul says in Romans, “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?” [8:32]. Doesn’t He promise there that God is going to cause “all things to work together for good” [Romans 8:28]? Th[at] is the One [to whom] you are to go, and say, “Father.”

Imagine having a very close, loving [father], [who is] about as perfect a human father as you can [get]. [He is] a dad who, when you were growing up, spent time with you, taught you things, encouraged you, gave you some wisdom, taught you about the Lord [and] the Bible, helped you through school, helped you through college. [He is] your close, great, loved, fun dad that you just have so many great memories about. He is just such an excellent dad. [Now imagine that] all of a sudden you get a phone call and [your father has] had a massive stroke. You go to the hospital and he can’t

speak. The doctor says, “You know, he’s all there, he understands what we’re saying right now. He can’t speak—that part of his brain is shot—but he can hear everything you say.”

You sit down, and what do you say to him? That’s what Jesus is talking about. You tell [your father], as you [go to see him] day-by-day, “Dad, how are you doing?” He doesn’t answer. “This is what I did today, and this is what I’m thinking of doing, and maybe doing this. What do you think?” You’re talking with your dad. You’re talking with your earthly father. You’re having a conversation. There’s no fear there, there’s no terror there; you’re having a conversation with him. He loves you. You’re his child, [and] of course he wants to hear [about your life]. As he lies there, unable to speak to you, you’re pouring your heart out to him.

Well, take that part, and realize that there’s nothing wrong with God. He’s not injured; He hasn’t had a stroke. In His love, and His compassion, He has already chosen you; He has already saved you. He has bent His all-powerful will to do you good, to grant you every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ [see Ephesians 1:3] for all eternity. When you ask for bread, He’s not going to give you a rock, or a snake [see Matthew 7:10]. He’s not going to dump bad things on you, only good things, all good things, forever good things, and He has that for you. He loves you, and He just says, “Talk to me.” That’s what He’s looking for. What do you tell Him? You just tell Him about your life, you tell Him about what you’re struggling with, ask Him for things because He has unlimited resources. You want to please Him, [so] you thank Him for all that He has done for you, and is doing for you, and will do for you. That’s it.

The question[s] we need to ask ourselves [are these]. [First: Am I] following Jesus’ example, and getting away to pray? If you aren’t, go for the ten minutes. I’m not saying this because we’re [only] going to do this for a week, [but rather because] it is the beginning of a greater thing that should last until you die. Second: Do [I] want to learn how to pray? If you do, then you pray. That’s how you begin—you learn from the Scriptures, and keep coming, and we’ll learn together from Jesus. Finally, [ask yourself]: When

[I] pray, do [I] picture God, do [I] imagine God as [my] father, as [my] close, loving, perfect, heavenly, just, merciful, kind Father?

What we're going to do right now is we're going to close in prayer. [When we pray,] I [often] say, "Bow your heads." Do you know why we do that? [It is] because that's a way [of getting] to that secret place [to] pray when there's a whole bunch of people around. You don't have to look at that person with the weird cowlick on the back of his head, or the dandruff on his shoulder, or whatever. So, what we're going to do is we're just going to pray right now. I want you to bow your heads, and this is what I want you to think about. Just imagine that right now you're in heaven, and there Jesus is, the King of kings, the Lord of lords [see 1 Timothy 6:15]. You see Him there, sitting on His radiant and glorious throne. [There is a] brightness [that] just goes on, and you're seeing Jesus there, and He's looking at you, and He's got a smile on His face. He says, "Come closer." You do, and He looks at you, and says, "My Father wants you to talk to Him now." All of a sudden, Jesus disappears. There are no angels, there are no other believers; you're just in heaven, all alone, and you know that Jesus wants you to talk to your heavenly Father because you're a child of God. Jesus has told you that He wants you to talk to [His Father]. And so, right now, you're going to talk to Him. Do that just for a few moments. Just talk to Him. [Silence for a few moments.]

Father, we come before You right now as Your children, sinners saved by grace. And, Father, we like this. We like to be in Your presence, [to] be still and know that You are God [see Psalm 46:10], that You love us, that You are intimate with us, that You want to do us good, You want to hear from us, You want us to talk to You, and to ask You for things, and [to] thank You for things, and [to] praise You for things. Father, I just pray that each person right now, as they're just in their mind's eye in heaven all alone just thinking, talking, praying, that they would realize that this is good, this is exactly what You want us to do, and You want us to do this every day, multiple times a day if possible. [You want us] to come before You, put everything else aside, and just have a relationship with You as we

meditate on Your Word, as we think about Your goodness to us, and have a relationship with You. And, Father, we're going to close now, but, Father, may each person here leave realizing that he or she needs to spend time with You in prayer, to make it a habit to have private prayer, to engage in corporate prayer, that *You* might be the center of our lives, not the things that You give us. Father, we pray all of these things in Your precious name, Amen.

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