



# Praying to the God of 'How Much More'

## Luke Series #32

Luke 11:1-13

David Sunday

September 1, 2013

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Let's go to our great God in prayer.

Heavenly Father, as we open Your Word we pray You would make it the bread of life to us. Break it open, nourish our hearts with it. For those who are weary, we pray Your Spirit would work upon Your Word to revive us in our faith and hope in You. For the many in our church who are struggling with physical ailments, we pray the healing balm of Your Word would be received as more than sufficient to sustain them in sickness.

We also pray for other churches and remember Bethel Baptist in the Riverwood subdivision on the other side of the Fox River. We thank you for their new pastor, Kipp Soncek and pray you would greatly empower his ministry and equip the saints there for fresh works of service in the name of Jesus. We pray that our community would see more light, joy and truth as a result of the ministry of Bethel Baptist. We also pray for the Crossway Community Church in Bristol, Wisconsin as they get ready to send a large group to plant a new church in downtown Kenosha. We pray that in their sending, You would bless them with a renewal of spiritual life, vitality and recalibration of their hearts to the mission of Your gospel. Speak to them powerfully today through their pastor—Mike Bullmore –and through all the people who gather there in Jesus' name. We ask this in Your name and for Your glory. Amen.

We are going to talk about something I know I need to do. It is something I desire to do and my heart is drawn to this. When I am aware of my need for protection, provision, encouragement or comfort, it is a privilege and absolute necessity. I know when I fail to do this my life is impoverished in many ways. Sometimes when I have done this, I find myself asking, "Why did I wait so long? Why didn't I come sooner? Why don't I do this more constantly?" We are going to talk about prayer.

In the words of an old hymn,

We may, we must draw near,  
We perish if we cease from prayer.

(from Lord, Teach Us How to Pray Aright by James Montgomery, 1819)

We have a great desire to pray as believers. Yet I have never known a believer who has not struggled with prayer from time to time. A book on The Praying Life asks, "How do you feel if someone

tells you it's possible for you to have a vibrant, powerful life of prayer?"

- Anxiety? (What if nothing happens?)
- Anticipation? (I can't wait. Let's go and do it!)
- Awe? (Who me? Can I have that kind of relationship with God?)
- Apathy? (Who cares? It's not that important in my life.)
- Arrogance? (I don't need God's help. I can do life myself.)
- Alienation? (Will God listen to my prayers?).
- A combination of the above responses?

God's people need to pray. We perish if we cease from prayer. Yet we struggle to pray.

What if I were to tell you there is Someone Who enjoys unparalleled closeness to the Father in prayer, knows you deeply and personally, loves you and is inviting you to enter into His fellowship and communion with the Father? What if I were to tell you that Jesus isn't standing over you, chiding you for how miserably you have failed in your prayer life and wondering when you are finally going to get it right? Rather, Jesus is coming alongside you as Savior, Shepherd, Advocate and Friend. He is saying, "Follow Me into a life of prayer; into My fellowship and communion with the Father." What if Jesus was here to help us learn to pray? Would you be encouraged and excited by that?

Luke 11:1 says, "*Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.'*" I am confident that if we could hear Jesus praying to the Father, see the radiance of His face, hear the closeness of His intimacy with the Father and listen to the way He prayed, we would all say, "Lord, we are going to cancel everything we have going and stay as long as we need for You to teach us to pray. We want to learn from You and Your knowledge of the Father."

I am so glad that when the disciples asked the Lord to teach them to pray, Jesus did not look at them and say, "Are you kidding? Teach you to pray? There is no way you are ever going to get this or qualify to be close to the Father like I am." Jesus did not spurn their request but instead gladly, warmly and simply showed them how to pray.

If you think about it, it is a bit strange that we would need to be taught how to pray. In my relationship with my earthly dad, no one ever needed to teach me how to talk with him because it was natural. Early in my life, I was crying out to my dad and realized I needed him. I never looked at my dad when I was little and said, "He is so big that there is no way he could care for a little boy like me." It is natural for a child to approach his father with his needs.

When I was older, I worked at the construction company where my dad was the vice-president. I never had to knock on his door or make an appointment to talk with him but would simply walk into his office because he was my dad and I was his son. We know there is something unnatural and wrong in a

parent-child relationship when the child needs to be coached on how to approach his father. "You have to get him at just the right time to make sure he is not in a bad mood. When you go talk to him, you need to say just the right words and get out quickly because he doesn't have time for you." There is something wrong in a relationship that has that kind of distance between a father and child.

The truth is that something has gone wrong in our relationship with God. In the Garden of Eden, no one needed to teach Adam and Eve how to pray. They talked with God comfortably and naturally. But then they sinned, turned their back on God and rebelled against Him. The first thing they wanted to do was hide from God because of their shame.

Thankfully, God did not give up on them but sent Jesus the Savior into the world. In Luke 11:1-13, Jesus is showing us He is the Way into the Father's presence. He is opening wide the door into the Father's family room and saying, "You can come in, feel at home and pour out your heart here. Dare to draw near to the Father. Be not afraid that He will harm you, for He loves the sound of His children's voices. You can make yourself at home in His presence." Does it sound comforting and inviting to be able to come into the presence of God like this? That is the tone and spirit that undergirds this passage.

Knowing us as He does, Jesus is seeking to remove some obstacles that kink the oxygen hose in our spiritual life of prayer. There are two obstacles to prayer which Jesus wants to remove from our lives:

1. We do not know what we should pray for.
2. We do not fully trust and believe the One to Whom we pray.

## **Knowing What to Pray For**

In Luke 11:1-4, Jesus removes the obstacle of not knowing what we should pray for. Do you ever struggle with this and find yourself wondering: "What do I say when I come to pray?" Maybe you find yourself like Martha (at the end of Luke 10), distracted by many things. When you pray you cannot focus your thoughts long enough to approach your Heavenly Father in a way that seems meaningful. Jesus is seeking to remove that obstacle by teaching us what we should pray for when we come into God's presence. He knows we all have this struggle.

Once upon a time, there lived a barber named Peter Beskendorf. He had a client named Martin Luther who was a theologian and pastor. One day while Peter was cutting Martin Luther's hair, he said to Martin, "I don't know how to pray. Can you please teach me?" Martin went home and wrote a tract for his master-barber Peter. The tract is called [A Simple Way to Pray](#) and can be found online. I have never written an 11 page treatise for my barber and think it was a beautiful expression of love on Martin Luther's part. It is such a beautiful, simple and practical statement about how to pray.

Starting with the Lord's Prayer, Ten Commandments and Apostles Creed, Luther breaks down the Lord's Prayer one petition at a time and shows us how to use this in prayer. I discovered through my

church history teacher when I was at Moody Bible Institute something that liberated my prayer life. In his little tract, Martin Luther says, "To this day I suckle at the Lord's Prayer like a child and as an old man eat and drink from it and never get my fill..." Isn't that precious? It's what the Lord's Prayer meant to Luther.

The Lord's Prayer is so rich that an entire series of sermons could be preached on it. I am going to try to distill it very simply. Let's start at Luke 11:2:

*"And he said to them, 'When you pray, say: '"*

Let's pause there for a minute. Some of us have a problem with set forms of prayer because our experience with them has been dead ritualism where the words were recited over and over again. Others of us (myself included) come from traditions where we never used a form because we didn't want to be ritualistic. Jesus says, "When you don't know what else to pray, say this because it is a good place to start." He does not intend for the Lord's Prayer to be a ritual. In fact, if you look at Matthew's version of the Lord's Prayer, it is worded a bit differently. I think God is showing us that it is not a magic formula for saying the 'right' words to pray correctly. But it is a very helpful pattern for us. If you want to go beyond, "God, help me with this and thank You for this day," here is an excellent guide. Young people, this is a great guide to use to learn how to pray with a bit more depth and breadth than you would normally pray on your own.

It basically breaks down into two sections.

1. In the first two requests of the Lord's Prayer, we are praying for the glory of the Father (Luke 11:2).
2. In the last three requests, we are praying for the good of the Father's family (verses 3-4).

### **Pray for the Father's Glory**

Don't miss how shocking the use of the word "Father" as the first word of a prayer would have been for the disciples. Anna Freidel is going to a country dominated by a religion that has 96 names for their god yet not one of those names is "Father." Throughout the Old Testament, it was uncommon—though not entirely foreign—for believers to call God "Father." He revealed Himself as the Father of His people when He redeemed them from their bondage and slavery in Egypt. He said, "*Thus says the LORD, 'Israel is my firstborn son', and I say to you, 'Let my son go that he may serve me'"* (Exodus 4:22-23). Now Jesus says, "I have come to earn you the right to call God 'Father' every day of your life."

Remember, this section of Luke's Gospel is about Jesus' journey to Jerusalem. What is He going to do in Jerusalem? He is going to lay down His life on a cross and shed His blood for our sins. He will use that blood to sign the adoption papers welcoming us into the Father's family forever. He is going to rise from the dead so He can pour out His Spirit of adoption in our lives. The Spirit comes into our lives and convinces us that the God we have sinned against and Who was so far away has drawn near to us to

bring us into a close relationship with Himself. The fact we can call Him "Father" is stunning. Jesus has opened the way for you to know God—your Creator—as your Father Who cares and provides for you. When you realize how merciful God has been, all you care about first and foremost is that your Father's glory would be seen in all the earth.

Jesus says to pray two things about your Father's glory:

- a. Pray for His reputation to be hallowed and His name to be regarded as holy in all the earth. "*Father, hallowed be your name*" (Luke 11:2). May God be cherished and worshipped as holy in our lives. May He rid us of whatever gets in the way of His glory or keeps us from knowing, cherishing and esteeming Him for Who He is as a holy God. Remove that from my life so He is regarded as holy.
- b. Pray for His reign. "*Your kingdom come*" Pray He would reign over all the earth and bring all the nations of the world under the submission and sovereign Lordship of King Jesus. Pray that Jesus would come and set up God's eternal Kingdom here on earth. Pray about those kinds of things.

Of course, those requests can open up many different areas. They can set us free to pray for God's Kingdom to be hallowed in missions or in areas of sin in which we struggle. Jesus says the first priority is to always pray about that which concerns the glory of God.

### **Pray for the Good of God's Family**

Who is this family? It is all those who through faith in Jesus Christ can come to God and say, "Our Father." Notice that the Lord's Prayer never uses the pronouns 'me' and 'my.' It is never just about me and my individual requests but about "Our Father."

*'Give us each day our daily bread,  
and forgive us our sins,  
for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us.  
And lead us not into temptation'* (Luke 11:3-4).

We come as a family, purchased by His blood, and pray for the needs of the family, specifically in three areas:

- a. Provision
- b. Pardon
- c. Protection

Pray for the Father's glory—His name and reign. Pray for the family's good—for provision, pardon and protection.

**Provision:** "*Give us this day our daily bread.*" God does not want us fretting about tomorrow's needs. Rather, He wants us to pray for today's needs. "*Give us this day our daily bread.*"

We do not ask for a mansion or Mercedes but for the necessities—what we need to serve God today. God wants us to understand that we were absolutely dependent on Him to provide the oatmeal we ate this morning. It could not have nourished or strengthened us physically if God had not made it nourishing to us. We are dependent upon Him for everything, including our next breath. Jesus wants us to condition ourselves in our prayer lives to be that dependent on Him.

**Pardon:** More than our physical needs, we need spiritual forgiveness for our sins. We should always be praying, “*And forgive us our sins...*” (verse four) for we sin in many ways. God doesn’t answer our prayers because we have been good but because He is merciful to us. If we really believe we need forgiveness every time we pray, we will not be able to withhold forgiveness from others. “*...for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us*” (verse four).

**Protection:** We should also pray, “*and lead us not into temptation*” “We are weak, Father, protect us from ourselves! Keep us from falling and constrain us to cling to You!”

Jesus is removing the obstacles to prayer in a simple, yet comprehensive way. He gives us a beautiful pattern for prayer. Jesus isn’t merely giving us a formula for prayer but is going after our hearts. We realize our names have been written in heaven. God has been merciful to us and comes to us when we were stranded on the side of the road—bloodied and beaten—like the man whom the Samaritan helped. When we realize how much mercy God has shown us, our hearts will want to cry out for these things. Our prayer lives reveal what is in our hearts. If we care about the Father’s glory and the good of His family, we’ll pray like this.

## Trusting the One to Whom We Pray

Jesus goes beyond the obstacle of what to pray for because He understands the main obstacle is that we don’t fully trust and believe in the goodness of the One to Whom we pray. The greatest need in prayer is not knowing what to pray for but to have right thoughts about the One to Whom we pray. A.W. Tozer said, “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.” I think Jesus is telling us in Luke 11:5-13 that what comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important motivation for our prayers.

Jesus wants to expand our view of God, His goodness and His generosity. As our understanding grows, the impulse to pray without ceasing will become more natural in our lives. He begins in Luke 11:5-8 with the “Parable of the Midnight Friend.” Put yourself in this guy’s shoes and think about how you would respond if you got a knock on the door in the middle of the night.

*<sup>5</sup> And he said to them, “Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves, <sup>6</sup> for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; <sup>7</sup> and he will answer from within, ‘Do not bother me; the door is now*

*shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything'?<sup>8</sup> I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence [the only time in the New Testament this word is used. Some translations say 'importunity' which is also not common. It actually means because of his shameless persistence, raw nerve and gutsy refusal to give up...] he will rise and give him whatever he needs [to get him off of his back].*

For what would you be willing to call me and wake me up in the middle of the night? I hope you would not hesitate to call me in the middle of the night if you had an urgent need. I might not hear it ring but I would try to respond to your request. But what if you started calling me every Saturday and Sunday night at two or three in the morning and saying, "Hey David, what's up? How are you doing? What are you thinking about? Would you like to study the Bible together and can I tell you about my day?" If you did that even a couple of times, I would want to have a talk with you and ask if we could find a better time for these conversations. Jesus' point in this parable is that God would never say that.

In our human relationships, there are many social conventions we try to respect. In ancient society hospitality was very important. If you had a neighbor or guest come in the middle of the night and you did not have bread to put out, you would be ashamed. You would do whatever you needed to do to take care of your guest's needs out of sheer honor. However, you might not do it readily or be happy about it the next day. You would probably say to the midnight guests when you saw them next: "Let's not let that happen again." Jesus is saying, "If you, out of the constraints of human friendship, would finally—even reluctantly—get out of bed to meet a real need of your friend, how much more will your Father—Who gave you His Son—answer your needs?"

God is not like that sleepy friend. He never sleeps or slumbers. The throne of grace is always open for business because the blood of Jesus which reconciles us to God makes us have a Friend in Heaven Who is always available to us. He will never say, "This is a bad time. Can you come later?" He will meet you in the midnight of your life.

Sometimes I love to stay up late into the night because it is quiet. Sometimes there are burdens on my heart which I need to unfold to God. There is no one else to call but He is available. Psalm 42:8 says, "*By day the LORD commands his steadfast love, and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life.*" There is never a bad time to come to Him.

Right now, you may feel that you are in a figurative "midnight of your life." You have lived many years and a lot of them have not been spent in calling on God. You are getting closer to the end, starting to think about death and life after death and wondering if it is too late to come to God. Sure, maybe you should have come sooner. But Jesus says, "Never mind how late it is. Just come." He will gladly receive you as you pour out your heart.

Maybe you realize in the middle of the night that there is a burden of shame and guilt weighing you down and you need to confess some things. Jesus says to go knock on His door and He will open to you and receive you. He loves to meet us in the midnight of our lives and is always available. Isn't it good to know that God is a Friend Who is always available? You can't say that about anyone else in your life.

In Luke 11:9-10, Jesus is continuing to expand our thoughts of God and wants us to know He is a God worth seeking because He is a Rewarder of those who seek Him.

*<sup>9</sup> And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. <sup>10</sup> For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.*

Present imperative verbs are being used here. Jesus is saying, "Keep on asking, seeking and knocking. Press in and prevail. Be intense in your pursuit of God because you can never come to Him too often. He never gets tired of hearing His children."

Previously, I had thought that in these verses Jesus must be saying God doesn't really want to answer our prayers but if we bug Him enough, He will finally respond. However, now I don't think this is what Jesus is saying at all. The whole thrust of this passage is to convince us in many different ways that God is far more eager to hear, receive and answer our prayers than we are to pray to Him. He is a Rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. When we are praying according to God's will (as outlined in Luke 11:1-4) there is no prayer that goes unheard or unheeded.

You might ask, "If God is so eager to bless us with everything we need, why doesn't He answer us the first time we pray? Why do we have to keep asking, seeking and knocking?" There are probably a number of reasons:

- Because he loves to hear the voice of prayer. An old Puritan said, "You let the musician play a great while before you throw him down money, because you love to hear his music." God loves to hear His children pray.
- So that He may humble us. We may too easily assume "I deserve this blessing." We treat God like He is at our beck and call or ask for things casually or perfunctorily. God is not a perfunctory God and He wants us to cherish the blessings we receive from Him.
- Because He sees that we are not yet ready for the blessing we seek. As we are praying, He is conditioning our hearts in a hundred different ways to be ready to receive the blessing when it comes, recognize it came from Him and give Him thanks for it. Then the blessing is sweeter and more precious.
- So that we get in the habit of praying without ceasing. Charles H. Spurgeon said, "I never pray more than five minutes at a time, but I never go five minutes without praying." He was in the habit of constant prayer and fellowship with God.

Jesus is opening our hearts to see how good and generous the Father is because Jesus knows the more fully we see His generosity, the more our hearts will be inclined to pray without ceasing.

### **A Father Who Always Gives Us His Very Best**

We are coming to one of my favorite verses in all of Scripture.

*<sup>11</sup> 'What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; <sup>12</sup> or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? <sup>13</sup> If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!'*

We are all tainted by sin. Yet when my kids ask me for a good gift, my heart wants to give it to them. I would never put a snake on their plate (partially because I am afraid to touch snakes). When Jesus says, "...how much more..." (verse 13) that is an unanswerable question. There is no limit because our Father is the God of how much more. God has never given you a serpent or a scorpion when you have asked for a need. Over time when you are able to finally see things as He does, you will find that the difficulties and "hard providences" He has put into your life are blessings in disguise.

When Kate was sick, someone gave me a clipping which I put on my bulletin board next to my computer. It said, "God is to be trusted when His providences seem to run contrary to His promises." When it seems the things that are happening in your life do not mesh with the goodness of God, trust in the goodness of God. Believe that "Behind a frowning providence He hides a smiling face" (From God Moves in a Mysterious Way by William Cowper). If you could see as He sees, you would realize that God has never treated you ungenerously but always in a way that was for your good.

Jesus says if this is the way an earthly father is with his children, "...how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!'" (Luke 11:13). The best gift is the gift of God Himself. If you could make a list of everything you need—every redeemed desire—and add them all up, the sum of all those needs would add up to the Holy Spirit. The gift of God's presence with His people is light in darkness, water to cleanse and refresh, power when we are weak. In the Person of the Holy Spirit, God is giving us everything and the very best He has to give.

Don't ever think that because you received the Holy Spirit when you became a Christian, you have no more need to pray for the Holy Spirit in your life." Pray as Paul did in Ephesians 1:17, "*I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.*"

Let me give you an example from the Valley of Vision of a way to ask God for the working of the Holy Spirit in your life. As you ask for these things, you can be confident He is giving the Holy Spirit to you. In your heart, echo "Amen" and let this be your prayer lifted up from your heart.

Lord Jesus Christ,  
Fill me with your Spirit,  
that I may be full of His presence.  
I am blind – send Him to make me see;  
dark – let Him say, "Let there be light!"  
May His comforts cheer me in my sorrows,  
His strength sustain me in my trials,  
His blessings revive me in my weariness,  
His presence render me a fruitful tree of holiness,  
His might establish me in peace and joy,  
His incitements make me ceaseless in prayer,  
His animation kindle in me undying devotion.

(From The Valley of Vision)

Oh God, give Your Holy Spirit in fuller measure to us. Our God will never say, "I'm not available." He'll never tell you, "I'm tired of listening to you. Would you stop asking and seeking?" He will never say, "You are asking too much now."

You are coming to a King  
Great petitions with you bring  
For his grace and power are such  
None can ever ask too much!

(From Come My Soul, Thy Suit Prepare by John Newton, 1779)

What if we heard Jesus calling us to prayer in our prayer meeting on Wednesday night and saying, "New Covenant Bible Church, how much more would I be willing to do for you if you would ask."

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## **New Covenant Bible Church**

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*All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.*

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