

## Lessons in Prayer Part 1: *Intimate Dependency*

### Luke 11:1-4

**Introduction:** One of the joys of parenting is modeling traits and abilities that we pass along to our kids. They watch what we do, what we are passionate about, and they start the learning process there. If we learned to work on cars, or in a workshop, or to play a sport, it often started with watching and the question: "Daddy, teach me how to play guitar" "Mommy, teach me to blog". The other day our daughter asked Erin to teach her how to do laundry! (Which she did, all of it, from washing, folding, and putting away for an extra dollar of allowance - our family does NOT have a minimum wage!) How many have learned to cook pasta the right way, learned to balance ledger sheets, and appreciated the nuances of fly fishing from teachers that showed and taught each discipline. As the foundational skills are taught, the doorways of greater knowledge and expression of each activity grows with time and experience. This is the type of lesson we get in this next section of Luke.

#### **The Question:** *Teach us to pray*

**Luke 11:1** - 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.'

- **Saw a different example**
- **Wanted something different**
- **Longed for something more**

#### **What Jesus did not address here:**

Jesus addressed the issue of **how** we should pray, and this becomes foundational to all prayer. Though other aspects are dealt with in Scripture (and some even in the next section of Luke) Jesus addresses a specific question and does not address:

**Where to pray** - Though he did so in **Matt. 6:6** saying that it should not be done as a public spectacle but as a private discipline

**How often we should pray** - There is not a minimum or maximum given, though **1 Thess. 5:17** says to pray without ceasing and **EM Bounds** declared, "*The little estimate we put on prayer is evidence of the little time we give to it.*"

**What posture we should take** - Standing (1 Sam. 1:26) - check; sitting (1 Kings 19:4) - check; kneeling (Ezra 9:5) - check; bowing (Ex. 34:8-9) - check; lying face down (Ezek 9:8; Matt. 26:39) - check; with hands lifted up (1 Tim. 2:8) - check; looking up (John 17:1) - check; and looking down (Luke 18:13) - check. Hands folded and eyes closed? check, for those easily distracted.

**The time of day** - before dawn (Mark 1:35), after sunrise (Ps. 5:3), three times a day (Dan. 6:10), at noon (Acts 10:9), in the afternoon (Acts 3:1), in the evening (1 Kings 18:36), all day long (Ps. 86:3), day and night (Neh. 1:6; 1 Tim. 5:5). Before meals? Sure. Before bed? Yep. Before a sermon. Yessir.

**Our attitude when we pray** - In sorrow (Dan. 9:3), weeping bitterly (1 Sam. 1:9-11), with fasting (Acts 14:23) crying out to God (Ps. 62:8), in joy (Phil. 1:4), and thankfulness (1 Thess. 5:18)

#### **A strict structure in prayer**

*"We are not enslaved to the structure or obligated to always follow it, as for example when Peter cried out, 'Lord save me!' when he began to sink (Matt. 14:30). If he had begun first with 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come...' he would have been blowing bubbles before he*

*got to the point! But at the same time, the structure and logic of this prayer are valuable for all disciples. Are we followers of Christ? If so, what follows must inform and shape our everyday prayer life."*<sup>1</sup>

### **The Answer:** *When you pray*

The petitions in the first half of this model prayer focus on God's glory while those in the second focus on our needs. Yet in reality the entire prayer is God-centered, since God glorifies Himself by providing for man's needs.<sup>2</sup>

### **The Vertical:**

**Luke 11:2** - And he said to them, "*When you pray, say: **Father, hallowed** be your **name**. Your kingdom come.*

- **Intimately exalting all of who God is**

In an short, sweet, and to the point beginning of this prayer, Jesus offered a revolutionary change to the way the disciples prayed. When Jesus addressed God as Father, it was a clear (yet shocking) admission of who He was. In **John 10:30**, Jesus declared that He and the Father were one, and the religious leaders accused Him of blasphemy and wanted to stone Him. It made sense that Jesus would address God as Father, and that fact would not have blown the disciples minds.

However, the fact that **they** would be able to address the God of the universe **as Father** was a radical change. In the OT, there were 14 references to God as Father, but these were reserved for the nation as a whole, not the individual. God could be addressed corporately with a sense of intimacy, but not individually. David, the king, addressed God as "My God" (Ps. 18:6) and the fact that the Lord was near (Ps. 145:18). There was nearness, but not the type of intimacy offered between a father and son.

Jesus referenced God as Father 60 times in the NT. The word for Father carries the idea of "**dearest Father**", a reverential type of closeness. Jesus not only showed us to pray this way, He actually provided the means to do it. He shares His sonship with us (Gal. 4:6; Rom. 8:15) so that we can cry out "Abba, Father" to the sovereign creator of the universe. Jesus transformed the relationship with God from a *distant, corporate experience* into an intimate, one to one bond and taught His disciples to pray with the same intimacy. He invites us to do the same.

Think about how incredible this is. I think on this side of the resurrection we can take for granted. We have access to God, and not just **access**, we get to commune with one who is our Father. We love our phones and ipads because we get instant access to news, can communicate around the world in an instant, and never left out of the loop. This allows us to know that we can get a hold of someone at a moment's notice. We have that kind of access with our Father, and He listens.

It also brings a sense of **security**. We know that God will hear us when we call on Him, and He never leaves. I grew up with my dad as the principal of my school, which had its downsides (never got away with nothing), but also meant that I could go to him at any part of the day if I forgot my lunch, was late to class, or simply wanted to talk to him (and get out of class). There was a sense of safety and security knowing that dad was around and his office was always open.

Addressing God as Father means we have forever **connectedness, intimacy, and affection**, which settles the matters of **fear, loneliness, and hopelessness**, knowing that He supplies our every need out of the riches of His glory (Phil. 4:19). **NOTE:** This is reserved for believers, those who have yielded in

<sup>1</sup> Kent Hughes, "Luke", p. 405.

<sup>2</sup> John MacArthur, "Luke 11-17", p. 8.

repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. God is the Father of believers, not all people. It is those who believe in Him, who received Him, that He gave the right to be called **children of God** (John 1:12).

Now, just as we can easily take access for granted, or we can take those we love for granted, or treat intimate things as common, our prayer to the Father is that His **name would be hallowed**. The word hallowed means to be "set apart, revered, or sanctified". The reason we pray that His name would be hallowed is the fact that ones name refers to the **reality of the essence of their nature**, or the entire makeup of someone. Throughout the Bible, God takes a high view of how His name is treated. We are not to take **His name** in vain (Ex. 20:7), Israel was to fear His glorious and awesome name or face affliction (Deut. 28:58), the Temple was built for the name of the Lord (1 Kings 5:5; 1 Chron. 22:7), He deferred His anger for the sake of His name (Isa. 48:9), will save His people so they will know His name (Isa 52:6), will vindicate the holiness of His name by bringing the New Covenant (Ezek. 36:22-31). It is the name of Jesus that carries power to glorify the name of God (John 12:28), to save those who call on His name (Acts 2:21; 4:12; Romans 10:13), and its the name of Lord Jesus that we do everything, whether in word or deed to the thanksgiving of God (Col. 3:17). This is a reverential prayer that recognizes the awesome power of God's name and seeks to magnify and glorify Him. We want to make much of His name because we want to make much of Him. This prayer seeks to have all of life, in word, thought, deed, attitude, and affection to glorify God, to never have His name receive less than it deserves, and to give His name the proper place (Phil 2:9-11).

*Is this how we pray? Is this where we start? Do we skip to our needs, wants and desires, or do we stand back in awe and wonder that we have access to the God of the universe, as Father, and do we want to make much of Him?*

- **Reverently anticipating God's Kingdom**

The second aspect of vertical prayer is the commitment to God's kingdom, not ours. Notice this is the main point of this principle: it is not our kingdom that we pray for, but His. How often do we subtly (or not so subtly) pray for our own kingdom, where our desires become demands and our comfort, hopes, and dreams become the basis of request. This is a prayer of not just radical dependence but of relentless yielding of our desires into conformity to His.

There is a present and future aspect to this prayer. Jesus told His followers to seek the kingdom first (Matt. 6:33), and to commit wholeheartedly to His kingdom (Luke 9:62). The realization of the kingdom, when Jesus will reign physically on this earth is future, but there are realities we experience now. When someone comes to salvation they are transferred from the domain of darkness to the kingdom of God's beloved Son (Col. 1:13), in whom we have redemption and forgiveness of sins. This means that in the present we pray that God would save those He has called, and prepare us for the future Kingdom where we will reign with Him.

So often our prayers are focused on the present, our comfort, our homes, or our stability here. This prayer is focused on our wills being conformed to God's kingdom, His will, meaning that we are committed to reach, serve, and live soberly in the present as we prepare and anticipate the future kingdom to come. This was the prayer of Jesus in the Garden before He died: *take this cup, but not my will, but thy will be done*. (Mark 14:36)

### **The Horizontal:**

**Luke 11:3-4** - *Give us each day our daily bread; and forgive us our sins as we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us; and lead us not into temptation.*

- **Dependently seeking daily sustenance**

The focus of the prayer Jesus taught took a slight but significant turn with the last three requests. The first two were directed back to God while these last three have to do with life on the horizontal in terms of daily needs.

The first deals with the daily need of sustenance, literally the need for bread to eat. For us, this is a foreign concept (especially with so many that are gluten intolerant!). Bread, however, is significant even today in most of the world. When we were in Kyrgyzstan, bread was the lifeblood of meals. It was brought out for breakfast, and any leftovers would be saved for the next meal or the next day. In this culture, bread today did not guarantee bread tomorrow, so careful consideration was taken with the care of bread (you did NOT throw it away). Here God reminds us that our prayer everyday is that God would provide for our life because without Him we would go hungry. Notice this is more than simply a prayer of thanks before a meal (which is not bad nor excluded here, but this prayer is much more than just thanks). It is a **daily prayer of dependency on God for our ability to live each day.**

Now, if we were truly honest with ourselves, this type of prayer is foreign to us. We simply do not live in a culture where the propensity exists that we WILL NOT EAT in a day (and I'm not talking fasting or cleanses). We are talking about the real likelihood that there would not be enough money to buy food, or that drought or famine meant crops did not produce. We live in a culture in Simi where we can choose *what* food to eat, not *if we will* (even our homeless have access to food everyday - praise the Lord).

What does this mean for our prayer? How do we pray this way? I believe that since we do not pray in dependency for daily bread, we simply shift that prayer to daily comfort. This is why a high percentage of our prayer, especially in sharing requests together, are taken up with **physical needs** - sickness, disease, cancer, etc. If not physical needs, they are secondarily concerned with **financial security** - tension, not enough, better job, etc. Is it right to pray for these things? YOU BETTER BELIEVE IT. However, so often we do not pray for these in dependency, but trying to be independent. Here is what I mean:

**Proverbs 30:8-9** says *"Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, 'Who is the Lord?' or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of the Lord."*

Notice what the desire of the writer is: it was not for financial *freedom*, but *financial dependency*! Keep me in a place where I need to trust in you. I know myself, and know that if I have too much money I will begin to think that I don't need God (read Deut. 8 for how this happened to Israel). But also take care of my daily need so I don't have to steal and bring shame on God's name. The same happens when we pray for physical needs: we sometimes fail to pray that God will teach us to trust Him through physical uncertainty and ONLY see answers to prayer as physical healing, missing out on what God may be doing *through our sickness and disease.*

**"God is not going to answer prayers that would enable us to live more independently of Him."** Darrin Patrick.

When we pray for areas of physical and financial, are we praying for further dependence on God or independence from Him? Do we realize that we are not entitled to ANYTHING in our life, and need Him everyday? Is that reflected in our daily prayer? What would be different about our ability to walk in thankfulness and gratitude if we realized *every perfect gift comes from Him alone?*

- **Constantly acknowledging a need for forgiveness**

The fourth prayer is maybe the most shocking for us. Out of all the areas and arenas that God would have us pray for, **forgiveness** was one of the top five. Notice that just as we are to pray for daily bread,

this is not a "once for all" type of prayer. In other words, we would not pray that God would give us food every week, or month or year, but pray daily for it, so we would not pray for forgiveness only once. This at first causes us to pause based on what we know about forgiveness.

When we come to believe in Christ as Lord, we yield our life to Him in repentance, and receive forgiveness of sins. When Jesus was nailed to the cross, He shed His blood once for all (Rom. 6:10; Heb. 9:12, 26; 10:14). His blood covered all of our sins because He cancelled the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands, and nailed it to the cross (Col. 3:13-14). In other words, our forgiveness is sure in salvation, and our sin, past, present, and future is paid for by Christ by His one time, never to be repeated death on the cross.

If that is true (and it is), then why would we pray for forgiveness again? The answer is simple. Though our sins are forgiven, we continue to sin each day in this body of flesh, and those sins bear with them consequence. The consequence we face is to our relationships. Sin puts up a barrier, changes our ability to trust, and means intimate relationship is momentarily interrupted. When David kept silent about his sin without confessing them and being restored, he said there was "no soundness in his flesh, no health in his bones, he would go on in mourning, his sides filled with burning, he was crushed, and groaned (Psalm 38). In other words, his sin affected his pure relationship with the Lord, and that was corrected after he was confronted of, confessed, and repented of his sin (see Psalm 51 for a record of this process). Our ongoing prayer of forgiveness is to recognize that our sin affects our relationship with God, our ability to commune with Him, and our soft hearted devotion to Him.

This is not much different from keeping short accounts with a spouse. We know that there is covenantal love and commitment, but sin affects our daily relationship. This is why the second part of the prayer of forgiveness is so important. **NOTE:** The order is imperative. We must see ourselves as sinners in need of forgiveness to be able to forgive other sinners (Eph. 4:32). Also notice that we do not forgive those who sin against **God, but against.....wait for it....US!** We are to forgive those who sin against us. As you know, this is a monumental task that is ONLY POSSIBLE through the work of Christ, the empowerment of the Spirit, and the dependency in prayer.

Forgiveness of others is essential for healthy relationships. This allows us to look each other in the eye, to exist in the same family, to join in the same mission. It helps us not have sinners try to make up for or pay for their sin, it allows us to not think ourselves more highly than someone else, and allows us to rebuild trust, respect, and practical love. That is why this prayer is prayed often. It remembers that the person who sinned against me had their sins paid for, in full, by Christ. It remembers that the same way I was forgiven, they were forgiven. It reminds us that the sin I am appalled with the most is that which resides in my own heart.

Jesus valued relationships, between God and man and between man and man. Forgiveness is essential to this, and our prayer of dependency is essential to hold sin no longer against others.

- **Boldly asking for sovereign protection**

The final prayer is a dependent prayer for protection during temptation. Temptation is part of life. We face temptation on two fronts: **outside** of us and **within**. James 1:14 says that temptation happens when we are lured away by our own desire. That is how external temptation works. It gives us something externally that drives our fleshly hearts after it. Satan is no fool. He knows the way our minds and hearts work, and puts tailor made temptations in front of us to lure us away from God and His plan. He is like a skilled fisherman who uses the right bait for the right kind of fish.

But there is something else about this prayer. The same word for "**temptation**" is the same word for "**trial**" used in James 1:2 and 12. Trials are given by God in order to test our faith and produce steadfastness and ultimately perfection, completeness, and maturity (James 1:4). The difference between the two are: who is doing the action, and what is the purpose of it. Satan wants to see us fail, God wants to see us succeed. The truth is, we don't know whether at the time something is a

temptation or a trial since we have two options for each. We either trust in the Lord and thus grow in righteousness, or we trust ourselves and walk down a path of sin. One underlines our faith, the other undermines it. One leads to maturity, while the other leads to death. The prayer Jesus compels us to pray is that we will be dependent on God in temptation, and walk through it by faith, knowing that God will never give us more than we can handle or our ability, but will give us a way to escape and endure through it (1 Cor. 10:13). This means that in great and small - a stubbed toe that causes pain, to an unexpected diagnosis, to an opportunity to look at something on our phone, to taking a short cut on our taxes, we can withstand the temptation to sin and defame the name of God, and trust there is greater joy in obedience.

**Questions for Discussion:**

- How often do we focus on the immensity that we can call God Father? What does that practically mean for us?
- Is there ever a time that we subtly (or not so subtly) pray for our own will to be done, or our own kingdom to come? What does it look like to pray for His kingdom?
- Do our prayers exemplify a growing desire to be more dependent on God or moving toward independence? How do we pray in a way that builds dependence?
- Is it wrong to pray for finances and health? Especially in these two areas, what is our expectation of God? How do we determine 'answers' to prayers? What if God chooses to keep us in financial tension and physical discomfort? How is that an answer to prayer (see Paul seeking to have a thorn in the flesh removed three times - 2 Cor. 12:7-10)?
- Why does God put us through trials and expose us to temptations?