

'To Pray Like Jesus'

Every believer has the privilege of praying to God as their good and loving Father.

.....**Read Luke 11: 1 – 13**.....

***“One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.’² He said to them, ‘When you pray, say: ‘Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. ³Give us each day our daily bread. ⁴Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.’ ⁵Then he said to them, ‘Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, ⁶because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.’ ⁷Then the one inside answers, ‘Don’t bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can’t get up and give you anything.’ ⁸I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man’s boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs. ⁹So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ¹⁰For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. ¹¹Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? ¹²Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”*.....**

Jesus’ disciples noticed how frequently he prayed. They couldn’t help but notice, actually. He would get up early and go off by himself. He would spend entire nights in the dark, alone, praying. Whenever they couldn’t find him, they just assumed that he was somewhere off by himself, praying. They could see how much Jesus relied on prayer and how it strengthened him and gave him direction and confidence. It’s little wonder then, that one of his disciples asked him to teach them, too, how to pray as he did.

It was common then, to be able to identify followers of a particular rabbi by the prayer he taught.¹ They would have certain words and phrases that made their prayer unique. Maybe it would be similar to recognizing a Presbyterian because they pray, ‘debts’ and ‘debtors’ instead of ‘trespasses’.

Jesus began teaching them by saying, ***‘When you pray, say, ‘Father...’*** Now, to call God ***‘Father’*** is something we do without thinking much about what it means. But to Jesus’ disciples, to begin a prayer to Holy Almighty God by calling Him, ***‘Father,’*** was unheard of.

Until Jesus, no Jewish rabbi ever dared to call God, ***‘Father’.***² It implied an intimacy and a relationship with God that was unthinkably irreverent. Jews never even dared to say God’s name. When addressing God or talking about God, they would say *‘The Name’* or *‘Adonai’*, which means *‘Lord,’* never, ever, dishonoring Him by speaking His Name.

¹ William Barclay, *The Gospel of Luke: The New Daily Study Bible* (Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, KY, 2017), 170.

² R.C. Sproul, <https://www.ligonier.org/posts/what-does-it-mean-call-god-father>

Today it is the same. Jews never even write *'The Name'* but leave it incomplete by omitting vowels. For instance, they write 'G_d', with an underscore where the vowel would be. What we consider to be the Hebrew name for God, *'Yahweh'*, came from an intentionally unpronounceable group of consonants to protect it from being spoken (YHWH).

Scholars in the 12th Century A.D. added the vowels from *'Adonai'*, which created our modern name for God, *'Jehovah,'* because they substituted a 'J' in the Germanic language for the Hebrew 'Y' sound.³ All this information about God's name is to show that when Jesus introduced his disciples to the idea that God was their **'Father'**, it was a *phenomenal* and *unprecedented* privilege.

Let's remember here, who was Jesus giving the privilege to call God, **'Father?'** It was not then nor is it now an automatic right for all human beings to call God, **'Father'**. That may shock some of you. Only Jesus' disciples have the distinct privilege of calling God, **'Father.'**

We learn in the Bible that it is only when we are adopted into God's family that we are able to call God, **'Our Father.'** The next shocking news is that we are not automatically born as God's *'children.'* God created us all, yes, but God *gives us the choice* of whether we want to belong to Him.

John 1:12 tells us, **'Yet to all who received him (that is, Jesus), to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.'** (also *Galatians 4:4 -7*) In *John 14:6*, Jesus said, **'No one comes to the Father except through me.'** We belong to God only through trusting in Jesus.

Let's just pause for a moment before we go any further. Let's make sure that you are connected to God and that you are able to call God, **'Father,'** when you pray. Paul tells us in *Romans 10:10*: **'For it is with your heart that you believe and are made right with God, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.'** Not only does faith in Jesus make us children in the family of God but asking Jesus to remove our sin saves us from the penalty of our sins and allows us to join the Kingdom of God now and into eternity.

So, church family, here's an opportunity to ask God to make you His child. (You may repeat after me...) *'Almighty God, I place my life into Jesus' care. I confess that my sins have separated me from You. I have trusted in myself to earn my way into Your Grace, but now I see that it is impossible to do that. I realize now that I need Your Son Jesus to take my sins away and make me clean in order to enter into Your presence. I want to live the way You want me to, God. I promise to turn to You and listen to Your voice and trust You before anything else in my life. I know that I will need Your help to do this. I want to be able to call You, 'Father'. I willingly now become Your child. Thank you for this privilege. Amen.'*

Perhaps you noticed that Luke's version of Jesus' prayer stops short. Matthew's version, which we use in church says, *'Our Father in Heaven.'* (*Matthew 6:9*) The reason might be that

³ <https://www.theonenessofgod.org/the-pronunciation-history-of-yahweh-to-jehovah/>

Jesus emphasized different points in his prayer to different audiences. **'In Heaven'** adds a reminder of how incredible it is that everyone in the family of God is able to call the Creator of the Universe, **'Our Father.'**

Here in Luke, Jesus keeps it short and to the point. **'Father,' 'Hallowed be Your name.'** **'Your kingdom come...'** Jesus showed them and us that all prayer needs to begin with honoring God and focusing on God's will. So often, we just plow into our prayers to God and the focus is on us, right? We start with what we want God to do for us. We forget that prayer isn't first about us, but about us wanting what God wants before we bring Him our desires and requests.

After focusing our will on God's will, *then* we ask God for help. **'Give us our daily bread'** stands as a reminder that God is ultimately the giver of every basic human need we have. We may have food in our refrigerator, but we rely on God for help in getting it there. God provides the resources that makes food possible. Remember the camp blessing song? *'Oh, the Lord is good to me, and so I thank the Lord; for giving me the things I need, the sun and the rain and the apple seed. The Lord is good to me!'*

Then we are to ask for forgiveness for anything that has caused us to **'sin'** against God. At the same time, we understand that we cannot expect God to forgive us if we are unwilling to forgive the people who have wronged us. So, when we pray, we need to make sure that all areas of our life are confessed and **'clean'** and that our relationship with God is **'right'**.

The word used for **'sin'** by Luke and Matthew is **'hamartia'** (*Hah-mar-tee-ah*) which means any act against God's law. Different versions of the Bible translate this as a **'debt'** against God; others call this a **'trespass'** against God. Still others just say, **'sin,'** which is easy to understand.

Jesus also taught his disciples not to try to withstand the temptations of the Evil One without God's help. If Jesus needed to rely on God's help to stay strong against demonic temptations, how much more, then, do we need God's help not to fall prey to Satan's lies?

Jesus' prayer stops here in Luke and in Matthew. We add a **'doxology'** to our Lord's Prayer in church every Sunday. *'For Thine is the kingdom, And the power, And the glory, Forever. Amen.'* There is evidence that the early church added this praise to God at the end of the Prayer when they said it together.⁴ You have no doubt discovered when you are in a large group praying the Lord's Prayer together, that some Christians say the doxology at the end, and others do not.

Jesus taught his disciples a **pattern** for prayer. The exact words are not the important thing; but the **intent** of the Prayer is. It reminds every member of God's family 1) that God the Father will give you, His child, what He knows is best. 2) To honor Him and His will in your heart above your own desires. 3) To trust God to provide your daily needs; 4) To stay in close relationship with Him through continual cleansing of your sin and 5) To ask God to protect you from being led astray by Satan.

Jesus followed his Prayer with a very puzzling parable. He told a story about a man who woke up his neighbor in the middle of the night, demanding that he give him bread he needed for an unexpected guest.

⁴ <https://www.gotquestions.org/for-thine-is-the-kingdom.html>

A typical Palestinian home had just one room. At night, the animals were brought in and shared the space with the entire family, who typically slept together on a raised floor, surrounding a fireplace, at one end of the room. Once everyone was down and settled, it would disturb everyone to go to the door to unbolt it! So the neighbor's first reaction is very understandable! ***'Don't bother me. The door is already locked and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything!'***

At first, it seems like Jesus is suggesting that we should be obnoxiously persistent when we pray to God. It appears that Jesus is saying that when God appears reluctant at first to answer our prayer, He will finally give in if we just keep boldly insisting. However, Jesus is instead explaining that if our human friends eventually give us what we need, God, who is so much more gracious than any human being, will certainly *always* help us. God is always available to us, at midnight or any hour. Jesus was teaching them that God is never bothered when we come to Him, and that He wants us to be bold and honest when we pray.

By pointing out the obvious, that a human father would never give his son something harmful to eat, like a ***'serpent'*** or a ***'scorpion'***, Jesus assures his disciples that they can trust God, their Heavenly Father, much more than a human father, to never give His children anything that is harmful. Jesus wants us to know and to expect that God *will answer all* of our prayers. Jesus said to his disciples, ***'Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.'*** As God's children, He wants us to ***'Ask'***, ***'Seek'***, and ***'Knock'***.

I just want to make sure that you realize that God answers *all* of our prayers but that we need to pray *'according to His will.'* For reasons we may not discover this side of Heaven, what we ask God for may not be what God gives.

Jesus concludes his lesson on prayer by highlighting the very best gift that God gives to His children. We look for specific answers to our prayers, like healing, or a new job. While God provides the material things that we need to exist, God goes even further and gives His children a ***'spiritual'*** gift as well. What is it this gift from God? It is the gift of His Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the power and presence of God Who comes to live in a believer's life. In *John 14*, Jesus described who receives this gift and what the Holy Spirit does. Jesus said, ***'I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever...he (will) live in you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.'*** (*John 14:16 – 18*)

When Jesus returned to heaven after his resurrection, he asked God to send the Holy Spirit to live in every believer's heart and soul. The Holy Spirit who was poured out from Heaven upon believers on the Day of Pentecost (*Acts 2*) is still given to each of us when we ask Jesus to be our Savior and Lord.

Through the Holy Spirit, every believer has God and Jesus with them, and in them, always ready to instruct and encourage, strengthen and comfort. Through the Holy Spirit, every believer has the Kingdom of God living in them and the power of God to help through the difficulties of life.

The Holy Spirit is without exception, our Heavenly Father's very best gift to us. Amen.