

“Prayer is a Relationship”

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Open to Luke 11. As we begin Luke 11, we meet Jesus doing what He always does and that's pray! It's through prayer that Jesus communicated with His Father. We too can communicate with God – confessing our sins, stating our needs, asking for help, praising, thanking, and seeing God's Will for our lives. Jesus was always checking in with His father asking God to declare His Will to Him.

Jesus' disciples saw this happen over and over again and wanted to learn more about how to pray for themselves. Verse 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.”* As Jesus begins teaching them about prayer, He begins with a very dear look at God Almighty. Verse 2, *“And he said to them, “When you pray, say: “Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come.”*

In this prayer, **Jesus Invites Us into a Deeply Personal Relationship with God.** He's encouraging us to call on God using the same name He uses, *“Abba, Father”*. *“Abba”* is another name for *“Daddy”* or *“Papa.”* Very personal! He invites us to call on God as children call upon a loving parent, trusting that they belong to God and that God wants for them what's good and life giving! About this relationship with God, Martin Luther said, *“To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than it is to be alive without breathing.”*

Verses 11-13 reinforce what Jesus has said about His Father, *“What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? 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!”* If human parents, with all their faults, know how to give their children gifts that are good for them, how much more will the heavenly Father give good gifts to his children who ask of Him, including and especially the gift of the Holy Spirit!

Prayer isn't just us praying and God listening. **Prayer is a two-way Conversation with God!** From his book *Why Pray?*, John Devries, said this about this conversation, *“Prayer is a relationship in which we first of all recognize who God is and how greatly He is to be praised. Prayer is the means by which we do that. All of our communication with God is prayer. In prayer we're enfolded into God, and God is enfolded into us.”*

Prayer involves: **Speaking**, bringing our requests to God, asking for His help. **Listening**. It can't just be us talking to God, we need to be silent and listen for His response. As it says in Psalm 46:10, *“Be still and know that I am God.”* The only way we can learn from all He does for us is to stop and listen!

Thinking. As we pray, our focus needs to be on God alone, not on what we think. God knows and God hears. We need to rely on Him alone, realizing what He's done for us! **Pondering**. We need to meditate on, not only what we asked, but on what God can do! As the song says, *“Ponder anew, what the Almighty can do. Who with His love doth befriend you!”*

A believer was heard to pray the following prayer: *“Dear Lord, So far today God, I've done all right. I haven't gossiped; I haven't lost my temper; I haven't been greedy,*

grumpy, nasty, selfish, or over indulgent. I'm really glad about that! But in a few minutes, God, I'm going to get out of bed, and from then on I'm probably going to need a lot of help! Amen."

Oswald Chambers once said, "*We tend to use prayer as a last resort, but **God wants Prayer to be our First Line of Defense.** We pray when there's nothing else we can do, but God wants us to pray before we do anything at all. Most of us would prefer, however, to spend our time doing something that will get immediate results. We don't want to wait for God to resolve matters in His good time because His idea of 'good time' is seldom in sync with ours."*

And that's the problem! Even if we pray consistently, there are times when it just seems as though God's not answering! This is perhaps the most difficult part of this passage because sometimes our experience contradicts Jesus' words! So often we've asked and not received; we've searched and not found. In spite of our most fervent prayers for their health and safety, we've lost loved ones to cancer and senseless accidents.

In spite of the fervent prayers of people around the world, we hear daily of tragedies of violence, hunger, disease, and natural disasters. If God's like a loving parent who desires to give what is good and life giving, why do so many prayers seem to go unanswered? There's no simple answer to this question!

What then can we say about unanswered prayer? It's wise to be careful of saying more than we can possibly know. We can, however, affirm what Scripture tells us, that God's all-powerful, yet God isn't the only power in the world. There are other powers at work. The powers of Satan and his demons, the powers of evil and death, often shown in human sin. Although Jesus has won the ultimate victory over these powers through His death and resurrection of Jesus, the battle still rages on!

In all prayer, **God can be Trusted to Respond.** Jesus tells the parable of the friend who calls at midnight. Hospitality was extremely important in the biblical world, and when a guest arrived, even unexpected, even at midnight, there was no question that hospitality must be extended. So when the man in the story finds himself without enough bread for his guest, he goes to a friend and asks to borrow some, even though he must wake up his friend's entire household.

Jesus says that the man will respond because of his friend's persistence! Jesus implies that if it's like this between friends with their mixed motives and self-interest, how much more so with God Who wants to give us what is good and life-giving!

In verses 9-10, Jesus tells us what we need to keep doing in relation to prayer. Follow it in your Bible but I'm going to read it from another version, "*And so I tell you, **Keep on Asking**, and you will receive what you ask for. **Keep on Seeking**, and you will find. **Keep on Knocking**, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened."* All He asks of us is to just keep do it!

But I think it goes beyond that! You have to **Keep on Listening.** God loves you and He wants the best for you! He responds to you in a way that's best for you. But if you keep on talking, you're going to miss what He says! Be quiet and listen to Him!

Because you know you can trust Him completely, walk in faith and **Keep on Following!** God's gotten you this far through whatever has happened in your life, and He's promised He will always be with you as you walk with Him in faith!

The Only Way to Trust God More is to Know Him More! How? If you don't pray, you can't grow in your relationship with a God Who invites you to ask, seek, and knock. God loves you so much, and loves it when you talk and listen. The beauty and reality here is that this can happen anytime and anywhere!

It's through prayer that you truly can come closer to your God and have a true relationship with Him. All He wants to give you an abundant life here on earth and eternal life in heaven!