

Pastor Jim Lloyd

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Title: JESUS' PATTERN FOR PRAYER

Text: Luke 11:1-4 (ESV)

“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.’² And he said to them, ‘When you pray, say: ‘Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come.³ Give us each day our daily bread,⁴ and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.’”

Last week we looked at chapters 11 & 18 of Luke. Today we are going specifically to the first 4 verses of chapter 11. We are going to look at the prayer Jesus prayed following the disciples' request that they be taught to pray. Last week we looked at the instruction of Jesus TO pray – the HOW-TO pray especially when your prayers have been unanswered. You are to pray – desperately, boldly, persistently, and trustingly.

We have some ISSUES when it comes to prayer. MOST would concur that they don't pray enough. Some NOT AT ALL! Then some of our prayers don't make a lot of sense. John Crist (Full-time comedian and maybe part-time theologian) asks, “Do you ever have someone ask you to pray for something that is just so dumb that you think, “Um, I am NOT praying for that!” He cited an example – when a person asked him, “Would you pray for my son? He's in the finals of a karate tournament.” He thought, “What EXACTLY am I SUPPOSED to pray? Jesus, when Connor steps out onto that mat, would you just guide his foot right into that other little boy's face? May he render his opponent unconscious...” Then he added, “I'm not sure what we're doing when we pray for our food. “Lord, bless this food and the hands that prepared it.” (I've prayed that many times.) “Why just the hands? Why not the whole body? But see, that's a question you are not allowed to ask. This afternoon when you pray over your meal, try asking God to bless the feet or the kidneys of the people that prepared it. See where that gets you.” Anyway, I'm grateful that we have a story in the New Testament where Jesus specifically explains to the disciples HOW TO PRAY. We would do well to let this prayer shape our prayers.

Last week we talked about overcoming the problem of unanswered prayer. This week we're going to deal with another obstacle: Many don't pray because THEY DON'T KNOW HOW TO PRAY. Luke chapter 11 addresses both obstacles to prayer. *“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.’ And he said to them, ‘When you pray, say...”* It's important to note that there is a NEED TO BE TAUGHT TO PRAY... Jesus didn't just say: “You DON'T need to be taught how to pray; just say whatever you want.” There is a specifically Christian way to pray. In fact, in Matthew's recording of this same teaching, he tells us that before Jesus gives His disciples instructions ON THE WAY TO pray, He warns His disciples how NOT to pray.

I suppose every religion teaches its adherents to pray. BUT... Christian prayer is fundamentally different. Matthew says: *⁷“And WHEN (not if) you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles (that just means people who don't know God) do, for THEY think that they will be heard for their MANY words. ⁸Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him”* (Matthew 6:7-8). (Interestingly, one of the only kinds of prayer that Jesus criticizes are prayers that are too long. To which many of you say, “Amen.” BUT... Let me add that He NEVER said anything against long sermons!☺) So, what did Jesus have against long prayers? Jesus' prayer is LESS THAN 40 words. These pray – ers thought they'd be heard for their “MANY words.” They had the notion that because they pray a certain length of time, or say certain phrases, or fast, or get themselves into some spiritual state, that God would hear them. Almost every religion teaches some version of this: If you'll repeat enough Hail Mary's; verses from the Koran; chants from the Bhagavad Gita; if you'll yell loud enough at God saying, “Yes Lord; Yes Lord” enough – that God will hear you. The word “MANY” that Jesus uses here means “ANXIOUS”: Will God hear me? Did I use the right words? Did I pray long enough? Have I broken through? By contrast, Jesus reminds His disciples that they are praying to a LOVING FATHER. You don't have to (or you shouldn't have to) persuade a Father to care; A Father who knows what you need

before you ask it. A Father has good intentions and looks out for His children's own good. We have been ADOPTED into God's family. Yet many continue to act like orphans. Adoption is a one-time decision of the parent that does not fluctuate with the behavior of the child. We have been made children through the finished work of Christ, and there's nothing more we need to do to entice God to hear us. Our prayer begins by embracing the FATHERHOOD of God. J.I. Packer says if you really want to find out how much someone understands Christianity, find out how much they understand the fatherhood of God. So, that's where Jesus starts this prayer:

1. "OUR FATHER..." Paul Miller says how we approach God in prayer is where we demonstrate whether we really understand the gospel. "When we slow down to pray, we are immediately confronted with how unspiritual we are... (Are you like this? I am. I start thinking about how unspiritual my requests are, wondering if I am using the right words, or wondering if I am asking with the right motives.) In contrast, CHILDREN NEVER get frozen by their selfishness. They come just as they are, totally self-absorbed. Jesus even tells us to become like a little child when we pray... How do little children ask? They just say what is on their minds. They seem to have little awareness of what is appropriate or inappropriate. This isn't just a random observation about how parents respond to little children. This is the gospel." (God accepts us, with all of our mess, because of the finished work of Christ.) Some have a hard time with this because they had or have such a strained relationship with their dad. Your dad was quick to anger, or inattentive, or absent. But... You need to stop seeing your Heavenly Father through the lens of your earthly one. Maybe your earthly dad didn't care and looked at you more as a nuisance. But... Your HEAVENLY FATHER can't stop thinking about you, dances over you constantly with singing, and knows when a single hair falls from your head. Your earthly father may have been self-absorbed, but your Heavenly Father was so into you that He absorbed your pain on the cross to spare you the eternal consequences of your choices and behavior. So, go before the throne of God BOLDLY, and say, "Dad, I have a need" and just tell Him what's on your heart without all the posturing or obsessing over how unspiritual you are or saying the right words. I've always loved this picture of President John F. Kennedy. Here he is at his desk, with some papers in his hands probably deciding the fate of the free world. John, Jr. is peeking out from below – with a totally different relationship to the man in the chair than anyone else. That man is his father. Little John doesn't see the man at the desk as the ruler of the free world. That's dad... And I need some Cheerios. It's interesting that before we get to the requests of this prayer – which is, of course, the thing that occupies MOST OF OUR PRAYERS – we have several phrases that focus on our relationship with God. This shows us that prayer is more about being in RIGHT RELATIONSHIP TO GOD than getting through some long list of needs that God already knows about.

2. "HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME" should precede any request we make of God. I read of a guy who grew up in Catholic church who said that until he was 8 years old, he thought that God's name was "HOWARD." He said, "We said it every week: 'Our Father who are in heaven, Howard be your name.'" HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME is a request for God to be hallowed in our eyes and to show the world that He is hallowed through us. You say, "What does 'hallowed' mean?" "Hallowed" = Most Holy, Superior, Most Beautiful: He is BETTER THAN ANYTHING you are asking Him for. Many of us approach God like a means to an end. "God, get me out of this jam. God heal me. Help me do well on this test. Get me this job." But... Seeing GOD AS HOLY means seeing Him as GREATER than any and all earthly gifts. It means saying, "God, I would love to have a new job; I'd love to have a healed body, but YOU are better than any of those things. If I don't get them, I may be a little disappointed, but it won't affect my joy in life because I HAVE YOU, THE GREATEST OF MY POSSESSIONS." "Hallowed" = Most worthy. This is a recognition that the purpose of my life is to GIVE GLORY TO THE FATHER. Life is not about me, or me prospering, but Life is about HIS NAME & HIS KINGDOM. A lot of times we rush right into prayer forgetting why we exist in the first place. WE exist for the GLORY OF GOD. God is not our servant whom we put to work for our purposes. Think of your life like a MOVIE. Movies always have MAJOR characters and MINOR characters (Actors & Supporting Actors). What happens to minor characters is not as important because the story is NOT defined by them but rather it is defined by the major character. Anyone know who Biggs Darklighter is? Any *Star Wars* nerds here? He was the boyhood friend of Luke Skywalker. He

was the X wing pilot in the first *Star Wars* movie who shielded Luke Skywalker from getting shot so that he could destroy the Death Star. Without him, the whole *Star Wars* saga, how many ever movies there are, would never have gotten off the ground. YET... Most never heard of him. If he could be with us today, back from his grave in a galaxy far, far away, he would probably say, "I don't care. My small sliver of the story was only to serve the purposes of the main character – Luke Skywalker." GOD'S GLORY is the MAIN CHARACTER IN OUR LIVES, and we recognize that the point in all things that happen to us is to put us into a theatre where we can give glory to God. God might hallow His name before others by prospering you so that YOUR successes would further HIS kingdom; OR... He might hallow His name by letting you suffer so that you can show everyone in the midst of suffering that you can have joy in bad circumstances because He is better than health or anything else you are asking Him for. The point of our lives is much more than living and dying; the point is giving glory to God. Sometimes God is glorified when sick people get well. Sometimes He is glorified when they suffer well, and even die well.

3. "LET YOUR KINGDOM COME" (Some translations add "YOUR WILL BE DONE."). In this life – in the here & now – we should be surrendering ourselves to pursue God's agendas on earth. Prayer is not supposed to be getting God to help you in all your agendas, but you seeking to join God where He is working. Two key things here: **A. PRAY THE SCRIPTURE** – Scripture is how we best know what God wants to do in the world. Our faith is supposed to serve as the WIRE that connects God's power to the needs of the world. (Imagine you have an electrical source and an appliance over here. Plenty of energy; totally lifeless. Prayer is like the cord that connects them.) That's what we are doing when we say, "Your kingdom come, Your will be done." We are connecting the power of God's promise to the situation. Here's what we say: The prayers that start in Heaven are heard by Heaven. So, I want to ground my prayers in Scripture. Mark Batterson (*The Circle Maker*) said, "One thing is certain: Our most powerful prayers are linked to the promises of God. When you know you are praying the promises of God, you can pray with holy confidence." Two very practical suggestions: Whenever you spend time in the Word, HIGHLIGHT verses that stand out to you. Go back and pray them – especially the promises. MEMORIZE Scripture: I love hearing prayers that are laced with Scripture. That's so much better than trite phrases and "God, just..." over and over. How much better to commit Scripture to memory so that you can bring His Word to bear in every prayer you offer. Let me challenge you to memorize 5 or 10 verses that you could start using in your prayers. So, that's the first thing. KNOW & PRAY SCRIPTURE. **B. PRAY IN THE HOLY SPIRIT.** The Spirit is the one responsible for extending God's kingdom on earth. He knows the will of God. Prayer is supposed to be a two-way conversation as Holy Spirit reveals what He wants for God's kingdom. Holy Spirit is supposed to pray through you. Of the 59 times that Holy Spirit shows up in the Book of Acts – 39 times He is speaking. Prayer is NOT just God speaking to us, but also Holy Spirit speaking TO us. Our responsibility then is LISTENING. Try this: "God, I don't want to just pray TO You, I want to pray WITH You. So, move in me as I pray." One last observation about this phrase before we move on. Eugene Peterson says these two phrases juxtaposed are an example of two important kinds of prayers we should pray: morning prayers and evening prayers. It's a concept he gets from the Psalms. Morning Prayer is active, petitionary prayer, where you pray boldly against things in the world that are not right. "God, change this! Bring Your kingdom into this mess." Pray against the perversions of this old world. Evening Prayer is where you SUBMIT YOURSELF TO THE WILL OF GOD and rest in HIS CHOICES for your life. "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Know that God knows best, AND... He will take care of all things. Both are essential components of a healthy prayer life.

4. "GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD." Let me point out that Jesus likes bread. It doesn't say – your daily peas or broccoli. WWJD? He likes bread. Bob Fisher, I can't see Jesus ordering the BUNLESS burger! Most of us probably don't pray for our daily bread because we don't wonder where our next meal is coming from. The point here is two-fold: We develop a posture of DEPENDENCE AND a posture of THANKSGIVING for all things. The essence of sin is independence and autonomy from God. That's the drive of sin. The lie is that you don't need God. One of the things about bread is that it does NOT last forever. You can get a better price on day old bread because it has a limited shelf life. You can't depend on the bread you made last month or last week.

Yesterday's bread doesn't compare to FRESH bread. The picture here is that bread is short-lived and DAILY we must be looking to God as our source for all things. *"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want."* He meets our daily needs. Not every request is spiritual you know. Bread isn't spiritual. Philippians 4:6 – *"Do not be anxious about anything, but pray about everything, letting your requests, with thanksgiving, be made known to God."* What should I look to God for? Everything! Literally anything I'm worried about. Let me list a few things we find in Scripture that people prayed about – note how some of these are spiritual and some are not. Zacharias and Elizabeth wanted a family. When they couldn't have kids, they prayed for a son. Solomon prayed for wisdom in his new job. Eliezer (Genesis 24) prayed he could meet a pretty girl he could set his master Isaac up with. Samson prayed for water when he was thirsty and superhuman strength to accomplish a task. Joshua prayed for the sun to stand still so he could finish a battle. Daniel had a weird dream, and he didn't know what it meant, so he prayed for interpretation. Gideon thought God was calling him to do something, but he wasn't sure so he prayed for confirmation that he should do it. David prayed for forgiveness after committing adultery with Bathsheba. He prayed God would give him a clean heart and a renewed, steadfast spirit. Elijah prayed that it wouldn't rain. Paul prayed that a thorn in the flesh would be taken away. The disciples prayed for boldness. Fathers in the New Testament prayed for their little girls to get better. Peter asked Jesus for financial help to pay his taxes. Jesus told His disciples to pray to get out of temptation. He prayed that His disciples would stop acting like idiots and be unified. Jesus told us to pray for lost people and the workers to get the gospel to them. The apostles prayed for Jesus to come back quickly. Here's the rule: If it matters to you, IT MATTERS TO GOD, and you can pray about it. *"Do not be anxious about anything, but pray about everything, letting your requests, with thanksgiving, be made known to God."* Watch what happens when you do: Philippians 4:7 – *"And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."* Those who depend on God will learn to rest in God, BECAUSE... Psalm 84:11, *"No good thing will he withhold from those who walk uprightly before him."* Every responsibility that God has assigned me – father, husband, friend, pastor – He will supply the daily bread I need. He meets my DAILY needs. Psalm 9:10 – *"And those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, O LORD, have not forsaken those who seek you."* IF we trust in God, HE won't let us down. He supplies our daily needs. Give us this day our DAILY bread. Prayer is the way.

5. "...AND FORGIVE US OUR SINS, FOR WE OURSELVES FORGIVE EVERYONE WHO IS INDEBTED TO US."

Confession is such an important part of our lives because it helps us clear out sin so that it isn't growing and spreading in us. You see, sin loses its power when it is exposed. Scripture tells us to confess our sins first to God, and then to others where we need to, because you strip sin of its power that way. Confession can change our attitude toward others. Realizing how gracious and compassionate God has been toward me produces compassion and generosity in me toward others. I do well when I approach God as a man deeply loved AND deeply forgiven, and that fosters the right attitude in me toward others – both – that they need my love, and they need my forgiveness. We love because He first loved us. One last thing I want to point out that this prayer is a communal prayer. ALL the pronouns in the Lord's Prayer are plural: OUR Father – Give US – OUR daily bread – Forgive US – OUR debtors – Lead US – Deliver US. We tend to think of prayer (and confession) mainly as a personal thing. But... There's also corporate "we" elements to it. Throughout Scripture, people like Daniel and Ezra and Solomon led the congregation to confess the sins of "we the people" sins they may have had no personal part in. We would do well to lament, from time to time, the sins of our past and hope together toward the future. We should mourn the thousands of babies who were made in the image of God with human souls that are aborted every single day in our country. This is more than a political issue; it is a BIBLICAL one. Psalm 139 tells us in no uncertain terms that every baby has a soul and God has a plan for him or her and terminating him or her is the taking of innocent human life. Our society's approval of abortion is inexcusable and we, as a society, must repent of it and we as a church must lead in that.

6. Finally, "LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION." This should be a part of our daily prayer time. Scripture makes clear that ALL of us, left to ourselves, will go astray. Inside of us are corruptions that want to take over and destroy us. *"ALL we like sheep have gone astray and we've turned everyone to HIS OWN WAY."* Scripture says

that the natural man does not desire the things of God. Faith, loving God, loving purity and truth and righteousness – these things are not natural to man because we are fallen. That means, without the overcoming grace of God working inside us, all of us (me included) will fall away. We had our sectional annual minister’s meeting this week. It was spoken a few times that we (referencing ministers) need fellowship and connection. Often when we are disconnected, we fall, or we fail. Many who started out in ministry are no longer in ministry. There are a variety of reasons for that, BUT... Among those reasons is moral failure. Many were gifted men and women. It’s not that they were categorically different. Many of them were better preachers, better men than I. Two things Paul Tripp points out that leads to giving in to temptation: The absence of real community, and we don’t take seriously the power of indwelling sin. I need God’s grace to overcome my temptations and weaknesses. Pray for me. You need it, too. It’s our only hope. I don’t want to end this on a discouraging note. Yes, only God’s grace can deliver us from the particular temptations of our heart. Particularly since we have a literal enemy who is scheming to attack us with those temptations in the particular places where he knows we are most vulnerable, BUT... God promises to make a way of escape (1 Corinthians 10:13), if we ask Him for it. *“No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.”* In a day gone by, video games were much simpler. Missiles would drop from the top and you’d shoot. Donkeys would roll barrels and you’d jump over them. PAC-MAN was my favorite, or actually MS. PAC-MAN. There were dots on the screen, and you’d eat them. Ghosts would come after you, BUT... You could always duck out of the side trap door and be free. There was a way of escape. We don’t have to be discouraged or scared of Satan. We CAN be more than overcomers through the promises of Jesus. So, the last thing He tells us to pray, EVERY DAY, is “LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION.”

CONCLUSION. Let me end this message by giving you a few really practical suggestions in light of today’s message – **1.** If it isn’t already your daily practice to pray – Make Prayer a Daily Practice. A couple weeks ago, I read of a man who said he never prays longer than 20 minutes and that he never goes longer than 20 minutes without praying. I’ll not invite you to make that your practice, but we are exhorted to PRAY WITHOUT CEASING. You can pray through the phrases of the Lord’s prayer and pray what the Spirit brings to your mind. **2.** Another easy to remember outline for how you should pray is A-C-T-S. Adoration – Hallowed be Your name. Confession – forgive us our debts. Thanksgiving. Supplication – give us this day; forgive us our sins; lead us not into temptation. **3.** Here’s another one: Take a morning walk with no devices and pray out loud. You could set reminders on your calendar to pray for specific needs at specific times. Use a prayer app like Echoprayer, Prayermate, or Evernote - they can help you organize and keep track of prayer needs. Do prayer cards: A card where you put a name, prayer requests and verses of Scripture you are believing for these people. Pray in the moment with people. Don’t just promise to pray for them. (Waiters and waitresses, etc.) **4.** Prayer walk your neighborhood, the office, or some part of the city. Don’t be weird. No hands raised. Don’t try to be sneaky and anoint things with oil. Try 2-3 short times of prayer instead of one long one: Morning, after lunch, before bed. Pray regularly with your kids. Let them hear you pray. Use a kid’s version of ACTS – Wow, Sorry, Thanks, Help. Come to church a little early to pray. If you can’t make it at 8am, come at 8:30am, or even 8:45am. Clear your schedule for the prayer times on Sunday evening. Above all, JUST START! Prayer is a muscle that grows as you use it. The more you DO IT, the more you KNOW HOW to do it, and the more you DESIRE to do it. Start with 5 minutes a day, if that is all you can handle, and commit to doing it every day for a month. See where it goes from there. *“Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. 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.”*