

The Gospel Makes Us a People of Prayer

Luke 11:1-13



Scripture

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. ³ Give us each day our daily bread. ⁴ Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation. '" ⁵ Then 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, ⁶ because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.' ⁷ "Then 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.' ⁸ I 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. ⁹ "So 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. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. ¹¹ "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? ¹² Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³ If 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!"

Main Idea

In verses 1-4, Jesus teaches how to pray, and then in verses 5-13, Jesus teaches us how we should approach God in prayer with boldness and persistence. Verses 5-13 will be the focus of this study. Probably the best word to describe the approach of the man to his friend in the parable would be – shameless. Jesus encourages us to approach God with a boldness and a persistence that might make us uncomfortable. This kind of approach to God only makes sense when we see how Jesus describes our relationship to the Father – we are his children. Because the gospel tells us we are adopted children of God, we can have unshakeable confidence that God will answer our bold and persistent prayers as a perfect, loving and wise Father.

Discussion

Q1: What comes to your mind first when you think of prayer? Share about a time when you prayed with intensity or fervency for something. What was it about the situation that drove you to pray like that?

A1: The first part of the question is designed to help get a feel for where people are with regard to prayer. Often, people are guilty because of their lack of prayer. Though many of us may be truly guilty of not dedicating more time to prayer – trying to pray more to relieve guilt is not what will lead to deep heart change. Use this question to see if any struggle with guilt in this area. Come back to this issue when you reach Q5 which leads us to consider the gospel motivation for prayer.

This question is designed to help bring out what motivates and moves us to pray. Most of us can identify a time in life when we felt the most important and meaningful thing for us to do was to pray. Most often what drives us to intense and persistent prayer is when a situation seems beyond our control. Many of us don't pray because we don't feel a desperate need for God's power in a situation beyond our control. But the reality is that all of life, certainly the most important things in life (our sin, our relationship with God, our relationship with others) are out of our control. When we start to see the reality of our need (like children instinctively do), our view of prayer is changed.

Q2: Read Luke 11:1-13 above. What does it mean to approach God "shamelessly" like the man in the parable? Are you comfortable approaching God in this way? Is it possible to "annoy" or "bother" God? Discuss.

A2: The man in the parable doesn't care what time of night it is, he doesn't care that he is completely inconveniencing his friend, he doesn't take no for an answer. He shamelessly approaches his friend to help him with something he sees as an urgent need. This means we should approach God daringly with

our requests asking him with confidence for things we know He delights in or approves of. When we, or our friends, family or neighbors, have genuine need, we should persistently ask God to meet that need. We should never be ashamed to ask or to present our desires before God. God never tires of hearing from us. He loves when we bother him.

Many in the group may be uncomfortable with talking about prayer like this. "Doesn't God have better things to do". The answer is 'no' – the center of God's heart is to listen to the needs of his children and bless them with good gifts.

For a biblical example of shameless prayer you may want to take the group to Gen. 18:18-33. There Abraham boldly asks God to spare the city of Sodom on behalf of the righteous in accordance with God's own justice. Also point the group to Eph. 3:10 – God answers our prayers beyond even what we ask, think or imagine.

Q3: When you hear Jesus encouraging us to "keep on asking, keep on seeking and keep on knocking" what concerns or questions come to your mind? Why do we often hesitate to approach God like this?

A3: One answer sure to come up is "What if God doesn't answer". Many of us are afraid to pray like this because we are afraid of disappointment with God if God doesn't answer our requests. In the sermon there were a number of helpful quotes that provide us with perspective on this concern. Tim Keller says, "We would see that God always gives you what you ask for if you knew what He knows". Also – "A parent will often say 'no' to the request, but 'yes' to the need".

The truth that Jesus is pointing us to is that God always answers persistent, bold prayer. As our heavenly Father, God knows the perfect way to answer every request we bring to him. God would not be good if answered our prayers that were sinful ("Lord don't let him/her succeed") or led us into temptation ("Lord let me win the lottery") or weren't the best for us.

Some may also say, "I already asked him once. What the point of doing it over and over?" Here is where Jesus is saying 'once isn't enough'. Bold and persistent prayer puts us into a position where God can do His work in us. Our requests will often change, we will often change, or our circumstance will change – and God will be glorified as we consistently declared our need for Him.

Q4: What do you find to be the biggest hindrances in your personal prayer life? How does this passage/discussion help provide perspective on those hindrances?

A4: Here you can expect a variety of answers. Answers that you should expect:

"I'm too busy" – Jesus points us to a living relationship with our creator and king who longs to relate to us as Father. Busyness is often a reflection of misplaced priorities. Jesus challenges us here to make prayer an ongoing practice because, if we do, we will know God deeper. A deeper experience of God's Fatherly love will be the reward of those who pray boldly and with resolve.

"I don't know what to say or how to pray" – Here is where the parent child analogy can help. Our kids instinctively know how to ask. We can learn from them. God is looking for words or magic incantations – he is looking for us to approach him as children in need of his grace.

"Honestly, life is going ok without prayer". – This response needs to be sensitively challenged – what does it mean that life is going fine, ok? If we were made to know God and make him known, than that is life. All of us will be forced to deal with life that is out of control, with the pain and the reality that 'nothing is ok apart from Christ'. Often God will use these extremely tough times to teach us this.

Q5: Jesus wants us to have assurance that, because God is our Father, we can trust that He will respond to our prayers with perfect goodness, love and wisdom. How does the gospel convince us that this is true? ...even in times of suffering and times when it seems as if God isn't answering?

A5: The gospel convinces us that this is true because of what Romans 8:31-32 says, "³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all-- how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?"

God has met our deepest need by sending Jesus Christ to die for us. He met this need without us asking. He met this need when we were happy worshipping anything and anyone but Him. He brought us back to Himself to know life in all its fullness simply because He loves us. That kind of God can be trusted to answer the prayers of his beloved children the same way he met our deepest need.

In times of suffering and doubt, we need to go to the cross. God is not a God who remained far off from our suffering, but a God who fully entered in to lift us out of the cause of our suffering – our sin. The cross convinces us that God is good even when we struggle to see how.

Prayer

Spend some time sharing needs. Share some things that we can shamelessly ask God for with regard to the larger vision of advancing the gospel in our city. Spend some time praying for these things, asking God to show us His heart and love for the people and city of San Diego.