

How We Ought to Pray

Luke 11:1-13

Luke 11:1-13 - It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples. And He said to them, "When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.'" Then He said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and goes to him at midnight and says to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; and from inside he answers and says, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been shut and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.' I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs. So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened. Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?"

Introduction:

- A. Being creatures of habit, we often fall into a pattern of doing certain things in certain ways. There is nothing wrong with a habit, so long as it is a good habit. In fact, we ought to cultivate good habits to carry us over our weak moments
- B. But sometimes we begin to think that the way we currently do something is the only way it can be done.
- C. Jesus was asked by his disciples to teach them to pray, like John taught his disciples (Lk 11:1). Have you stopped to think that these are Jewish men? Shouldn't a Jew know how to pray to God? Consider how many prayers are mentioned in the Old Testament.
- D. Prayer wasn't something new to a Jew. Rather, I think that they, like most of us, tend to feel that our prayers are not adequate. Seeing the power of Jesus's prayer, the disciples wanted to be able to do the same.

I. What Is Prayer?

- A. Phil 4:6; 1 Tim 2:1-3

Philippians 4:6 - Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

1 Timothy 2:1-3 - First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,

- 1. Supplication - a request regarding a need
 - 2. Prayer - to worship
 - 3. Intercession - an interview, a request on behalf of another
 - 4. Giving thanks - gratitude
- B. It is the way followers of God talk to their Creator
 - 1. To ask

a. Cannot receive unless you first ask - Jas 4:2

James 4:2 - You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.

b. Ask according to Christ's authority - Jn 16:24

John 16:24 - "Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.

c. Ask help for others - 2 Cor 1:11

2 Corinthians 1:11 - you also joining in helping us through your prayers, so that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed on us through the prayers of many.

2. To ask pardon

a. For self - 1 Jn 1:9

1 John 1:9 - If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

b. For others - Jas 5:16

James 5:16 - Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

3. To praise

a. Hannah's prayer - 1 Sam 2:1-10

1 Samuel 2:1-10 - Then Hannah prayed and said, "My heart exults in the LORD; My horn is exalted in the LORD, My mouth speaks boldly against my enemies, Because I rejoice in Your salvation. There is no one holy like the LORD, Indeed, there is no one besides You, Nor is there any rock like our God. Boast no more so very proudly, Do not let arrogance come out of your mouth; For the LORD is a God of knowledge, And with Him actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty are shattered, But the feeble gird on strength. Those who were full hire themselves out for bread, But those who were hungry cease to hunger. Even the barren gives birth to seven, But she who has many children languishes. The LORD kills and makes alive; He brings down to Sheol and raises up. The LORD makes poor and rich; He brings low, He also exalts. He raises the poor from the dust, He lifts the needy from the ash heap To make them sit with nobles, And inherit a seat of honor; For the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S, And He set the world on them. He keeps the feet of His godly ones, But the wicked ones are silenced in darkness; For not by might shall a man prevail. Those who contend with the LORD will be shattered; Against them He will thunder in the heavens, The LORD will judge the ends of the earth; And He will give strength to His king, And will exalt the horn of His anointed."

b. Ethan's praise - Psa 89:5-14

Psalms 89:5-14 - The heavens will praise Your wonders, O LORD; Your faithfulness also in the assembly of the holy ones. For who in the skies is comparable to the LORD? Who among the sons of the mighty is like the LORD, A God greatly feared in the council of the holy ones, And awesome above all those who are around Him? O LORD God of hosts, who is like You, O mighty LORD? Your faithfulness also surrounds You. You rule the swelling of the sea; When its waves rise, You still them. You Yourself crushed Rahab like one who is slain; You scattered Your enemies with Your mighty arm. The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours; The world and all it contains, You have founded them. The north and the south, You have created them; Tabor and Hermon shout for joy at Your name. You have a strong arm; Your hand is mighty, Your right hand is exalted. Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; Lovingkindness and truth go before You.

4. To thank

a. David's praise - Psa 66:19-20

Psalms 66:19-20 - But certainly God has heard; He has given heed to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, Who has not turned away my prayer Nor His lovingkindness from me.

b. Thankful in everything - 1 Thess 5:18

1 Thessalonians 5:18 - in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

5. To seek fellowship

a. Drawing near to God - Jas 4:8-10

James 4:8-10 - Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

b. Confident access to God - Eph 3:12

Ephesians 3:12 - in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him.

II. When We Teach A Child To Pray, We Often Assume A Particular Position And We Encourage Our Child To Do The Same.

A. Interestingly, when Jesus instructed His disciples, he never mentioned a physical position.

B. When we look at prayers recorded in the Bible, we find those praying in many positions

1. Standing - Mk 11:25; Lk 18:10-14

Mark 11:25 - "Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions.

Luke 18:10-14 - "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

2. Sitting - 1 Ki 19:1-5; Neh 1:4

1 Kings 19:1-5 - Now Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So may the gods do to me and even more, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time." And he was afraid and arose and ran for his life and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree; and he requested for himself that he might die, and said, "It is enough; now, O LORD, take my life, for I am not better than my fathers." He lay down and slept under a juniper tree; and behold, there was an angel touching him, and he said to him, "Arise, eat."

Nehemiah 1:4 - When I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days; and I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

3. Lying down - 2 Ki 20:1-3

2 Kings 20:1-3 - In those days Hezekiah became mortally ill. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him and said to him, "Thus says the LORD, 'Set your house in order, for you shall

die and not live." Then he turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD, saying, "Remember now, O LORD, I beseech You, how I have walked before You in truth and with a whole heart and have done what is good in Your sight." And Hezekiah wept bitterly.

4. Kneeling - Lk 22:41-42; Acts 9:40

Luke 22:41-42 - And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and began to pray, saying, "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done."

Acts 9:40 - But Peter sent them all out and knelt down and prayed, and turning to the body, he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up.

a. Kneeling with hands spread toward heaven - 1 Ki 8:54; Ezra 9:5

1 Kings 8:54 - When Solomon had finished praying this entire prayer and supplication to the LORD, he arose from before the altar of the LORD, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread toward heaven.

Ezra 9:5 - But at the evening offering I arose from my humiliation, even with my garment and my robe torn, and I fell on my knees and stretched out my hands to the LORD my God;

b. Kneeling and bowing down - Psa 95:6; Ezra 10:1

Psalms 95:6 - Come, let us worship and bow down, Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.

Ezra 10:1 - Now while Ezra was praying and making confession, weeping and prostrating himself before the house of God, a very large assembly, men, women and children, gathered to him from Israel; for the people wept bitterly.

5. Bowing down - Psa 35:13-14

Psalms 35:13-14 - But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth; I humbled my soul with fasting, And my prayer kept returning to my bosom. I went about as though it were my friend or brother; I bowed down mourning, as one who sorrows for a mother.

6. Falling on their face - Matt 26:39; Num 16:20-22

Matthew 26:39 - And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will."

Numbers 16:20-22 - Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, "Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them instantly." But they fell on their faces and said, "O God, God of the spirits of all flesh, when one man sins, will You be angry with the entire congregation?"

7. Face toward God - Dan 9:3; Psa 5:3

Daniel 9:3 - So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes.

Psalms 5:3 - In the morning, O LORD, You will hear my voice; In the morning I will order my prayer to You and eagerly watch.

8. Uplifted hands - Psa 28:2

Psalms 28:2 - Hear the voice of my supplications when I cry to You for help, When I lift up my hands toward Your holy sanctuary.

a. Lifting up holy hands - 1 Tim 2:8

1 Timothy 2:8 - Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension.

- 1) Not necessarily literal because of the use of "holy"
- 2) The idea is to come before God with hands free from the guilt of sin, such as Prov 6:17
- 3) Zophar had the wrong idea about Job, but he did understand the need to approach God properly - Job 11:13-15

Job 11:13-15 - "If you would direct your heart right And spread out your hand to Him, If iniquity is in your hand, put it far away, And do not let wickedness dwell in your tents; Then, indeed, you could lift up your face without moral defect, And you would be steadfast and not fear.

- 4) Job's hands were innocent of sin - Job 31:7

Job 31:7 - "If my step has turned from the way, Or my heart followed my eyes, Or if any spot has stuck to my hands,

- 5) Jas 4:8 - James is not speaking of a literal washing

James 4:8 - Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

b. Position of hands

- 1) Heb 12:12 - Hanging down, ashamed, weak

Hebrews 12:12 - Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble,

- 2) Lam 3:41 - Lifting heart and hands

Lamentations 3:41 - We lift up our heart and hands Toward God in heaven;

C. There is no one required position.

1. The various positions take signified the petitioner's attitude at the moment of prayer
2. Or it was just the position they were in when they needed to pray

III. *More Important That Physical Position Is The Position Of Our Hearts Toward God*

A. Sincere

1. Matt 6:5 - Some make a show of their religion. Such is not needed for God, who sees everything.

Matthew 6:5 - "When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.

2. What we say must be consistent with what we think - Matt 15:8

Matthew 15:8 - "THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME.

B. Humble - Lk 18:10-14

Luke 18:10-14 - "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

1. Not for attention like the priests of Baal, who thought they could get their god's attention through noise and self-mutilation - 1 Ki 18:19-39

1 Kings 18:19-39 - "Now then send and gather to me all Israel at Mount Carmel, together with 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table." So Ahab sent a message among all the sons of Israel and brought the prophets together at Mount Carmel. Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people did not answer him a word. Then Elijah said to the people, "I alone am left a prophet of the LORD, but Baal's prophets are 450 men. "Now let them give us two oxen; and let them choose one ox for themselves and cut it up, and place it on the wood, but put no fire under it; and I will prepare the other ox and lay it on the wood, and I will not put a fire under it. Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD, and the God who answers by fire, He is God." And all the people said, "That is a good idea." So Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "Choose one ox for yourselves and prepare it first for you are many, and call on the name of your god, but put no fire under it." Then they took the ox which was given them and they prepared it and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon saying, "O Baal, answer us." But there was no voice and no one answered. And they leaped about the altar which they made. It came about at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, "Call out with a loud voice, for he is a god; either he is occupied or gone aside, or is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and needs to be awakened." So they cried with a loud voice and cut themselves according to their custom with swords and lances until the blood gushed out on them. When midday was past, they raved until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice; but there was no voice, no one answered, and no one paid attention. Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come near to me." So all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD which had been torn down. Elijah took twelve stones according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD had come, saying, "Israel shall be your name." So with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD, and he made a trench around the altar, large enough to hold two measures of seed. Then he arranged the wood and cut the ox in pieces and laid it on the wood. And he said, "Fill four pitchers with water and pour it on the burnt offering and on the wood." And he said, "Do it a second time," and they did it a second time. And he said, "Do it a third time," and they did it a third time. The water flowed around the altar and he also filled the trench with water. At the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, Elijah the prophet came near and said, "O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, today let it be known that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant and I have done all these things at Your word. Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that You, O LORD, are God, and that You have turned their heart back again." Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The LORD, He is God; the LORD, He is God."

2. Not for the attention of others - Matt 6:5-6

Matthew 6:5-6 - "When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

C. Acceptance and confession of our faults - 1 Jn 1:8-9

1 John 1:8-9 - If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1. Many ask God for things without a willingness to change
2. Many ask God for the forgiveness they are not willing to extend to others - Matt 6:12, 14-15; Mk 11:25-26

Matthew 6:12 - 'And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Matthew 6:14-15 - "For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.

Mark 11:25-26 - "Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions."

D. Fervent

1. Elijah - Jas 5:17

James 5:17 - Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months.

2. Epaphrus - Col 4:12

Colossians 4:12 - Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God.

3. Jesus - Lk 22:44

Luke 22:44 - And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground.

4. These are not casual, lukewarm prayers. Being worth bringing up to the Almighty God should mean it is something you strongly desire.

E. Persistent

1. If something is worth having, it shows in our consistency in bring the matter before God - Lk 18:1-8

Luke 18:1-8 - Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart, saying, "In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man. "There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, 'Give me legal protection from my opponent.' For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, 'Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out.'" And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge said; now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"

2. Pray without ceasing (1 Thess 5:17) means praying without giving up - Rom 12:12

Romans 12:12 - rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer,

F. Watchful - 1 Pet 4:7

1 Peter 4:7 - The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.

1. Pray expecting an answer - Eph 6:18

Ephesians 6:18 - With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,

2. Watch for opportunities
3. But it also means that because we brought a matter up before God, we do not then let down our guard against Satan - Mk 14:38

Mark 14:38 - "Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

G. With understanding - 1 Cor 14:15

1 Corinthians 14:15 - What is the outcome then? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also.

1. The words of our prayers ought to contain the meaning of our hearts
2. This why we should not recite rote prayers as many do
3. Nor do we need to inflate the length of our prayers as if that will make them more significant - Matt 6:7-8

Matthew 6:7-8 - "And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. 8 "So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

4. Some of Jesus' prayers were quite short - Matt 26:39, 42, 44

Matthew 26:39 - And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will."

Matthew 26:42 - He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, "My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done."

Matthew 26:44 - And He left them again, and went away and prayed a third time, saying the same thing once more.

- a. This wasn't vain repetition, but a fervent desire and a persistence in communicating that desire.

H. With faith - Heb 11:6

Hebrews 11:6 - And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

1. Why pray if you don't believe in God and His ability? - Eph 3:20

Ephesians 3:20 - Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us,

2. Jas 1:5-8 - Without doubt

James 1:5-8 - But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

3. We will receive as we believe - Matt 21:21-22

Matthew 21:21-22 - And Jesus answered and said to them, "Truly I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' it will happen. And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."

I. Thankfully

1. Always giving thanks - Eph 5:20; Col 4:2

Ephesians 5:20 - always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;

Colossians 4:2 - Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving;

2. Thankfulness is a sign of respect - Lk 17:11-19

Luke 17:11-19 - While He was on the way to Jerusalem, He was passing between Samaria and Galilee. As He entered a village, ten leprous men who stood at a distance met Him; and they raised their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" When He saw them, He said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they were going, they were cleansed. Now one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice, and he fell on his face at His feet, giving thanks to Him. And he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine--where are they? Was no one found who returned to give glory to God, except this foreigner?" And He said to him, "Stand up and go; your faith has made you well."

3. Jonah recognized this - Jonah 2:9

Jonah 2:9 - But I will sacrifice to You With the voice of thanksgiving. That which I have vowed I will pay. Salvation is from the LORD."

J. With praise

1. Give God the glory for who He is - Rev 19:1

Revelation 1:19 - "Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things.

2. Give God the glory for His answers

3. Paul's example - 1 Tim 1:16-17

1 Timothy 1:16-17 - Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

Conclusion:

- A. How do you pray? How ought you pray?