

Prayer is so common. It crosses cultures and religions, even the sacred/secular divide.

- Madonna's Like a Prayer
- MC Hammer "we got to pray just to make it today"
- Bon Jovi, Livin' on a Prayer
- Bone-Thugs 'n Harmony in Tha Crossroads- And we pray (4x), Everyday (4x)

Prayer is also kind of weird and awkward. It can also put you in situations where you don't know if you should be praying for certain things:

- Comedian John Crist: "I'm not praying for that" bit
- Friend who has a drug test coming up & pray for Malachi (hard time = wrist injury from iPad)

Prayer is also a very serious and sobering:

- Fires, Hurricanes, Flooding, Shootings.
- Mayors, government officials, and first responders and victims' families begging for people to "Please pray"

TITLE SLIDE:

How Much More: How to pray shamelessly and persistently

Luke 11:5-13

The Bible is replete with examples of prayer from cover to cover- Abraham, Moses, Nehemiah, King David, most of the psalms. They're poetic and powerful.

The striking thing to me is that as we began last week, when asked by his disciples, Jesus didn't reference any example from the Bible on prayer.

- Lord's Prayer: template for *what* to pray
- And, as we'll see today, a very short, simple framework for *how* to pray

Let's turn to Luke 11:5 as we continue learning how to pray.

Luke 11:5-13

⁵ He also 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 of bread,' ⁶ because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I don't have anything to offer him.' ⁷ Then he will answer from inside and say, 'Don't bother me! The door is already locked, and my children and I have gone to bed. I can't get up to give you anything.' ⁸ I tell you, even though he won't get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his friend's shameless 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, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. ¹¹ What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead of a fish? ¹² Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?

¹³ 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?"

Today I'm going to do two things to help us understand what Jesus teaches here on how to pray:

- First, I'm going to go back through each of these verses to give you some context
- Second, I'll have a 3 reflections in the form of points for us to apply what Jesus is saying

So let's go. Let me back up and make sure we know what's already happened and what Trevor preached last week.

- Jesus just shared what we call the Lord's Prayer
 - 30,000 ft template/outline for prayer. Not a script but better a script than no prayer

Next Jesus brings things right down onto street-level. He *continues* through a 2nd-person story.

Luke 11:5-6

⁵ He also 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 of bread, ⁶ because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I don't have anything to offer him.'

Jesus tells this story. The story represents what's common and relatable to illustrate a point, not to make a bunch of one-to-one prescriptive details for how to pray.

You go to your friend's house at midnight because you're having a hospitality crisis.

- Due to hot conditions it was normal for travelers to travel at night to avoid the sun. And it was customary to offer on-call, AirBnB-type hospitality service for travelers.
- Plus, the traveler is a friend, not just a stranger.
- No electricity, at midnight people are likely deeply asleep.
- Shame-Honor context. Your personal shame. Your community's shame.
- Asks for 3 loaves of bread- callback to the Lord's Prayer. Also, enough bread to serve for one meal

Luke 11:7

⁷ Then he will answer from inside and say, 'Don't bother me! The door is already locked, and my children and I have gone to bed. I can't get up to give you anything.'

The sleeping neighbor responds.

- Startled awake- Can you imagine someone banging and yelling at your front door at 2am (without a doorbell camera!)
- All in a one-room house, family sleeping together on a large mat.
- Annoyed- he's waking up his whole family
- Inconvenienced- he'll have to work to unbolt the door
- Limited (I can't)

Luke 11:8

⁸ I tell you, even though he won't get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his friend's shameless boldness, he will get up and give him as much as he needs.

Here's what Jesus said was key to the request being met:

- The audacity of the person making the request
- not friendship, not shame-honor culture. Shameless Boldness.
- Jesus is essentially saying, "Pray like this!" Get over your pride and ask:
 - Jesus is undermining our internal dialogue and temptation to not even pray

Next Jesus makes the deeper connection to what shameless boldness looks like.

Luke 11:9-10

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, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

Jesus shares we're to: Ask, seek, and knock. Don't just be bold. Be persistent.

- Make the ask! Voice your request to God.
- Seek- don't stop looking for an answer or resolution. Have eyes and a heart full of hope!
- Knock- you don't just knock once. That's weird. God always has your attention. But the idea here is to make sure your request is heard by persistently praying, asking, and seeking.

Last, Jesus helps us understand how God is different from the annoyed, sleeping neighbor.

Luke 11:12-13

¹¹ What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead of a fish? ¹² Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³ 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?"

Jesus' reminder is that you can trust God for two things. You don't have to fear the response. And he will abundantly provide his presence through his Spirit.

Three points to put some handles on this for us

1. Prayer exposes our motives and our beliefs about God

When asked about prayer, most people, even non-Christians will admit to some form of praying. But maybe some here don't pray at all:

- Disbelief- some of you don't pray... because you don't believe in God

- Comedian Aaron Weber posted on social media after his premature baby went into the NICU. An atheist friend texted him back and said let me know if you need anything. To which he responded, "I'll just take your prayers." And the friend said I don't believe in that. So I'm sending you good vibes. And Aaron said, "Yeah, that seems more real! Calling on all my vibe warriors."
- I'm not just talking about the disbelief of atheists. I'm also talking about disbelief of Christians:
 - We move about in a world buffered from the activity of God.
 - "Oh, no. I'm not an atheist. I just pray like one."
- So why don't you pray?
 - We believe we don't need God's help: "I'll just place another Amazon order."
 - We believe we need to earn/keep God's favor: "Rise and grind, kings and queens!"
 - We believe our justice is more effective. We'll post another sick burn on social media to own the other side or keep wearing our value projection on our t-shirts and bumper stickers.
- Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount to pray in secret and we will be rewarded in secret.
 - We'd rather have the publicity of another smile box on our doorstep
 - Another promotion or praise from our own merits
 - Or another post that provides another dopamine from our latest IG story
- But did you pray about it?

But eventually the pendulum of our motives will swing from disbelief to desperation.

- Mark Twain, non-believer, when his wife got terminally ill he admitted he 'prayed like a dog'
- Our humanity is revealed in prayer- we are desperate, out of control, and vulnerable
- You WILL reach a point of desperation and vulnerability where you HAVE to pray.
- **George Mueller: "The greater the difficulties, the easier it is for faith. As long as human possibilities for success remain, faith does not accomplish things as easily as when all natural prospects fail."**
- Sadly, for many Christians this *may be the only time* you pray
- We reactively and desperately pray real quick when OUR kingdom starts falling apart
- Look Jesus isn't here to shame you. He's here to remind us that we should be desperate all the time:
 - Pray for the little things (bread, fish, eggs)
 - Pray for the big things (his kingdom come, i.e. Lord's Prayer)
- It's natural to react in desperation. God will certainly listen to your urgent, spontaneous prayer of LORD HELP! I hope that is the genuine knee-jerk reflex of your soul.
- But we should also respond in prayer in planned, humble desperation asking for daily bread

Ultimately our motives about prayer reveal what we believe about God.

- As a **boss**? Trying to win his approval with your hard work?
 - This will leave you tired, feeling like a failure, and keeping score
- As a **genie**? Believe that you can find the loophole keep your life comfortable
 - Comedian James Acaster: "Infinite wishes. That's everyone's favorite loophole. You find a lamp, you rub it, a genie comes out, grants you 3 wishes. What's your first wish? Infinite wishes? Clever. That's a clever loophole for a situation none of us are ever

gonna end up in, ever. Some people say, NO! You can't wish for infinite wishes. That's against the rules. Ok, so I won't wish for infinite wishes. OK, then what's your first wish. Infinite genies.

- This will only last as long as God grants your wishes. He's not your servant and suffering is not your enemy. Comfort is more dangerous than suffering.
- As **AI**? Is God just an algorithm of omniscience that gives you quick answers to speed up your effectiveness
 - This will train you to believe prayer is only as good as it is effective and immediate

In the first half of the passage Jesus relates God more to the friend character. And you may bristle at verse 8.

Luke 11:8

⁸ I tell you, even though he won't get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his friend's shameless boldness, he will get up and give him as much as he needs.

Sheesh. What kind of friend is God? But look, Jesus *contrasts* God to the friend. He's not comparing them side by side. God is a much better than this friend!

- You don't have to fear annoying him or putting him out

1 Peter 5:7

... casting all your cares on him, because he cares about you.

I also think that Jesus is pointing the focus on *HOW* to pray to God in a persuasive, shamelessly bold way more than focus on the quality of the friend.

- Our motivation should be out of boldness to receive what we need
- Our belief in God is that he is much better than this friend

2. Prayer is our opportunity to experience God as He really is.

And, watch this, there are two sets of three words are game-changers for how to experience God in prayer: The first group of three are:

Ask. Seek. Knock.

We pray in such a way that we keep asking, keep seeking, and keep knocking. We're to be persistent like when you go to your neighbor's house for an urgent request. We don't give up!

We ask and pray and seek because we know God is a God who is generous.

St. Augustine: "But our Lord Jesus Christ.... Would not surely exhort us so strongly to ask, if He were not willing to give."

Those who ask receive, those who seek find, and those who knock have the door opened to them.

Example: Ice Cream with my three daughters

- I love ice cream: Kroger Private Selection Brown Butter Bourbon or Denali Extreme Moose Tracks!
- Of course I shared this love with our 3 daughters.
- Friday nights when they were younger we'd let them stay up later, watch a movie and play
- I'd often get ice cream on my way home on Friday afternoons
- This love turned to leverage in the girls. They know my weaknesses.
- In terms of asking, seeking, and knocking, it doesn't take much persistence to get me to give them something they AND I enjoy!

Let's be honest. Sometimes we get this joyful ice-cream moment at the end of our prayers. And when we get those moments it is like experiencing the love of the Father in our loves that he would answer our prayers.

But sometimes he doesn't answer like that. And it makes us hesitate to keep asking, seeking, knocking.

1. We've tried this before and we don't get the answer we asked for.
 - a. Look I don't have the omniscience of God to know why.
 - b. I also know that many others have asked, sought, and knocked and didn't receive.
 - c. The answer was no, the answer was wait, or there was simply silence.
 - d. My encouragement to you to remember and believe is twofold
 - i. God is present. Even in the suffering. You have Jesus as your prime example.
 - ii. Consider your options: you can embrace the mystery or you can run from it.
 1. Is running away from God really a better answer?
 2. Is a God that you can completely know, even still God?

The second thing is also a difficult one to admit.

2. Jesus, as in so many places in the bible, relates God as a Father. And if you have dad-issues then I totally see why that would be difficult.

Jesus says even bad fathers like you and yours don't give snakes instead of fish or scorpions instead of eggs. That hurts especially if you've experienced the snake and scorpion side of an earthly father.

No father is perfect. I know I'm not. At the same time I know for many years I had no idea how my experience of my own dad shaped how I viewed and failed to view God as a good Father.

- Parents' divorced by the time I was 4. I lived with my mom and spent every other weekend with my dad and step mother pretty much for the next 14 years.
- My dad provided- he worked hard, later in life came into his faith, he told me he loved me, he bought me my first pair of Nikes when I was in 6th grade, he attended pretty much every baseball or basketball game I ever played
- Negatively though I experienced two things in my dad: his alcoholism and his anger.

- When he was drunk, which was often, I didn't know which version of him I'd experience
- I also remember feeling like me and my sister were in the middle of my dad's anger toward our mom.
- And toward the end of my dad's life several years ago things got really dark and hurtful. He said things to me that came from a place I can never understand.

So listen, if you have a hard time seeing God as a good father, I get it.

But Jesus was three more words that might change the game for you:

HOW MUCH MORE

Luke 11:13

¹³ 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?"

First there's this admission that even the best fathers, those who give good gifts, are evil. That's crazy but true!

Also know this:

- My experience of my dad is the floor of comparison to my heavenly father
- So is yours!

Viewing God as a perfect, loving, heavenly Father will unlock not only your prayer life but also everything else you can experience in the Father's love. In asking, seeking, and knocking through prayer may just be the way you experience God as a good father. In his presence even if there's silence or the answers don't come as expected.

Prayer is your opportunity to experience God as a good father.

3. Prayer is an invitation into the Kingdom of Jesus

Don't Settle- 4 Things (May 4, 2025)

1. Prayer for family & friends
2. Yearning for church spiritual revival
3. Church multiplication & diversity
4. Personal walk with God

City Church let's continue to level up our prayer.

- Pray spontaneously for people on Sundays but also Monday through Saturday. Let's be weird.
- Pray regularly- keep a journal, list, notepad. Write it down and follow it up.
- Pray boldly for Kingdom things not our kingdom things
- Pray persistently believing God is a good father

Maybe today you came in not believing in prayer or God at all today. Are you courageous? Let me challenge you to take a courageous step.

- Will you just start by praying a simple prayer to God?
- I mean, what do you have to lose if he is not real?

Pray, “Father, fill me with your Holy Spirit to know who Jesus really is.”

Ask, seek, and knock!

- God is so much more committed and responsive to you than your best friend.
- And he’s so much more loving and generous than even the best father.

Maybe today is your day to do what Romans 10:9-10 in the form of a prayer.

Romans 10:9

If you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Invitation is open to pray with one of our prayer counselors this morning:

- Pray to confess and believe in Jesus
- Be prayed for in your desperate need

City Church, will we also pray, “Father, fill me with your Holy Spirit to know who Jesus really is.”

- Filled with the Spirit to be unafraid, overflowing, and sent.
- Experience the joy of a generous father with an attitude of bold persistence.

Today we are also celebrating the Lord’s Supper.

LORD’S SUPPER slide

On the night before Jesus’ crucifixion he gathered with his disciples. He took bread and wine and turned them into a way to look backwards and forwards. The bread represented Christ’s body- blessed and broken for you. The wine represented Christ’s blood- poured out for forgiveness of sin.

At this meal for us we both look backwards and forwards.

- Backwards seeing that Jesus was himself a friend took the bread to give it to us. He died in our place. His body broken and his blood spilled instead of us to pay for our sin and guilt before God.
- But the Lord’s Supper also points forward. To a time when we will celebrate together the fullness of God’s Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

Don’t take if you don’t believe.

You’re welcome to join if you have placed faith in Jesus. Covenant members in groups of 6 or so. Someone will pray and lead your small circle.