

Luke 10:25-11:13 forms a three unit section that deals with the disciple's responsibilities before God. The first section (10:25-37) showed that disciples are to love their neighbor. The second section (Jesus' visit with Mary and Martha - 10:38-42), is an object lesson on the priority of Jesus and His word over service. The third section (11:1-13) stresses dependence upon God through an active prayer life.

***Jesus' Visit with Mary and Martha*** (Luke 10:38-42)

Darrell Bock does an excellent job summarizing the visit of Jesus to the house of Martha and Mary:

The visit is built around a contrast. Martha and Jesus are the focus of the attention, though Mary is the point of the example – despite her saying nothing. The literary style of the “silent testimony” recalls the woman of Luke 7:36-50, as does the presence of an exemplary action. First, we see Martha, busy and harried, engaged in getting everything right for Jesus' visit, and disturbed over Mary's lack of help. The presence of sibling tension adds a touch of real life to the dispute. We find Mary seated at the feet of Jesus, the position of a disciple, listening to His every word. Jesus notes that it is Mary who has chosen well. Time with Jesus is more important than preparing an elaborate meal for Him. Sometimes the activity associated with the ministry can prevent us from more important endeavors – such as hearing God's word so that He can touch us (8:15, 21). The image recalls Deuteronomy 8:3. Service of the hand cannot supersede service with the ear, since the ear guides the heart and the hand. In addition, the picture of a woman in the disciple's position, at the feet of Jesus, would be startling in a culture where women did not receive formal teaching from a rabbi.

***10:38 Now as they were traveling along, He entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home.***

***10:39 She had a sister called Mary, who was seated at the Lord's feet, listening to His word.***

Mary and Martha had a brother named Lazarus and all three lived together in Bethany (Jn. 11:1, 18, and 12:1). The fact that Martha is listed first, places her in an emphatic position in Greek, probably meaning that she was the older of the two and the owner of the house.

Sitting at someone's feet is a position of readiness to receive and submit to what that person said. It is the position of a disciple. Thus, Paul said he had been brought up at the "feet" of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). The imperfect tense verb (listening) indicates continuous action, while the object (His word) directs us to the focus of her attention. Mary was intently listening to Jesus' teaching.

Women were not allowed to sit at the feet of a Rabbi, but Jesus' ministry broke the molds of Jewish thought. Mary intuitively felt welcomed. She knew that she would not be turned away.

***10:40 But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me."***

Verse 40 introduces a contrast between Mary and Martha. Mary was continuously listening (imperfect tense) to Jesus' word; Martha was continuously distracted (imperfect tense) with all her preparations.

The Bible commands hospitality and showing kindness to strangers (Ro.12:13, 1 Pet. 4:10; 1 Tim. 5:10). As the hostess of the house, the responsibility to provide suitable refreshments fell on Martha. Thus she saw her actions as within the boundaries of proper concern; she was serving the Lord and all the guests.

Mary, on the other hand, was not in sync with what was culturally expected. It was not the role of women to sit at a teacher's feet. From Martha's perspective, Mary was acting inappropriately; she was insensitive to Martha's needs, and she was behaving negligently in her responsibilities toward their guests.

Eventually, Mary's inactivity led to Martha's agitation. The apex of her exasperation is expressed in her suggestion that the Lord Himself was insensitive: "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone?" The form of the question in Greek anticipates a "yes" answer; that is, she expected Jesus to agree with her. This is followed by an imperative (a command): "tell her to help me." What started off as a desire to be a good hostess turned into an accusation about Jesus' concern and a demand that Jesus tell her sister to help!

Of course, only a skeletal outline of what happened is given; there are probably many details left out. Martha may have wanted to listen to Jesus too, but felt the burden of her responsibility. But Luke boils the story down to the salient point. No matter how much responsibility Martha felt, and no matter how many good intentions she may have had, she failed to make the right decision. She had completely lost sight of a rare privilege she was afforded to hear the Messiah teach her privately and personally.

***10:41 But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things;***

***10:42 but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her."***

Jesus, graciously and gently responded as demonstrated by the two-fold utterance of the name: "Martha, Martha."

"You are worried and bothered about so many things." "Worried" (to be unduly concerned) expresses the inward anxiety that her preparations should be worthy of her Lord, while "bothered" (to be troubled) speaks of the outward bustle of those preparations (Jamieson-Fausset-Brown). "Too many things" means she was too engrossed in activity; she was so absorbed in such elaborate preparation that she missed her Lord's teaching.

What makes this story so interesting is that serving the Lord with zeal would, under other circumstances, be considered the proper, most God-honoring course of action. Who would criticize someone for wanting the best for the Lord? But Martha was obsessed with the wrong thing. She should have cherished being with Jesus and learning from Him above all else.

Mary had chosen the one thing that really mattered – to sit at Jesus' feet and learn from Him. She had chosen the "good part" (or, "good portion," ESV). "Portion" is used for a portion of food in Genesis 43:34, Deuteronomy 18:8, and 1 Samuel 1:4. It is used in a metaphorical sense of God: "The Lord is my

portion" (Psa. 119:57; 16:5). It's possible that Jesus was making a play on words. A "portion" can be used of a portion of a meal; Mary had chosen the "right meal," the word of God (Lk. 4:4; Deut. 8:3).

Bock summarizes this story as follows:

Luke 10:38–42 highlights a major feature of discipleship: choosing to order one's affairs properly. One of the facts of life is that its demands are often all consuming. In fact, much of life is spent fulfilling these demands. Such was Martha's situation when Jesus visited her. She was diligent in preparing an appropriate meal for the teacher. In contrast, Mary simply sat down. She was not lifting a finger to help, and Martha was disturbed. But Mary had made the right choice, according to Jesus. The disciple who reflects on Jesus' teaching receives a meal that is never removed. To sit at Jesus' feet is the disciple's priority. The worries of life should never prevent one from consuming God's word. This is Luke's message to disciples: sit at Jesus' feet and devour His teaching, since there is no more important meal (1042-1043).

#### ***Lesson on How to Pray and Perseverance in Prayer*** (Luke 11:1-13)

Once again, Bock is very helpful in summarizing 11:1-13:

An exhortation to prayer follows Jesus' teaching on being a neighbor and on giving attention to him. The disciple is to look to God. This point comes in three steps. In Luke 11:1–4, Jesus' model prayer expresses the disciple's dependence on God and their desire that God's will and glory be revealed. In 11:5-8, a brief parable exhorts disciples to be bold and aggressive in prayer. And in 11:9–13, there appears a two-part exhortation to prayer. Disciples are to come to God as a child comes to a parent, knowing that God meets their basic needs. Jesus promises that those who ask will receive spiritual blessing, pointing out that the Father's kindness is greater than a human's compassion. God expresses His compassion by sending the Holy Spirit to those who ask. The disciple's requests are for God's presence and insight, and the initial fulfillment of this promise is the coming of the "promise of the Father" (Lk. 24:49; 2:1–39). Jesus promises direction from God's Spirit. Such insight is essential to the disciple and it should be eagerly sought, because the one who seeks God can know that He is gracious. The theme of seeking God reappears in Luke 12:30–32.

#### ***An Example Prayer*** (Luke 11:1-4)

***11:1 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."***

***11:2 And He said to them, "When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come.'***

The aorist imperative ("teach us to pray") is used when there is urgency (Bock, 1050).

The prayer Jesus offers is similar to, but not worded exactly as the prayer in Matthew 6. That we have two versions of the prayer demonstrates that the prayer's exact wording is not as important as are the themes that the prayer emphasizes.

Jesus begins by addressing God as "Father." This implies that God is not removed, but personal and intimate in His relationship to us. This is fleshed out in verses 11-13 where God is described as being more than a good and caring father.

In a sense, all men are God's children since God made and sustains them all (Acts 17:28, 29). But God is Father to Christians in a special way (Jn.1:12; Gal. 3:26; Heb. 2:11-15). We are sons by adoption into God's family and by birth (Jn. 3:5). This is the way "father" is most commonly used in Scripture when referring to God.

It becomes immediately apparent that Jesus places God at the center of life. As the lawyer in Luke 10:27 said, the one who has eternal life is the one who loves the Lord God with a whole heart, with all their soul, and with all their strength. This is reflected in that fact that he desires that God's name be hallowed.

The word hallowed means holy. The verb is passive and looks for God to act in such a way that leads to His name being made holy by men, that His name be sanctified, set apart, treated as something distinct from that which is common. In the Bible, one's "name" summed up that person's whole character, all that was known or revealed about him (Morris, 211). Here it essentially stands for God Himself (Marshall, 457). "The picture is of the creator God, enthroned and manifesting His rule. His glory is made evident to all. The disciple opens the prayer with recognition of the One being addressed, trusting and hoping that God in His greatness will manifest Himself" (Bock, 1052).

The second statement, "Your kingdom come," focuses on the hope of the fulfilled realization and culmination of God's rule upon the earth. In one sense the kingdom had come as the disciples proclaimed it, and it would come in a greater way after Jesus' death and the promise of the Spirit was realized. But there is even a greater, ultimate coming of the kingdom when Messiah returns to reign upon the earth and evil is completely eradicated. Matthew 6 makes this even clearer when Jesus adds, "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." It is only in the consummated kingdom when God's will on earth will be His will in heaven.

**11:3 'Give us each day our daily bread.'**

"Daily" (ἐπιούσιος; *epiousios*) is a rare word in Greek. It seems to be an adjective meaning "of the day that is coming." If we used it in the morning we would be referring to the day that is just beginning; if we used it at night we would be talking about the following day. Such thinking reflects a simple trust in God for daily provision.

In Jesus' day, laborers were paid for their work at the end of each day. However, the pay was so low that it barely covered the day's needs for food. Furthermore, the society was primarily agrarian, which

meant that one crop failure would spell a major disaster. Praying “Give us this day our daily bread” in this type of society was no empty rhetoric. Jesus’ followers were to learn how to trust God for their daily subsistence. In essence, therefore, Jesus is teaching of the necessity of daily prayer for daily needs (Carson, Matthew).

In addition, such a prayer demonstrates that we understand that everything we have comes from God. James says, “Every good and perfect gift is from above” (Jam. 1:17), and Paul asked the Corinthians, “For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?” (I Cor. 4:7)

Everything we have is from God. Life in western society isn’t as precarious as in the first century. We have received much more. But sadly, our very wealth has contributed to our thanklessness. We have taken His gifts for granted, and then we complain and call into question the very existence of this beneficent God if they begin to dry up (Carson).

As every day demands bread, so every day demands prayer. No amount of prayer today will suffice for tomorrow’s prayer. Likewise, prayer tomorrow will not help today’s needs. God seeks to inspire a faith that leaves the future in His hands and depends on Him one day at a time. In God’s eyes, today’s bread is enough (Also see Ex.16:4, 5, 13-31).

***11:4 'And forgive us our sins, For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.'"***

Matthew 6:12 reads, “forgive us our *debts*, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” Luke has “sins.” In both cases sin is pictured as a debt. We have a moral obligation that we owe God. When we fail to pay it we are in debt.

Colossians 2:14 says God canceled “the record of debt that stood against us” by “nailing it to the cross.” The Greek word for “cancel” (ἐξαλείψας), which Paul uses in Colossians 2, means “to blot out” or “to wipe away.” When a debtor had finally paid off all his debts, his creditor would write “tetelestai,” “paid in full,” on the certificate of debt. These are the very words that Jesus cried out on the cross; “tetelestai”, “it is finished”, “paid in full” (Jn. 19:31). Through the death of Christ, our debt of sin had been paid in full. God’s forgiveness is not simply God winking His eye at sin, He is taking the debt that is ours and placing it upon Christ. God drove a nail right through the infinite debt of our sin. There are no longer any outstanding charges against us.

When we pray the way Jesus taught us to pray, the debts we ask God to forgive are the very debts that were crucified with Christ at Calvary. When Christ died on the cross, all our debts were canceled; the mountain of debt we once owed to God has been completely erased.

Once we understand the huge debt that has been forgiven us, it will translate into our own forgiveness of others.

Finally, Jesus told His disciples to pray, “lead us not into temptation.” The sinner whose past sins have been forgiven longs to be delivered from the tyranny of evil in the future.

The Bible clearly teaches us that God cannot be tempted by evil, nor can He tempt us (Jam. 1:13). Because of this, some have wondered why anyone would even need to ask God NOT to lead us into temptation. Although there are a number of explanations, the most satisfying and easiest to understand is that this is an example of a figure of speech known as litotes which expresses something by negating the contrary. For example, when we say, "You won't be sorry" what we mean is, "you will be glad." An example of litotes is in John 6:37 where Jesus said, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out." By saying that He will certainly not cast them out, Jesus was really saying, "I will certainly keep all who come to Me." In the same way, "lead us not into temptation" means "lead us in the way of righteousness" (Carson, Sermon, 70).

This is a strong reminder that not only do we need to depend on God for daily physical life, but we also need to depend on Him for daily spiritual victory. Failure to depend on God for spiritual victory is to have already fallen, for it is part of our ugly independence that fails to recognize that we are fallen creatures before God.

***A Parable about Boldness in Prayer*** (Luke 11:5-8)

***11:5 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;***

***11:6 for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him';***

***11:7 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.'***

***11:8 "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.***

In verse 5 Jesus turns from *what* one should pray to *how* one should pray. The illustration reflects the culture of the time. Food was not readily available. There were no stores open at night and bread was only baked as it was needed, not stocked on shelves. Hospitality was also a virtue that was taken seriously by the whole community.

In this parable, Jesus portrays a situation where someone has a late-night visitor and they have no food to offer them. The host has no choice but to go to his neighbor and awaken him for help, or be a poor host and offer nothing to the late-night guest. In that culture, if one's neighbor needed help and asked for help, one was obligated to respond.

Furthermore, most homes at that time were simply one-room dwellings. To knock on the door at night could potentially awaken the whole family. Yet boldness was necessary for hospitality was the greater concern.

The host needed three loaves of bread and promised even to repay his neighbor. Understandably, the neighbor is not happy about the timing of the request; it's late, dark, and everyone is asleep. The request at that time of night sounds unreasonable. The neighbor had bread, but didn't want to get it because of the chaos that would follow.

Nevertheless, though he won't get up and give him something as a friend, he will get up and give him what he wants because of his persistence. The Greek word translated as "persistence" appears only once in the NT. It has both the ideas of boldness and shamelessness (Bock, 1059). Thus, the main idea is not as much that of persistence as it is in shamelessness and boldness in requesting what is needed. The host is willing to do whatever it takes to be hospitable – even facing rebuke and inconveniencing others. The argument is from lesser to greater; if a flawed human being will eventually respond to the person who boldly requests of him, how much more will God who delights in the prayers of His children answer the requests of those who boldly approach Him.

Believers in Christ have access to God and they should use it.

***An Exhortation to Trust God*** (Luke 11:9-13)

In verses 9-13, Jesus applies the parable:

***11:9 "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.***

***11:10 "For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened.***

Verses 9 and 10 have three present tense imperatives: "ask," "seek," "knock." An imperative is a command; the present tense usually indicates continuous action: "Keep asking", "Keep seeking", "Keep knocking."

"Asking" is a verb regularly used of prayer. The passive verb means God will give (cf. Jn. 16:24; 14:13; 15:7). It is difficult to know where the emphasis is placed. It may mean "you must ask in order to receive," or "if you ask you are sure to receive". The latter idea is present in verse 10. This is an invitation to pray.

"Seeking" is commonly used of seeking God (Deut. 4:29; Isa. 65:1; 55:6); to seek His face is to pray (2 Sam 21:1; Psa.23:6; 26:8; Hos.5:15). The language here parallels the OT idea of seeking after God and finding him. This is an invitation to pursue God.

The third phrase is used of a picture of a man knocking at a closed door. This, too, is most likely a picture of prayer, of a person seeking admission into the Father's presence. This is an invitation to enter into God's presence.

"Asking" is the simplest act and requires no movement. "Seeking" turns "asking" into an activity of pursuit. "Knocking" over and over again demonstrates utter earnestness and perhaps even desperation. . . So Jesus clearly wants us to be like this friend who kept knocking. He wants us to prevail in prayer. (Piper).

Each action has a corresponding response that is repeated in verses 9 and 10 as an emphasis: "everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened." This does not

mean that God is like a genie who does exactly what is requested; rather, it means that based on the request, God responds appropriately.

***11:11 "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?"***

***11:12 "Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he?"***

***11:13 "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?"***

Verses 11-13 illustrate God's willingness to answer prayer. Parents give their children their basic needs. No parent would give a child a snake if the child asked for a fish, or a scorpion instead of an egg. When parents are asked they don't give what is harmful; they give what is needed.

Jesus then argues from lesser to greater. If this is true of parents who are evil, it is surely true of God who is good. A disciple that asks for the necessities of their spiritual life will be given the Holy Spirit.

As Piper says, "The words 'how much more' mean something utterly crucial for us. They mean that God is much more inclined to hear us and help us when we pray than earthly fathers are. Why does Jesus talk this way? Surely, it's because he means for us to feel secure in the Father's love when we come to him in prayer. He does not want us to feel precarious or unsure of our acceptance or fearful that we will find the Father out of sorts or unconcerned."

It might be asked, "Why would we need to keep asking, seeking, and knocking (11:9, 10) if God is like a loving father who desires to meet our needs?" (11:11-13). The only answer given is that a good father will not give his son a serpent if he asks for a fish. In other words, a good father will only give his children what is good for them. Thus we must conclude that there is something good for us in persistently asking, seeking, and knocking or there would be no need to do it. God will only do what is best. Thus we see that Jesus teaches us to prevail in prayer without doubting the Father's love.