

“Lord, Teach Us to Pray”

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Luke 11:1-13

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INTRODUCTION

A. A Typical Scene at the Eggar Household – WILL’S PRAYER AT THE DINNER TABLE

1. My prayer life is not all that stellar.
2. The irony: I need to be taught how to pray...and if you’re honest, so do you.
3. With this admission we find that we are in the company of the disciples who found themselves in need of being schooled in that vital necessity of the Christian Life called prayer.

THE DISCIPLES’ REQUEST

A. The Disciple’s Prayer Life Was Missing Something; It Was Lacking

1. What brought them to this realization was not in their reading a book on prayer, but by witnessing Jesus in prayer – *‘Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he had finished, one of his disciples (presumably a spokesman for the entire group) said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray...”’*
2. In light of Jesus’ prayer life the disciples realized that their prayer life was lacking **depth, intimacy, direction and purpose, confidence and staying power.**
3. Now I know what you’re thinking...he was Jesus, he was God...no wonder they felt their prayer life was inadequate compared to his. But, this sort of thinking misses the point. Jesus was God, fully God, but at the very same time he was fully human, and in his prayer life he was demonstrating to his disciples that prayer is a deeply human act, for which we were created; an act that as we engage in it, the way Jesus engaged in it, we are becoming more fully human ourselves.
4. When the disciples witnessed Jesus’ prayer life what they encountered was something that was unique that had depth, something that was deeply personal and genuinely human, something that revealed dependence was not something to scoffed at, that made clear that confidence in God was not a pipe-dream, or an illusion which only the religious cling. In light of Jesus’ prayer life the

disciples knew they had no clue about prayer – *‘Lord, teach us to pray.’*

5. This is the only time the disciples ask Jesus to teach them something...The wanted to do well, what Jesus did best. They wanted to learn how to pray.

JESUS’ RESPONSE

A. A Prayer, A Parable, and A Comment Structure

1. Meant to teach his disciples how to pray, but more importantly about the One to whom they’re pray – **YOU CAN’T LEARN TO PRAY IF YOU DON’T KNOW THE ONE TO WHOM YOU PRAY!!!**
2. Why don’t we pray? Why do we experience such difficulty in sustaining a prayer life? Why do we look at prayer as something we know we’re supposed to do but question if it really does anything? And why, even when we do try to pray, do we in the end find ourselves frustrated and confused, only to give in and go back to our normal routine of fending for ourselves?
3. The answer, according to the text, is two-fold: **1) Our view of God is too small or just plain wrong and/or 2) our view of ourselves is way too large.**

B. Depersonalizing God

1. When the disciples request that Jesus teach them to pray the first thing he does is **immerse** them in the personal, FOR PRAYER IS DEEPLY PERSONAL, IT IS RELATIONAL SPEECH ADDRESSED TO A PERSONAL AND RELATIONAL GOD – *‘When you pray say, Father...’ (v.2) Father, Friend, Parent and child, Heavenly Father/Holy Spirit...all of which are powerful designations that exclude the impersonal*
2. Why does Jesus do this? Because we are prone to depersonalize God. It’s much easier to deal with an impersonal God. With an impersonal and distant God you are in control (EX. A Facebook Friend God)
3. With an impersonal God prayer is nothing more than a religious duty and empty obligation – no wonder it feels like our prayers making no higher than the ceiling
4. What Jesus is making clear is that God is personal, that he is intimately near, not an absentee landlord.

- This God engages with us personally – Jesus
- We are to respond to him personally with our lives – *Honor name, your kingdom come*

5. Prayer is personal, not an abstract exercise in futility.

C. Doubting God's Goodness

1. Not only are we prone to view God as impersonal, we are also prone, especially when life gets difficult, to view God as uncaring, to doubt that God is good, and particularly good to me.

2. THE PARABLE (vv. 5-8)

- Quickly retell parable
 - Hospitality and Communal Culture. It was viewed as shameful to not be hospitable.
 - *Can you imagine having a friend and going to him at midnight and saying to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey.' And then having the supposed friend giving you some excuses and end up saying no? NO WAY CAN I IMAGINE THAT!!!!*
 - **The Punch-line:** *He will not get up and get him anything because he is friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs (v. 8)*
 - Shamelessly persistent vs. Avoidance of shame (he will arise because he wants to avoid shaming himself and his community)
3. If a not so good friend still arises and gives you whatever you need, how much God who has staked his reputation on providing for your good, providing not simply out of compulsion but out of love...because he is your friend.
4. God is more committed to your good than you are. Where do we see this most clearly? – Offering up his own Son for you
5. This gives us confidence to come to him with all of our needs. It gives us confidence to ask, to seek, and to knock (vv. 9-10).

D. Deeming That We Can Take Care of Ourselves

1. We struggle in prayer because we think too much of ourselves...we deem that we can provide for ourselves. Oh we may pray when it comes to spiritual things, but I'm able to take care of the other stuff
2. And in this way we pray, if we pray, out of our excess and not our need – we have the resources, the skill, the ingenuity, the elbow-grease to provide for myself and get done what I need to get done. And in this way we don't have time for prayer.
3. In teaching us to pray Jesus brings us face to face with our poverty as human beings. He will not let us deny that at the core we are needy creatures! Give, Give, Give
 - We need bread
 - We need forgiveness
 - We need deliverance
4. You see, if we are going to learn to pray we must **embrace** and **acknowledge** our neediness as human beings. This is a **NECESSARY PRECONDITION** to learning to pray. For when we pray out of our excess all we're doing is wanting more, (more stuff, more things to make life easier) and in turn all we will be doing is dictating to God that we need him to raise our standard of living, we need him to help us set up our little kingdoms.
5. Not the way Jesus lived or prayed – When God became human in Jesus, he showed us how not to become less human, but more human. Jesus was absolutely dependent and needy before his Father. As we look more and more at Jesus we are to become more and more convinced of our absolute neediness of God – like a child with his parent.
6. We don't become less needy, less dependent when we pray; we become more needy, more dependent, which is to say human.

CONCLUSION

A. *'How much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him' (v. 13)*

1. We are to ask for God's personal presence to abide with us so that:
 - Know God more truly – **Personal God**
 - Trust God more fully – **Confidence that he will give me all that I need**
 - See ourselves rightly – **as needy and dependent**
 - We can pray learn to pray.
 - We can learn to embody the prayer Jesus taught us to pray.