

GROWTH GROUPS
WEEK 8
WEEK OF NOV 8



Growth Group Fall 2020

Too Busy Not To Pray

Week 8 – November 8, 2020 - Luke 11:1-13

Growth groups are one of the best and easiest ways to find community at a church. In this time of Corona19 and “social distancing” please don’t meet in person, but do continue to check in with each other. If your growth group would like to meet online or if you are aware of needs that the church can help fill, please let us know at connect@ljpres.org. Thank you for loving and caring for each other.

Setting the Context

A central theme in the book of Luke is prayer. In Luke 11, we see a prayer given by Jesus to his disciples. When asked for a specific, unique prayer Jesus spoke what we now know as “The Lord’s Prayer.” This prayer was intended to be prayed by those who already believed in God and had a pre-existing relationship with him. This can be seen through the opening word, “Father.” The Lord’s Prayer can be seen as an outline or template for all of our prayers. It is simple, yet sufficient.

The prayer begins with looking to God and a recognition of the character and position of God. God is personal, like a parent, and deserving of all glory and praise. God will bring about his kingdom and will make His name known among creation.

The next section of the prayer is the “we” petitions. Asking for “daily bread,” “forgiveness of sins,” as well as learning how to “forgive others,” and “avoiding temptation.” These lines are meant to be prayed often and with conviction. We are told to remember to ask God to provide us with the basics. In asking, we should recognize that all that we have is God’s.

Oftentimes we forget to acknowledge our own sin before God. We don’t repent and ask for God’s forgiveness. Jesus reminds us here that confession needs to be regular. We also need to ask for God’s help in forgiving those who have hurt us. Finally, we ask for God’s help to daily keep us from temptations that distract us and can lead us away from God.

Theologian Kenneth Bailey says we need to see the parable of the “friend at night” from a Middle Eastern cultural perspective, which would be concerned about hospitality and the avoidance of shame. The man who is awakened in the middle of the night will, of course, show hospitality. The tone of Jesus “Suppose you have a friend” should be read more emphatically, “Can you imagine going to a friend in the middle of the night and them not getting up to help you!” No one living in the Middle East could ever have imagined that. You always show hospitality and you always do the honorable thing. Also note that the man asking is not banging on the door asking for help. He simply calls out to the man who is asleep.

Bailey suggests the parable is not so much about the persistence of our prayers, as it is about the nature of God. Of course, God would get up to help. God will always be gracious and he will be honorable. Jesus doesn’t just talk about “how” we should pray, he talks about “why” we should pray. We pray expectantly because the God we approach in prayer is one who is gracious and merciful. We may not always get what we ask for, but God will gladly get up in the middle of the night to comfort us and be with us.



Exploring the Text

Read 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 Jesus said to them, “Suppose you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; ⁶ a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.’ ⁷ And suppose the one inside answers, ‘Don’t bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can’t get up and give you anything.’ ⁸ I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity he will surely get up and give you as much as you need.

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; the one who seeks finds; and to the one 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!”

Questions

If you are answering these questions alone, we would urge you to try journaling. Rather than just pondering the answers, try writing them out along with a prayer to the Lord.

- 1) Do you have any simple prayers that have been consistent throughout your life? (Maybe a prayer learned in Sunday School, a mealtime prayer, a prayer said at school etc...)
- 2) We read that Jesus often went out by himself to pray. Do you have a certain place where you like to pray?
- 3) What do you think motivated one of the disciples to ask Jesus to teach them to pray?
- 4) What line from this version of the Lord’s Prayer resonates the most with you? Why? Is there a part of this prayer that you would have a hard time praying?
- 5) How do you deal with it, when it seems as though God is slow to answer your prayers, or perhaps when God has seemed to say no to what you are asking for?
- 6) Pastor Paul mentioned Romans 8:27-28 in his sermon and how the Holy Spirit intercedes for us in ways that we don’t understand. “ In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God.” Do you find this verse comforting? Have you ever experienced something like that?
- 7) Theologian Kenneth Bailey suggests the parable of the friend at night should be seen as teaching us something about the nature of God, not necessarily the persistence of our prayers as this parable is often talked about. If God is the neighbor who is awakened in this parable, what does this parable teach us about God? How does it influence the way in which we pray?
- 8) Soren Kierkegaard says, “The function of prayer is not to influence God, but rather to change the nature of the one who prays.” Do you agree or disagree with this? Why? Have you seen this to be true in your own life?
- 9) What have you been praying about recently? Is there a place in your life where you could use prayer right now?