

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

Lord, Teach Us to Pray

Luke 11:1-13

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Analysis by Steven E. Albertin

¹[Jesus] was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples."²He said to them, "When you pray, say:

Father, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come.

³*Give us each day our daily bread.*

⁴*And forgive us our sins,*

for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.

And do not bring us to the time of trial."

⁵And he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; ⁶for a friend of mine has arrived, and I have nothing to set before him.' ⁷And he answers from within, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.' ⁸I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs.

⁹"So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. ¹⁰For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and

for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. ¹¹Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? ¹²Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? ¹³If 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 Praying in the Garden of Gethsemane by Hermann Clementz found on [Wikipedia](#)

Prayer is Part Two of a conversation started by God. God started that conversation at the very moment we thought God had gone silent. First, Jesus responds to the pleas and prayers of the desperate and reverses the inevitable. Then, Jesus shatters what we thought was set in stone and works miracles. God's love

cannot be thwarted.

DIAGNOSIS: Faithless Praying

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem): Problems with Praying

Jesus seems to be saying that prayer can actually make a difference, that prayer can change God, that because we have prayed, God will do things differently. IF we only pray the right kind of prayer. IF we pray fervently enough, seriously enough and faithfully enough. IF we use the right words, ask for the right things and get the right people to pray with us, THEN God can be changed.

Others say that if prayer changes anything, it changes us. We pray so that God might help us to accept what God is going to do anyway. So we pray for the faith and the courage to accept the inevitable will of God, even though at the moment God's will seems quite unacceptable.

Really??? Does God change his mind? Or was God already inclined to give us what we ask for anyway?

These questions certainly haunted the disciples as they also do us.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem): Praying without Faith

Both of these types of prayer are faithless. One sounds like magical thinking. Such prayer assumes that, IF we can only learn how to say the "magic words," THEN we can get God to give us what we want. THEN the rabbit will pop out of the hat. THEN we can get the secret door to open, like were in some Indiana Jones

adventure to find the lost treasure.

The other version sounds like fatalism. Such prayer is no different than trying to “buck up” or “grin and bear it.” Since God has already determined what will happen, we can do nothing to change it. Therefore, we pray for the strength to accept the inevitable.

Neither kind of prayer trusts that God is what Jesus claims he is: “Our Father.”

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem): Why Bother?

Why bother to pray if everything is set in stone anyway? Why bother to pray if we can never be sure that we have said the right words or with the right passion? Why bother if the cancer still kills, the rain never comes, or and the marriage still crumbles? Truth be told, we are tired of praying when the God who promises to listen never seems to hear the pleas from our lips.

With this conclusion, we are exposed for the “evil” (v. 13) folks we are. All we asked for was what we wanted. Isn’t that what prayer is supposed to do for us? Of course, we know what God thinks of such arrogance. It isn’t pretty.

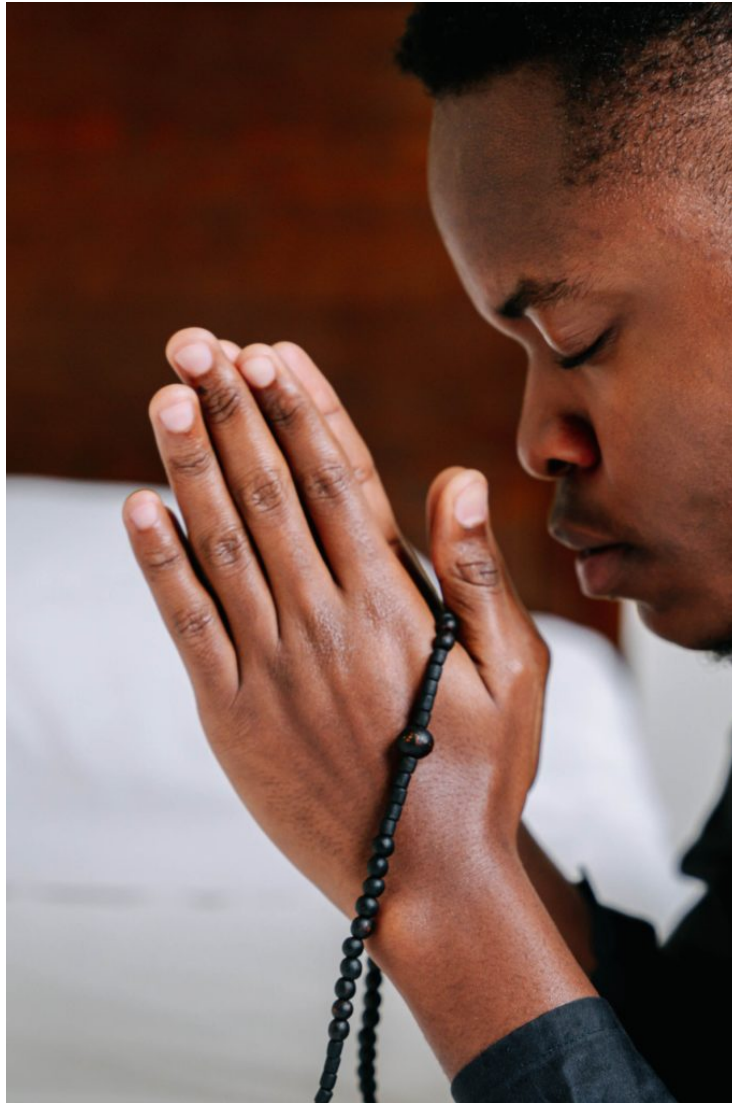


Photo by [Ivan Samkov](#) found on [Pexels](#)

PROGNOSIS: Faithful Praying

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution): A New Conversation

Prayer is Part Two of a conversation started by God. God started that conversation at the very moment we thought God had gone silent. First, Jesus responds to the pleas and prayers of the desperate and reverses the inevitable. Then, Jesus shatters what we thought was set in stone and works miracles. God's love cannot be thwarted. Even the stone sealing Jesus in the tomb cannot do it. God raises Jesus from the dead to prove that God

is not silent. God is free to love and do whatever God pleases to keep the conversation going. God sent Jesus to love arrogant sinners like us. Jesus died on the cross to prove it. When God raised Jesus from the dead, God made it clear that nothing could separate Jesus and those he loved from the love God. God promises to do whatever it takes for us to keep believing and praying.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution): Talking to Daddy

Jesus makes it possible for us to respond and seek out conversation with this God who is determined to love us. Jesus doesn't give us some complicated formula to show us how to pray more effectively. Prayer is not something that we HAVE TO do to get God's attention. Prayer is not some way that we resign ourselves to the inevitable. Prayer is something we GET TO do because of what God has already done for us. God has already started the conversation with the wonderful announcement that God is our loving Father, and we are his beloved children. God wants his kids to talk to him.

Just in case we will not know what to say, Jesus gives the Lord's Prayer, an incredibly short and simple prayer. That prayer makes it abundantly clear that we do not need to impress God with our many words. God just wants us to talk to him, like a child talks to their loving parent . . . with complete confidence and certainty that God will always give us what we need to keep on believing and praying.

It is like a man who visits his friend at midnight asking for some bread to feed his unexpected houseguest. But its midnight and the friend is tired and asleep with his family. He does not want to be bothered. However, the neighbor is persistent. He will not stop asking. So, his friend finally gives him some bread just to get him off his back. Jesus' point is simple. If

the friend is willing to give his neighbor bread merely because he is persistent, how much more then will our heavenly Father respond to the prayers of those he loves and give us that for which we ask.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution): Daring to Pray

When we pray, in faith we dare to believe that things can change. It is not because our prayers have earned it. It is not because we have been so good that we deserve it. God is free to change his mind and give us that for which we ask, even the most ordinary and down-to-earth things, . . . because God so loves his kids!

So, pray, ask, search and knock, whether at midnight when an unexpected guest has arrived or at 3 a.m. Our heavenly Father will always give us what we need to keep on praying, . . . to keep on asking (nothing is out-of-bounds.) . . ., and to keep on believing that our loving, heavenly Dad will always give us what we need , because we are his beloved kids.

Therefore, Lord, Dad, heavenly Father, . . . “teach us to pray” . . . like this.