

Lesson 10

Abiding in Christ in Prayer

Leader Guide

Leader Guide Bible Studies

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Luke 11:1-13
Abiding in Christ in Prayer

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.”

Luke 11:1

Prayers

Introduction

Most Christians pray, as do believers in other religions. Prayer is universal in faith. In America, most prayers are silent and solo rather than audible and with others. We most often pray, giving thanks for God’s blessings or asking him to meet the needs of our family and community. Other prayers request God’s guidance, health and healing, confession for sins, and peace or safety. All are good things to include in prayer. Why pray to God, who knows all our needs before we ask? Prayer is an act of intimacy we are invited to enter, an outpouring of our heart to God, and an acknowledgment of his power and our dependence. It is God’s nature to give when asked, and also by his grace when not asked.

Jesus prayed often. He prayed in the morning and evening, alone and with and for others, and always to do his Father’s will before major decisions and events. His disciples saw the intimacy Jesus had with the Father when he prayed and wanted to experience the same, so they asked Jesus to teach them to pray. The Lord’s Prayer is the prayer Jesus taught his disciples and is one of a dozen of Jesus’ prayers in scripture. Jesus probably taught the prayer as a structure with infinite variety, not a single prayer. Another model for prayer that includes the elements of the Lord’s Prayer is ACTS, Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication. In this lesson, we will look at these various elements of prayer.

Read Luke 1:1-13, The Lord’s Prayer

Lk 11:1 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.”

Lk 11:2 He said to them, “**When you pray, say: ‘Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come [Mt 6:10 your will be done on earth as it is in heaven].**

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

Lk 11:4 **Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation [Mt 6:13 but deliver us from the evil one.]”**

Lk 11:5 Then he said to them, “**Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread,**

Lk 11:6 **because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.’**

Lk 11:7 "Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.'

Lk 11:8 I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs.

Lk 11:9 "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.

Lk 11:10 For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

Lk 11:11 "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead?

Lk 11:12 Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?

Lk 11:13 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!"

Discussion

1. Who do you pray to, God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?

Most of the time we address our prayers to God, the Father, just as Jesus did. Sometimes we also pray to Jesus or the Holy Spirit. God is triune, so prayers can be addressed to the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit; all are God.

2. Adoration is the first element of the Lord's Prayer. Jesus included adoration in his prayer by saying his Father's name was holy. God's name, "I am who I am," is so holy that Hebrew writers would not write or say it, so they abbreviated it with four letters, YHWH. English Bibles translate God's name as LORD. Adoration magnifies God's character, and the Hebrew prophets referred to God's character in more than 60 ways. Some more familiar references are Almighty, My Shepherd, Everlasting, Deliverer, Healer, Provider, Righteousness, and God of Peace. What qualities of God's character do you think of in words of adoration?

Loving, gracious Father often comes to my mind.

3. A second aspect of the Lord's Prayer is Jesus' petition for God's kingdom to come. This petition is called an intercessory prayer because Jesus is making the petition on behalf of his Father. The petition focuses on the spiritual welfare of the church and its mission. Martin Luther observed that God's kingdom advances without our prayer, but we pray that his kingdom comes to us, among us, and keeps us firm in his Word and faith until we die. As Christ's disciples, we are called to participate in advancing God's kingdom by using our diverse gifts from the Holy Spirit. What do you see as your action and calling when you pray for God to advance his kingdom?

Answers will vary. The main point of the question is to have the class recognize that we are all called to act on Christ's behalf in caring for others. We don't need to be missionaries or evangelists to show Christ's love.

4. Prayers of intercession are our prayers offered on behalf of others and are throughout the scriptures. One example is Paul's prayer for the Colossians:

Col 1:9 For this reason [their faith], since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

Col 1:10 And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,

Col 1:11 being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully

Col 1:12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.

What are some things Paul prayed for on behalf of the Colossians?

- a. Verses 1:9, **Knowledge, wisdom, and spiritual understanding**
 - b. Verse 10, **A holy life bearing the fruit of good works and spiritual maturity**
 - c. Verse 11, **Endurance and patience**
 - d. Verse 12, **A thankful attitude toward God**
5. Intercessory prayer can be an endurance marathon of wrestling with God for the needs of others. Pete Greig describes intercessory prayer as standing between heaven and earth before the ruler of the universe to plead for him to change the future for the sake of a loved one. Discuss a time when you earnestly prayed for another person. What did you experience; extremes of emotion, urgency, joy and thanksgiving, burden?

There is an emotional burden and mental anguish in bringing the needs of suffering loved ones to God, especially when a chronic illness of a loved one stretches into months or years. Suffering can challenge our faith. God mercifully heals some in life and others through death. We do not know why. With time, "why" becomes less important and is replaced by trust and comfort through our loving God.

6. Jesus' petition for daily bread is an example of Supplication in the ACTS prayer. Daily bread signifies everything our physical needs require: food, drink, shelter, clothing, and more. God is mindful of our needs and gives us instructions about how to ask. What are some of the instructions Jesus gave his disciples about asking following the prayer in our reading from Luke 11?
- a. Verse 8, **Be bold in prayer**
 - b. Verse 10, **Ask for what you need**
 - c. Verse 13, **God is righteous and holy and knows your needs**

7. Jesus instructed his disciples to pray for God to meet their daily needs and provided guidance when they asked. Read the longer instructions regarding prayer in Matthew 6 and Luke 12 and discuss how to ask God to meet our needs.

- a. What is Jesus teaching about asking for material needs in Mt 6:19-24?

Mt 6:19 **“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.**

Mt 6:20 **But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.**

Mt 6:21 **For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**

Mt 6:22 **“The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light.**

Mt 6:23 **But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!**

Mt 6:24 **“No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.**

Our desire should not be for more possessions but for the advance of God’s kingdom. We pray for God to meet our needs and for our sensitivity to share with others for the sake of God’s kingdom.

- b. Summarize Jesus’ teaching on supplication for material needs in Mt 6:31-33.

Mt 6:31 **So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’**

Mt 6:32 **For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.**

Mt 6:33 **But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.**

We trust that God will provide for our needs so that we can be generous with what God has given us today.

- c. What is the point of Jesus’ teaching on supplication for material needs in Luke 12:15-21? What should the rich man have done?

Lk 12:15 **Then he said to them, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”**

Lk 12:16 **And he told them this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop.**

Lk 12:17 **He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’**

Lk 12:18 **“Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.**

Lk 12:19 And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry."

Lk 12:20 "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?'

Lk 12:21 "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God."

Life does not consist of an abundance of possessions, so our prayers should focus on our daily needs, not abundance. Christians live in a range of circumstances, from homelessness to abundance. It might require all the faith of a homeless or jobless person to ask God to meet their needs today, whereas the rich person has no immediate worries. The rich person is called to charity and to be sensitive to the needs of others. The book of James is a good example of the material disparity in the church and the responsibility of the rich to help meet the needs of others.

8. Asking for forgiveness and acknowledging our need to forgive others is an example of Confession in the ACT^S prayer. Confession is an act of our salvation. We wholly recognize our need for Christ as our Savior from sin and recognize that we continue to sin daily. We pray to God to forgive our sins and not deny our prayer because of our sins. David was a man of faith but sinned by adultery and murder. His confession in Psalm 51 provides valuable insights into why we need confession to God, who already knows our sins. Read the following selections from Psalm 51 and discuss the aspects of David's confession.

Ps 51:3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.

Ps 51:4 Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge.

Ps 51:7 Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

Ps 51:8 Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice.

Ps 51:9 Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.

Ps 51:10 Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Ps 51:11 Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.

Ps 51:12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. ^k

- a. Verse 3, David took **responsibility** for his sin.
- b. Verse 4 David confessed his sin against **God** and that David could not **justify** himself.
- c. Verse 7 David acknowledged only God could **cleanse him**
- d. Verse 8 David longed for **restoration** and acknowledged his **brokenness**
- e. Verse 9, David prayed that God would **remove his sin**.

f. Verse 10 David's confession led to a desire for repentance, transformation, and unity with God.

9. Confession is a crucial aspect of prayer. God wants us to confess our sins and receive his forgiveness so that we forgive others. Jesus told his disciples God would not forgive their sins if they did not forgive others (Matthew 6:15). The scriptures teach that sin hinders our prayers. Whereas the prayers of the righteous are powerful and effective (James 5:16). Read the following scriptures and discuss if God requires our righteousness to answer our prayers or if he answers our prayers through his grace.

Mt 6:14 **For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.** Mt 6:15 **But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins**

Jas 5:16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

1Jn 3:19 This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence ²⁰ whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.

1Jn 3:21 Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God

1Jn 3:22 and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him. ²³ And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.

1Pe 3:7 Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

We confess our sins and repent of sinful acts because we desire to abide in Christ and be fruitful in him. God is pleased with our confession, quick to forgive us, and hears our prayer. If we look to our own righteousness, we will always doubt our standing before God, but our identity is in Christ. Christ is our righteousness (1 Corinthians 1:30). Without the assurance of Christ as our righteousness, we might doubt our own prayers and look to someone to pray for us, always seeking someone more righteous as our intercessor. But God wants the intimacy of prayer with each of us. All prayers are answered through God's grace, not by our merit or the merit of our spoken words.

10. Jesus taught his disciples of their need for deliverance from Satan and not to be led into temptation. Does this mean that God leads us into temptation? Read the following verses on temptation and discuss what is meant by this petition.

1Co 10:13 No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

Jas 1:13 When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; ¹⁴ but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. ¹⁵ Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

Heb 2:18 Because he [Christ] himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

God is our Shield, our Rock, and our Fortress. We pray that God will lead us from temptation because we know we are weak and will easily succumb to temptation and sin. We choose the path that leads to temptation and pray that God leads us away. God does not direct our paths toward evil or tempt us with evil because he has no evil.

We are never far from the random violence of evil, evil people, or Satan. We pray that God delivers us from the evil in the world and the harm that Satan would work against us.

11. Thanksgiving, the T in the ACTS prayer structure, declares our understanding that God is the source of all goodness and blessings. Recognizing and acknowledging our abundant blessings from God is a joy. A more difficult prayer is one of faith that God works all things to good during trials and suffering, not just the blessings of comfort and abundance. When Paul preached the gospel at a synagogue in Thessalonica, many believed in Christ, causing a riot against Paul in the city. Paul escaped but the believers who remained were persecuted. Even in the face of their persecution, Paul told the Thessalonian believers “to give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

What hardship have you faced that you can now thank God for because it strengthened your faith?

Answers will vary. Allow time for participants to search their memory before the discussion.

12. Part of God’s character is honoring persistence. Paul writes, “God will give to each person according to what he has done. To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life (Romans 2:8).” God also honors persistence in our prayers. Jesus taught about this aspect of his Father’s character in several parables, including the Parable of the Persistent Widow.

Lk 18:1 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.

Lk 18:2 He said: **“In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men.**

Lk 18:3 And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.'

Lk 18:4 "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men,

Lk 18:5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!' "

Lk 18:6 And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says.

Lk 18:7 And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off?

Lk 18:8 I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"

Why does God desire persistence in our prayers?

We have all wondered about God's timing in healing and answering prayers. Perhaps God wants us to be persistent because he is shaping our faith and teaching us reliance on him.

13. Discuss the importance of praying with others in a church or small group setting.

Mt 18:19 "Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.

Mt 18:20 For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."

Heb 10:24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

Heb 10:25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another —and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Ac 2:42 They [Believers in the early church] devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Ac 2:43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.

Eph 4:3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit —just as you were called to one hope when you were called — ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Believers are called to be in unity with one another just as we are called to be in unity with Christ so that we can bear fruit. The church's mission is to continue Christ's redemptive message to the world. It is our privilege to come together to pray for each other's needs so that we might meet them and to pray that God's kingdom advances through our work in Christ's name.

14. God assures us that he forgives our sins when we confess them, hears our prayers, places us in Christ, and holds us in Christ with his abiding Holy Spirit. How does God's gift of the Holy Spirit give you complete assurance that God hears your prayers?

Jn 14:26 **But the Counselor [Helper, ESV, one who comes along side to guide], the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.**

Ro 8:26 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 with groans that words cannot express.

Ro 8:27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will

Eph 6:18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ and the Spirit of God. Through the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit, God keeps us in Christ and in unity with other believers. We have total assurance that God hears our prayers because both the Spirit and Christ intercede on our behalf. The Holy Spirit reveals God's will to us and guides our unspoken and spoken prayers so that our prayers please God.

Closing Prayer, An ACTS prayer structure

A Dear Father in heaven, we worship you and praise your holy name.

C Have mercy on us and forgive our sins so that we can approach you in prayer. We know our faith is feeble, but you are infinitely strong, faithful, and loving.

T We thank you for providing for all our needs this day and pray we are generous to others with the abundance you have given us.

S Father, we ask that you reveal your love to our loved ones who do not know your Son. Give us grace toward others and place praise for Jesus on our lips so that we might be witnesses of your goodness.

AMEN