

How To Pray

Welcome to **Week 2** of our 21 DOP! One week down and two weeks to go! If you are on this journey with us, WAY TO GO! I want to encourage you to continue to press in over these next two weeks and let God really help you establish some new disciplines in your life. I hope that you have found the PRAYER GUIDE we gave you helpful. There are still some available if you did not get one last week. If you are new to VC or just joining us this week it is not too late to join with us in our 21 DOP. We are on Day **8** today and we would love nothing more than for you to begin today. It is never too late to start praying or attempting to establish new disciplines in your life when it comes to our relationship with God. You can also catch up if you missed last week by watching last week's message online through our Vertical App or YouTube Channel.

Last week we talked about WHY WE PRAY and today we are going to dive into the specifics of HOW TO PRAY? Our passage for this week is going to be **Luke 11** and for the purpose of this message we are going to focus our attention on the first 13 verses. It is in these 13 verses that Jesus gives his disciples a model prayer which highlights significant elements that we need to include when we pray and then after He gives His disciples a model to follow He gives them 2 approaches to take when we pray.

Now let me issue a point of clarification regarding the prayer Jesus highlights for us in the first 4 verses of Luke 13. In fact, for many of us we may be more familiar with the version found in Matthew's Gospel that goes like this:

Matthew 6:9-13(NIV) 9.....:"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, 10 your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us today our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

We refer to this as the **Lord's Prayer**. You may have even recited it a time or two yourself at some point. When I played sports in middle school and highschool we would recite the Lord's Prayer as a team before every game as if it were some good luck charm to help us play better. Which is the point I want to make here. When it comes to this prayer I don't want us to think we have to recite it word for word just because Jesus gave it to his disciples this way. I don't think Jesus gave them this prayer as something they were supposed to recite word for word every time they prayed or that this prayer holds some sort of special power in order to receive something from God. Jesus uses this prayer simply as a model in order to teach His disciples key elements we need to consider when we pray. Asking for Jesus to teach them also shows us that prayer needs to be taught. It does not come naturally, but takes discipline and guidance. It is a part of discipleship. Remember, prayer is not about us making requests to God as much as it is about allowing God to shape our heart to His will by being in His holy presence.

Luke 11:1 (NIV) 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." There was something different about the way Jesus communicated with the Father as compared with what

they saw demonstrated by the religious leaders and they wanted Jesus to teach them how to do it. Btw, prayer is the only thing we see in scripture that the disciples intentionally asked for Jesus to teach them. Not to preach, cast out demons..but to pray! The Pharisees and religious leaders obviously prayed with more concern about how it made them look than they were thinking about worship or establishing intimacy with God. Jesus points this out in **Matthew 6:5-8 (NIV)** **5** “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. **6** But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. **7** And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. **8** Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. The religious leaders (aka the hypocrites or play actors as Jesus often referred to them) prayed for a show to make them appear spiritual and they would often use a lot of vain repetition when they prayed as if it was some magical formula to get what they wanted from God.

Luke 11:2-4 (NIV) He said to them, “When you pray, say: and He is going to highlight **6 Elements** our prayers should include

2 He said to them, “When you pray, say: “Father. In other words, **make it personal!** We have a God who wants to be known and who intimately knows us. He may feel like a mystery but He doesn’t want to remain that way! He has a name and He wants you to call Him by it. In fact, God has many names that describe His character and nature! He is our Father. He is our Refuge. He is our Provider. He is our Salvation. He is our Strength and Present Help in time of need. And we could go on and on. Get to know Him and all of His names and then call on Him by name. But make it personal because He wants a relationship with you!!

2 He said to them, “When you pray, say: “Father, hallowed be your name. When you pray make sure you **spend time worshiping!** Respect His majesty and His holiness!! Adore Him for who He is not for what He gives. Acknowledge His glory and give honor to His name. The Psalms are filled with what it means to adore God. Here are just few examples of how King David engaged with God when he prayed:

Psalms 8:1(NIV) LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory in the heavens.

Psalms 24:1-3 (NIV) **1** The earth is the LORD’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it;

2 for he founded it on the seas and established it on the waters. **3** Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place?

Psalms 29:1-4 (NIV) **1** Ascribe to the LORD, you heavenly beings, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. **2** Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness. **3** The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the LORD thunders over the mighty waters. **4** The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is majestic.

When you pray make sure you worship the Lord!!

2 He said to them, “When you pray, say: “Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. When you pray make sure to set your focus on the will of God! This is exactly how Jesus prayed in the garden that we looked at last week. This is to be our focus as well. Our desire should be that God’s Kingdom would be established here on earth as it was meant to be from the beginning before sin entered in. Our desire and our will should be yielded to His will and His way. We must be aware that our thoughts and ways are not His and that they must be adjusted accordingly. To pray without this understanding can lead to self-serving prayers. “Your kingdom come, Your will be done” should be the cry of our heart.

After we have made it PERSONAL, set our heart on WORSHIP, and YIELDED our heart to HIS WILL, we are now ready to make some requests. The last 3 elements Jesus highlights are really petitions where we ask God for help regarding things that only the Father can do for us. What are they? And what is the point if God already knows what we need based on what Jesus said in Matthew 6:8? Well, let’s look at each of them! The first one is found in vs.3.

3 Give us each day our daily bread. When you pray, make sure you express your need for God both physically and spiritually. When it comes to petitioning God in prayer we are acknowledging that there is no one else who can help us in our time of true need. And the reminder is not for God, as if he needed to be reminded, but it is for us! One of the things that we need to sustain life and that only God can provide is Daily BREAD! I don’t want us to just think about food we eat either. Yes, we need that for our physical bodies to sustain our physical frame but we also, and more importantly I might add, need God’s word! Here is what Jesus said when he was fasting in the wilderness and was being tempted to take a stone and turn it into bread. **Matthew 4:2-4 (NIV) 2 After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3 The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.” 4 Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’ Whether we are talking about physical bread or the bread of life, God is the only one who can give us what we need and we should remind ourselves of that everyday by praying and asking Him for what we will need for today. This keeps us in a posture of dependence and reminds us that He is LORD of our life. Notice the second petition! Btw, this too is something we need and that only God can provide.**

4 Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. When you pray make sure to confess sin and ask God for forgiveness. Sin hinders our relationship and intimacy with God. Therefore, we need to keep short accounts with Him in order to protect the intimacy of our relationship. Prayer should include self examination where we deal with sin in short order. Sin brings shame and when it does our tendency is to run from God or not seek His face. When in reality we should do the exact opposite! After all, just like daily bread, He is the only one who can forgive us of our sins! (and He wants to!) **1 John 1:8-10 (NIV) 8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.**

In the second part of verse 4 we see the third petition and what concludes the final of the 6 elements our prayers should include. **4 Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.**” When you pray, ask **God to help you understand the dangers of sin and help you flee from it.** Here is what the Bible says about temptation.

James 1:13 (NIV) When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone;

1 Corinthians 10:13 (NIV) No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. 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 endure it.

If these are the promises we have from God’s word regarding temptation then why does Jesus include the petition “**lead us not into temptation**”? We need to understand that the petition reflects the believing one’s desire to avoid the dangers of sin altogether. Because sin is a danger to our life and relationship with God and since we have the promises given to us about how God helps us with temptation, we are in essence asking God to help us understand and be aware of the ways that we are tempted so that we can avoid sin. Remember prayer is not so much about asking for something from God as it is about shaping our heart to conform to His will. When it comes to sin we need to run from it as far as possible and not even allow ourselves to entertain it as a thought. When we pray let’s ask God to shape our heart to not only recognize sin but to see it coming and run the other way.

If we will incorporate these 6 elements into our prayer lives along with a heart that is seeking God’s face more than we are seeking His hand, we cannot go wrong when we pray!

Now as we prepare to close, I want to call your attention to what Jesus says next following verse 4. Here, He is going to illustrate **two approaches** to consider when you petition the Father. Here is the first one.

Luke 11:5-10 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.

When it comes to prayer it is ok to be shamelessly bold and persistent!!

What causes the man in Jesus’ illustration to be bold and persistent? He is bold and shameless because he has a desperate need and the guy he is asking for help is his friend! They have a

relationship. Because of what Jesus has done for us and because He is the only one who can help us, we may come boldly to the throne of grace in our time of need.

Hebrews 4:14-16 (NIV) **14** Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. **15** For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. **16** Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

This means anytime anywhere we can come to the Father!! The persistence which is doubled down on in verses 9 and 10 becomes a demonstration of faith in the one being asked. The persistence also shows how sincere you are.

The three verbs given ASK, SEEK, and KNOCK are considered imperative verbs which simply mean "keep asking", "keep seeking", and "keep knocking". If you believe God is able, then Jesus is saying don't stop asking until you see what you need provided!!

Notice the second illustration Jesus gives them

Luke 11:11-13 (NIV) **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!"

When it comes to prayer expect God to give you the very best!!

Have confidence and expect God to hear you when you pray! But note, it is only after we have allowed God to shape our hearts to desire His will.

1 John 5:14-15 NIV "14 This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. 15 And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him."

Remember His thoughts and ways are different from ours

Isaiah 55:8-9 (NIV) **8** "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. **9** "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." -

But please know God only wants to give us the best!!

Roman 8:32 He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

We need to understand that what we think is best for us may not be what God says is best. In fact, The best gift of all is the gift of His Holy Spirit!! God wants to give us Himself. Anything that hinders that He will withhold from us. We need to understand that at the end of the day He is what's best for us!

Do you have an expectation that God will give you what is best? Do you really believe that?

Invitation:

Is your Christian life stale because you have never adopted these elements and approaches to your prayer life? How are you in your relationship with God? Relationship involves conversation, time spent together, etc

Are you struggling with sinful desires that hinder you from living for God as you should?

Have you been guilty of prayers that are more concerned with what you think is best rather than trusting God to do what He deems best?

If you are facing a struggle right now, what's the temperature of your prayer? Are you desperate for God yet? Does your persistence in your prayer match your faith? Are you expecting God to do what is best?