

Prayer 01 Luke 11:-Teach Us to Pray

by Alden Gannett

Alden Gannett emphasizes the vital role of prayer in the Christian life, urging believers to seek God's guidance and provision through persistent prayer.

Duration: 41:13

Scripture: Luke 11:1

Topics: "Prayer Life"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the importance of continual asking in prayer. He uses the story of a friend who asks for three loaves of bread from another friend who initially refuses due to inconvenience. The speaker emphasizes the need for faith and persistence in prayer, citing an example of a dean who confidently declared that God would provide for their needs. The sermon also highlights the need for believers to prioritize prayer in their busy lives, drawing inspiration from Martin Luther's example of spending three hours in prayer to prepare for the day.

Transcript

We look forward to this. My wife and I look forward to a time of relaxation and getting clean again. You know, we get so busy during the school year, we have to take some time and renew our fellowship.

She's my secretary, and we have love breaks rather than coffee breaks, but we don't have enough of those. And so we just planned this since we were here before and look forward to it, and we're delighted to be back with you and to share in the fellowship together. Luke 11 is our text this morning.

It's been on my heart to study the subject of prayer with you these days. We don't get enough of this, though we study it often, and it always encourages my heart to come back to the subject of prayer. The longer I'm a Christian, and this year it will mark forty years of having been a Christian, I grow in my sense of need of prayer, ministry of prayer.

And so I'm trusting God will speak to my heart these days through his word on this very fundamental subject, and I trust he will speak to all our hearts on this subject. May we read Luke 11, beginning with verse 1. And it came to pass that as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray as John also taught his disciples. And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins. For we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves? For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him. And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not, the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed.

I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you.

Seek, and ye shall find. Knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth.

And to him that knocketh it shall be opened. May we pray. Father, thy word encourages our hearts, and we pray that we shall indeed grow in the ministry of prayer in these days together.

May the Holy Spirit be our teacher. May he take the things of Christ and show them unto us. And may we grow in our appreciation of this great, great privilege, and grow in our exercise of this privilege of prayer.

Meet particular needs, we pray, in the name of Christ. Amen. I'm sure it troubles you as it troubles me to see our children being raised in a generation such as this.

You see the forces of evil mounting. We see the Restrainer, the Holy Spirit, lessening and lessening his restraining power upon the world. We see the coming of the Lord at hand, and a greater sense of urgency and imminency of his coming.

And we feel almost helpless as we see our younger generation defying the laws of God, defying the laws of the land. We see people taking law in their own hands and defying our government. We see young people raised in the home defying their parents and parental God-given authority.

We see religion on every hand, but very little vital Christianity. And all these things are of great concern to us, I know. Now, is the case hopeless? The Bible does tell us that when the Son of Man cometh, will he find faith on the earth? The Bible does tell us that evil seducers shall act worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived, that things will not get better but worse.

We know from Matthew 24 that wars and rumors of wars are just the beginning. We are clear from the word of God about this. Nevertheless, there is still that great ministry before the throne of grace that loosens the arm of God on behalf of his people with our burdens, with our problems, with our needs.

And God's still in the prayer-answering business, beloved. He still answers prayer for husbands, for wives, for parents, for children, for special needs, for special responsibilities, for witnessing, for serving our blessed Lord. This is still God's way of doing his work.

Someone has said, I think it was S. T. Gordon, that we can do no more than pray until we have prayed, that this is the beginning of all true vital spiritual service unto our Lord. Our text begins, it came to pass, as he was praying in a certain place, when he seeth one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. You see, the disciples of our Lord were impressed with the fact that John

had taught his disciples.

They had somehow learned of this, and then they witnessed our Lord praying himself on this very occasion. As he was praying, they were impressed with the example of our Lord before them. And so they come to him with a question at an opportune time when he seeth, saying, Lord, teach us to pray.

As a theologian and as a preacher, it startles me immediately that they didn't say, Lord, teach us to preach. And I read just recently that it was Canon Jollett who said, I would rather teach one man to pray than ten to preach. That startles me.

This is the very question these disciples asked. Lord, teach us to pray. John taught his disciples, we see your example before us.

We see something of the result, the impact of this ministry of prayer. Lord, teach us to pray. Now, probably they had in mind the method of prayer in their question, but I conclude from the text that primarily they had in mind, Lord, teach us to pray.

And I have discovered in my years in the Lord's work that the biggest problem is not so much how, but getting to it. It's such a simple exercise that the little child can enter in and come to his heavenly Father and beseech him, and see God wonderfully answer. And yet it is the holiest and grandest of all spiritual exercises for the people of God.

They said, Lord, teach us to pray. We do need to learn how more and more. But I suggest to you today that our biggest problem in this rat race that we live in, which so many demands upon us, so many activities to engage in, that one of the fundamental things we need to learn--and I want God to give us the new these days--is that the Lord will give us grace in a new way to sense our privilege and responsibility in prayer to the point where we will discipline our lives to take time, more time, to pray.

I have not forgotten reading of Martin Luther, and he said he was so busy this day that he had to spend three hours in prayer to prepare for the day. Now, that isn't the way we usually operate. We're so busy we've got only fifteen minutes for prayer that day.

We've got so many other things to do. Or only thirty minutes for prayer because the day is so full. And Martin Luther says, I'm so busy today I needed to take three hours to pray and prepare for the day.

And it was Martin Luther whom God used to bring that great Protestant Reformation which we are heirs today. Lord, teach us to pray. So the subject on this curriculum was prayer.

Notice instruction is involved. Lord, teach us to pray. Teach us to pray.

Instruction is needful. And haven't you noticed that from Genesis to Revelation the subject of prayer repeatedly comes before us? That the life of faith is written seemingly on every page of the Scripture, that the just shall live by faith, and that we are to pray without ceasing, that we are to continually come before our Lord. The more we read the book, the more we are impressed with the fact of man's utter dependence upon his God.

We need to know how. What does it mean to pray in the name of Christ? What does it mean to pray in the will of God? What does it mean to pray in faith? What does it mean to pray in our very text today? Because of His importunity, He will rise and give Him as many as He needed. Yes, there are many

conditions for prayer, and we want to speak of these in these days together.

Lord, teach us. Teach us to pray. Are we the master teacher to do this? They said, Lord, teach us to pray.

I do not profess today to be able to teach us to pray, but we do have the Word, and we do have the master teacher, our Lord Himself. And He, through the Word I trust these days, will instruct us in a new and fresh way in this great, holy exercise of prayer. You see, a teacher must be a master of his subject, and our Lord continually prayed here on earth.

Do you remember He prayed at His baptism? Do you remember He prayed during His temptation as led by the Spirit, the inference being that He continually depended upon the Spirit those forty days? Do you remember He prayed before choosing His disciples? Do you remember He arose a great while before day to pray? Do you remember that before a ministry and after the ministry He would pray? Do you remember He prayed in the garden? Do you remember He prayed on the cross? And we are told in Hebrews 7.25 that today the risen, exalted Lord at the right hand of the Father ever liveth to make intercession for us. So we have an authority on the subject, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, to teach us. And the disciples recognized this, for they witnessed His praying, and when He ceased, one of His disciples said to Him, Lord, teach us to pray.

Will you notice the subjects for prayer? Lord, teach us. Hear the scholars, hear the students. Lord, teach us.

I am sure this morning that though some of you have known the Lord for many, many, many years, you would not say today, I have learned all there is to know about the ministry of prayer. Let us make it personal in these days. Lord, teach me to pray.

In my busy schedule, with the many demands upon me, Lord, teach me to pray. Lord, for I felt that this was for other people, Lord, show me my privilege in a new way in these days. Lord, teach me to get down to business about it, and teach me to be effective in it.

Lord, teach me, teach me, teach me to pray. At this point, what has been called the Lord's Prayer, but better, the disciples' prayer, is repeated. You remember it was given in Matthew chapter 6, and now on a different occasion our Lord summarizes it and begins, Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Here it begins with praise, with worship, with adoration. A wonderful place to begin, as we did in the reading of God's word this morning. Everyone praising the Lord here, our Lord says that as we pray, start with praise.

Let thy name be sanctified, literally. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, as in heaven so in earth. You have been taught again and again, I know, that that prayer fits the tribulation period.

It was for that day when our Lord was offering the kingdom to that generation of believers, and Israel refused the king and therefore rejected the kingdom. So it will be in order to pray this prayer, literally, again in the tribulation period, when again the king will come, and this time will come to rule and reign on the earth in that glorious millennial reign, and then God's will will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Pray for our daily need.

Give us day by day our daily bread. This is of concern these days with mounting prices and mounting taxes, and for many of us, stable incomes. And, Lord, you know our needs day by day.

Here is our Lord teaching us to daily be dependent upon him for food and raiment, and forgive us our sins, our personal relationship with our Lord, short accounts with God, or we also forgive everyone that is indebted to us. And then lead us not into temptation. Keep the context in mind, the trials of the tribulation period, and there bearing much upon these people who will be praying this during the tribulation period following the rapture of the church.

And he says, lead us not into these, but deliver us from evil. They want that millennial reign of Christ to come when they will indeed live with him on the earth. Now, my great concern this morning, the verses which follow.

He said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him. Will you notice that there is a love relationship between these friends? The very term friend suggests this. They are not only neighbors, but neighborly.

They are friends enough so that one feels free at midnight to come and knock on his friend's door and ask him for a special need that was his at the moment. And this suggests immediately our relationship with our Heavenly Father. He loves us.

He loves us with an everlasting love. Do you remember John 13 having loved his own which are in the world? He loved them unto the end, unto the uttermost. We have such a relationship with our Heavenly Father who loves us and gave his Son to die for us.

And so in this prayer ministry we are coming to one who loves and who deals with us in grace and in mercy, and we can come to him. Friend, lend me three loaves. Here's a need, a need.

Were we to take the time this morning, we could go up and down every pew in this chapel this morning, and you would say, I have a need. I have a need. In our text, guests had come.

This happens every so often. A need. We'll never forget in our house when we were in seminary a number of years ago, newlyweds who had a little baby, and the cupboard was bare, literally bare.

We thought it was bare the night before, but no, we had milk for the baby for the next morning, and I think a bit of cereal, as I remember. Then my wife had some dried beans which could be soaked and cooked for the lunch, and that was it. There wasn't any more food.

So we said, Lord, you've just got to provide our needs. You can't let this baby starve. You are our Father, and you've promised to supply our needs.

Now, Lord, we're counting on you to supply. The morning mail came, and of course when you're in school you always think the mailbox is the way the Lord's going to supply your needs. And no money came in the morning.

Well, we had food for the lunch, so we had our beans for lunch. We'll look forward to that roast beef this noon. We had beans on this occasion, and then that mosaic, that afternoon mail, and lo and behold, the money we knew we had to come that afternoon mail, and there was not a dollar.

Lord. Now, Lord, you know our needs. This need's very real.

We've got a baby that needs food for supper. Lord, we're your children. You've promised to supply a very, very real need.

In the process, in the process, way up in Pennsylvania, my wife's mother called Dad. Dad, I've got a feeling those kids are in need down there in Texas. Well, should we send them a check? No, I think it's a little urgent.

I think we'd better wire it. And so that afternoon, in the middle of the afternoon, along came a money order for \$25 from Mom and Dad in answer to prayer. An hour later, friends came, college friends on the way to Mexico to stay overnight for supper, and stay overnight and breakfast the next morning.

God knew our needs. Now, there are very real needs on our hearts today. We brought the Carys with us.

The Carys have resigned Southeastern, and they have to go back to Canada because of Mr. Carys' health, and they do not have, they do not yet know how the Lord's going to provide for them up in Canada. Put that on your prayer list these days. There's a real need.

You have children. We have children with special needs. There are those of us today who have loved ones who are not saved.

Very real needs. Perhaps many of us today are making decisions about the future. These are very real needs.

I don't know what the needs of Park of the Palms are these days. We haven't had time to share with Brother Willie, but I'm sure there are needs and spiritual problems among us, people with special needs that are on the hearts of some of us today. Very genuine needs.

Friend lent me three loaves. A friend of mine has come. I had nothing to say before him.

They're hungry after a long journey. A very real need. I said to my board of trustees on Tuesday night, of which Brother Willie is a member, that he doesn't get up there very often anymore.

You folks don't let him go. I'm going to have to discipline your congregation here, Brother Willie. We have monthly meetings.

All right. We were talking about a future women's dormitory, and I said, My dear brethren, God knows our needs. If we need a women's dormitory in three years and four months, God will supply.

He says, My God shall supply all your what? Needs. According to what? His riches and glory through Christ Jesus. Now, all of us have needs, real needs, real needs this morning.

Now, notice the approach in our text. The friend has come to his friend. Friend lent me three loaves, and he from within, verse 7, shall answer and say, Trouble me not.

The door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot rise and give thee. Now, of course, remember this is a human friend, and you know how it is to get up after you're once in bed.

Oh, my. You've had a long, hard day, and you don't want to get out of bed. And though I don't know all the details of the ancient Norse custom, they're all tucked in fairly with a chore to get up.

He said, Sorry, friend, we're all tucked in for the night, and we'll be glad to help out in the morning. And I say unto you, though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needed. Friend, lend me three loaves.

Sorry, I'm in bed. I'll be glad to take care of you in the morning. Friend, lend me three loaves.

I've got friends who come, and they're hungry, and I have nothing to set before them. And yesterday I saw your dear wife out there making bread, and know that you have an abundant supply, and we'll be glad to make some tomorrow and replenish it. Friend, lend me three loaves.

No, I'm in bed. Friend, I've got a need. Sorry, we're in bed.

Friend, lend me three loaves. I was up in Indiana, Wabash, Indiana last week for a week of meetings. Drove back on Monday.

Got home at suppertime. My dear daughter was in financial...had a financial crisis on her hands. You know what that means.

Dad, will you loan me X number of dollars to pay my debt? Well, honey, we'll talk about it another time. Dad, I'm serious about this. Here's this debt, and here's this debt, and I need to take care of it, and I want to talk about it.

Well, honey, I just got in, and so on. Dad, listen, I'm serious about this, and I want to talk to you about it. You know that daughter of mine wouldn't let me alone until we settled that thing that night? That's the very principle here.

Though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his market shamelessness can ask him. He will rise and give him as many as he needed. When the disciples came to our Lord and said, Lord, teach us to pray, here's the first lesson he taught them.

The next verse goes on to say, the Greek testament puts it this way, keep on asking and it shall be given you. Keep on seeking and ye shall find. Keep on knocking, it shall be open unto you.

For everyone that keeps on asking receives. He that keeps on seeking finds. He that keeps on knocking, it shall be open unto you.

The Lord would remind us this morning that a fundamental premise for all prayer is this premise of continual dependence upon our Lord. The longer I'm in this, the more persuaded I am that 1 Thessalonians 5.17 is literal. Pray without ceasing.

Our Lord meant it when he said in Luke 18.1, men ought always to pray and not to think. Colossians 4.2, continue in prayer and watch in the same with thanksgiving. Acts chapter 6, it is not reason that we, the apostles, with the gift of preaching should leave the word of God to serve tables, but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word, and they turn the world upside down.

Now, why? Why this principle? Doesn't the Lord know our needs before we ask? He says he does. He says he does in Matthew chapter 6. He knows our needs before we ask. I taught that one night at an evening school in Dallas Bible College a number of years ago, and one lady was so offended that she quit the evening school, wouldn't come back and hear me teach anymore.

Watch right there in the text. The Lord knows our needs before we ask. Well, if he does that, isn't coming to him once with something and asking, isn't this all the world is necessary? Beloved, it's not the principle of informing God of our needs.

He knows those, knew them from eternity past. In fact, he set up the situation so that the need would be there. Do you remember the children of Israel coming out of Egypt? And you remember their God led them to that particular point by the Red Sea? The scripture very clearly indicates that God led them to that point where they would be boxed in with the mountains on the right side and the left and the Red Sea before them and Pharaoh's host coming from behind.

God led them to that point. He created the situation where the need would be there. Thirdly, he knows our needs.

Our issue is not making God hear so we don't have to get down and shout and yell and pound and scream to make God hear. We don't have to get on our knees to persuade God. That's not the point at all.

What is the point? It's illustrated in the natural realm. This heart of ours is ticking today, is beating today because God moment by moment gives his strength to pump that life. In him we live and move and have our being.

I see the principle here that God is saying to his disciples and to us this morning that I want you to moment by moment be dependent upon me. There is never to be a moment when you are not dependent. That's the whole principle of faith, just to live by faith.

You and I know the problem of walking out of the flesh, don't we? Of taking things in our own hands, solving our own problems with our own wisdom when in Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. How easy it is not to read the Word. How easy it is not to pray about something to do what Joshua did, you remember, and make a covenant with the Gibeonites without having prayed first.

And the Lord is saying in this school of prayer, I want us to be reminded today of moment by moment dependence upon our Lord. Why does the Lord then say keep on asking? He wants us to test our faith first of all. Do we really trust him? Are you trusting him for your children today? Are we for our grandchildren, great-grandchildren? Are you trusting him for your financial needs, your physical needs, your health needs, the problems that are very real that you prayed about this morning? Are you trusting him for these, or are you just praying about them? Keep on asking.

It brings us to the point where we see whether we really believe God for something. I've never forgotten some years ago at London Bible College, which has now been amalgamated with Toronto Bible College up there in Canada, and now the Ontario Bible College, the new institution, is called. Starting June 1st, this very week, it will be official in terms of actually one institution rather than two.

We had a need up there of \$16,000. We had a banknote of \$16,000, and it was just over our heads constantly. And so I went into a board meeting in February.

The chairman of my board was in Florida. And we talked together, and I said, Gentlemen, let's trust God for these \$16,000. Let's set up a 24-hour, round-the-clock prayer ministry.

I'd heard about this kind of thing and seen it operate in other places a bit, and I said, Let's set up our students and have other people join us, and we'll set it in the blocks of 15 or 30 minutes, I've forgotten, but

right through morning, noon, and night, and we'll ask God for \$16,000, and we'll burn the note on commencement. The board went along with us. When my chairman got back from Florida, he said, You fellows were crazy.

What in the world did you do here? Because of the general fund needs, day by day. But the Lord led us, and he went along with us. So we informed our people and said, You join us in prayer now for \$15,000 between now and May 31st, or what, excuse me, whatever it was.

And so our students prayed, and prayed. The money started coming in. About half of the way through, a third of the money was in.

It was time for our monthly board meeting. One of them shared with that, and our board came up with another third that night in the board meeting. So we had about \$10,000.

Well, we needed five more. We kept praying. One dear student came in and took off her diamond ring and put it on my desk.

She was a married lady. Well, I couldn't stand that, you know. So I took it into the Board of Trustees, and they kind of praised it, and we'll make up the difference and give the gal a ring back, which we did.

But that spirit of giving was upon us. We kept praying morning, noon, and night. Commencement, we had not \$15,000, but \$16,000.

We burned the note that night. For our little school up there, that was a big, big order. My reason for telling the story is not only to illustrate the principle of continual asking, but also in the middle of this, our dean at the time, Dr. Harris, stood up on the chapel platform, and he said to the student body and the faculty that morning, My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, I know God's going to provide this meal.

Well, that was a big statement. He sent up for 150 people and said, God's going to do this. So I was praised.

Praised. Not just praying about it, but he'd come to the point where he could say before God, I know God's going to do this. And he did.

And God says, You keep on now. Keep on. Keep on asking.

It tests your faith. Another reason for continual prayer is illustrated in the experience of Abraham in bringing us into line to the will of God, for often we come to God with our needs, and we don't pray in the will of God about those needs. You remember, Abraham was concerned about Lot and his family down there in Sodom.

And the Lord heard Abraham's prayer, and he said, Lord, if there be fifty righteous, will you spare? And the Lord said, I'll spare if there are fifty. Forty-five? I'll spare if there are forty-five. Forty? I'll spare if there are forty.

Thirty? Twenty? Ten? And he stopped praying. Well, the Lord answered his prayer. The Lord did spare Lot and his two daughters, and all that time God was bringing Abraham into line with his will as he prayed.

We were reminded the other night in our board meeting about planning a new building several years ago for our southeastern campus, and we started off planning a women's dormitory. We wound up with a

kitchen and dining hall on the first floor and a chapel on the second floor and classrooms on the third, and in the process God solved nine problems with that one building. You see, we started out in the wrong place, and as we prayed and prayed and prayed and prayed and prayed, God brought us into line with that which would best meet our needs.

It was thrilling to look back and see how God marvelously answered prayer as we waited before Him. You see, so to keep on praying brings us more and more and more into line with what God's perfect will is for us in this particular matter, and God leads us as we pray into His wonderful will. Praying also, being very specific here, requires that we recognize the answer when it comes.

You know, we're very definite with God here. Now, Lord, there's that boy of mine. Lord, you know his need, and Lord, I'm asking for his salvation.

Oh, God, save my boy. We keep on and keep on, and we're very definite and very precise and very specific with God about my boy until we see God answer prayer for that boy. We keep on, keep on, keep on praying.

Now, beloved, the history of the Christian church is that when there was a spirit of prayer, there was a movement of God. That's history. I've witnessed this on a campus.

I've witnessed this in a church. I've witnessed this in our home. I've witnessed this in my own personal life.

Where there is a spirit of prayer, there is a work of God, and where there is not a spirit of prayer, there is bitterness spiritually. When I used to be in a church as a pastor, when our people were there for prayer meeting, God was blessing in the preaching of the Word. Where our people lacked the spirit of prayer, there was not that blessing in the ministry of the Word.

I was reading the other day of Charles Haddon Spurgeon and the author, Pearson. A.T. Pearson was asking the question, what was the secret to Charles Haddon Spurgeon's ministry? Spurgeon replied, I have a congregation that prays for me. God has put us in park of the Lord.

Some of you are visitors. Some of you are landowners here. You're regulars around here.

What does God want to do here? Whatever God is pleased to do, He's going to do it in answer to prayer. Brother Willie, thank you for announcing our prayer meetings this week. God wants to do things these days.

What does He want to do? Let's get on our knees and find out. What is the great ministry of Park of the Palms? Does God want the ends of the earth to hear the gospel through our ministry? I certainly believe He does. This is the great commission.

He will do it as we pray, as we pray, as we pray, as we pray, as we pray. Let us go to this day, trusting God for great things. Let us approach this Memorial Weekend of Bible teaching ministry with expectation from God that God will do great things in our hearts as we pray, as we believe Him, as we trust Him to work.

The better and the best. Grace to take time to pray. We ask you to enlarge the ministry of Park of the Palms through prayer.

Enlarge its outreach to the ends of the earth through prayer. Hope thou solve the problems, meet the needs, lift the burdens, give direction for our lives as we pray, and thou dost speak to us through thy word. Make these glorious days together as we fellowship around Jesus Christ, as thy word speaks to our hearts.

Minister to each heart, we pray, in the name of Christ. Amen.

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