

## 36. Jesus Taught About Answered Prayer

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn what it means to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. We also want to help our children learn that our lives will have a greater impact and a joy that is full as we learn to enjoy fellowship with Jesus. If we try to serve the Lord in our own strength, we will become driven and be upset at others. In our topic today, we will see that Jesus taught His disciples several lessons about prayer.

One day, the disciples of Jesus asked Jesus how to pray. Luke 11:1-4 says, “Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, *that* one of His disciples said to Him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.’ So He said to them, ‘When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as *it is* in heaven. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’” In the time of Jesus, the rabbis often taught their followers prayers to repeat. John had also taught his disciples to pray. The disciples had often seen Jesus pray. One day, after He had finished praying, one of the disciples of Jesus asked Him to teach them to pray.

The rabbis would teach their followers a prayer to repeat. In contrast, the disciples saw and heard Jesus praying to the Father and so they realized that He did not just repeat prayers. That was why one of the disciples of Jesus asked Him to teach them how to pray. We will see that Jesus did not give them words to repeat. Instead, Jesus taught the disciples about the various things to include in prayer. This prayer begins by pointing out the relationship that we have to God. John 1:12 says, “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.” Then, Romans 8:14-15 says, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’” Hebrews 4:16 then tells us, “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” We become the children of God when we believe in Jesus and receive Him. We then have a very personal relationship that means we can cry out to God, our Father. We can also come to Him boldly because of that relationship.

Second, we recognize that God is Holy. The word “hallowed” means *to be pure or free from the guilt of sin*. God is holy because He is without sin. Third, we are to pray for the work of God in the world as we pray that His kingdom will be fully established. Fourth, we pray for the will of God to be done on earth just as His will is already done in heaven. This also shows our submission to the plan and purpose of God. After praying for the work of God in the world, we are also to pray for our own needs. First, we are to pray for our daily needs. Second, we are to pray for forgiveness from our sins. Our sins were forgiven at the moment of salvation but we will only experience the feeling of forgiveness as we forgive those who have sinned against us. Third, we are to pray that the Lord will not bring us into temptation but instead deliver us from the temptations of the evil one. The word translated “deliver” means *to rescue us from Satan*.

After teaching about prayer, Jesus went on to teach the importance of persistence in prayer. Luke

11:5-8 says, “And He said to them, ‘Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, “Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him”; and he will answer from within and say, “Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you”? I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs.’” Here, we see an illustration about persistence in prayer.

Jesus used two friends in this story to illustrate persistence. Jesus talked about a friend that was traveling and arrived at the home of one of his disciples close to midnight one night. It would be customary to offer such a friend something to eat after he had traveled so late. However, Jesus said that for the purpose of this story the disciple had no bread in his house. As a result, the disciple would go to a friend who lived nearby and ask to borrow three loaves of bread. Most of the Jews had only one room in their houses and so the whole family slept in that main room at night. Since it was midnight, the entire family would be asleep when the disciple knocked on the door and asked to borrow the three loaves of bread.

When a person is awakened by someone knocking on the door in the middle of the night, that person might not be very eager to answer the door. The person would not want to wake up his entire family by lighting a lamp to find the bread. As a result, Jesus said that the friend might answer, “Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you.” Jesus said that the person might not want to get up to get bread even though he was a friend. However, if the disciple kept knocking on the door, eventually the friend would get up and give the bread just because the disciple was persistent. If the disciple kept knocking long enough, everyone in the house would be awake and the friend would get the bread just to stop the knocking so that they could all go back to sleep. In the same way, God wants us to understand that He will answer our prayers even though the prayer may not be answered immediately.

Jesus went on to teach about the way that God will answer our prayers. Luke 11:9-13 says, “So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if *he asks* for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!”

Jesus taught three things that we are to do as we bring our requests to the Lord. First, we are to ask. The word translated “ask” is often used to talk of some one of lesser importance making a request of someone of greater importance. God is our Creator, but He invites us to bring our requests to Him. The word translated “receive” means *to gain or to obtain*. Hebrews 4:16 says, “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” In this verse, the word is translated “we may obtain”. In the same way, when we bring our requests to the Lord, Jesus said that we will obtain an answer to our prayer.

Second, we are to seek. The word translated “seek” means *to seek in order to find*. In the parable of the lost coin, Luke 15:8 says, “Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it?” Here, we see that the woman continued to seek for the coin until she found it. The word that is translated “finds” means *to find by inquiry or to find either by searching or without searching*. The Father wants to answer our requests as we ask according to the will of God.

Third, we are to knock. The word translated “knock” means *to knock at the door*. In Acts 12:13 and 16, Peter kept knocking at the door where a prayer meeting was being held to pray for him. He kept knocking until the door was opened. Jesus said that the one who knocks will have the door opened. This reminds us of the importance of continuing to pray until there is an answer. God wants to answer our prayers and may teach us patience in the process.

Then, we are given three illustrations of how the Father answers our prayers. If a son asks for food, a father does not give his son a stone. A stone cannot be eaten. If a child asks for a piece of fish, the father does not give him a snake. A snake will often destroy instead of meet the need for food. If a son asks for an egg, the father does not give him a scorpion. A scorpion has a poisonous sting in its tail. A father is not going to make a child suffer from a poisonous sting instead of giving the child the food that it needs. A loving parent will give good things to a child and not things that will destroy him.

Then, Jesus made a comparison between the giving of sinful parents and the giving of our heavenly Father. Luke 11:13 says, “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!” The night before His crucifixion, Jesus promised in John 14:16-17, ““And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever--the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.”” Ephesians 1:13-14 then promises, “In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.” Here, we see that the Father gives us the Holy Spirit at the moment of our salvation as our guarantee of eternal life.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that we can come to God in prayer at any time with our requests. He is eager to answer our prayers, because He is our loving heavenly Father. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand why the Father answers our prayers.