



Prayer

Luke 11:1-4

Bearing Fruit

- ❑ Jesus says, “If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit” (*John 15:5, NIV*).
- ❑ Jesus connects remaining in him with prayer.¹ He says, “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you” (*15:7*). This is not an unconditional guarantee that God will give us everything we ask. The condition for answered prayer is conformance with the will of God, which is a result of remaining in Christ.²


A Pattern for Fruitful 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, NIV*) How did Jesus respond? Read Luke 11:2-4.³

1. What can we learn from the order and content of this pattern of prayer?

Address: “Father”⁴ (*11:2a*)

Jesus told his followers to address God as “Father,” expressing the intimate, personal relationship between the believer and God. Who can address God in this way?

 “Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (*John 1:12, NIV*).

Two Statements (*11:2b*)

Before asking God to give us things, the pattern prayer makes these statements:

- “hallowed be your name,”⁵
- “your kingdom come”⁶

These statements concern God’s glory in relation to his name, rule, and will.

“Prayer is a mighty instrument, not for getting man’s will done in heaven, but for getting God’s will done on earth” (*Robert Law*)



¹ In the Old Testament, the word usually used for ‘pray’ is *pālal* which usually means ‘intercede, mediate.’ In the New Testament, the word usually used for ‘pray’ is *proseuchomai* which generally means ‘speak to God’ or ‘ask God for.’ Another word is *deomai* which means ‘ask; plead.’ Thus the word ‘prayer’ in the Bible usually refers to speaking to God. However, the biblical concept of prayer is broader, because it occurs in the context of relationship with God, and is responsive to God’s grace. Prayer involves more than just the human end of the communication. In a broader sense, prayer can be described in terms of conversation; fellowship; communion.

² Jesus says, ‘if my words remain in you ...’ (*John 15:7*). If God’s word dwells in us, it guides our thoughts, values, goals and desires. Thus we are much more likely to pray according to God’s will. Also see 1 John 5:14-15.

³ This is often called ‘the Lord’s Prayer,’ but is more appropriately ‘the disciples’ prayer.’ In this context, Jesus offers this prayer as a pattern for community praying, but the principles apply to personal praying as well. This prayer is not a formula that must be repeated word for word, but it provides general guidance in our praying.

⁴ Jesus’ pattern prayer in Matthew 6 adds ‘in heaven’ reminding us that God is majestic, transcendent, and glorious.

⁵ In other words, ‘may you be treated as holy, as you should be; as the one, true, holy God.’

⁶ This statement refers to the consummation (final arrival) of the kingdom, i.e. Christ’s return and full establishment of God’s kingdom. However, it is not limited to that. The King *has* come, and the kingdom has broken into this age (though only realized by those whose hearts are ruled by the King). Thus praying for God’s kingdom to come also includes expansion of his kingdom, and a greater manifestation (visibility) of his kingdom in the lives of Christians. Jesus’ pattern prayer in Matthew 6 adds ‘your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.’

Three Requests (11:3-4)

The pattern prayer then states the following requests:

- “Give us each day our daily bread.”⁷
- Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.⁸
- And lead us not into temptation.”⁹

These requests recognize our need of God’s forgiveness; and recognize our total dependence on Him for our physical and spiritual needs.

Obstacles/Hindrances to Fruitful Prayer

2. What kinds of things block or hinder a fruitful prayer life?¹⁰ (Consider Isaiah 59:1-2; James 1:6-7; 4:3; 4:6; Proverbs 28:9; Matthew 5:23-24; 1 Peter 3:7.)¹¹

A Few Suggestions for Personal Prayer

- ❑ Keep in mind that prayer is conversation with our Father, who is always present through his Spirit. “Pray in the Holy Spirit” (*Jude 20*). Converse with Him throughout each day.
- ❑ Establish regular times for focused prayer (daily). Also, have special times of prayer.
- ❑ Cultivate good attitudes for prayer, including humility, whole-heartedness (*Jeremiah 29:12-13*); thanksgiving (*Philippians 4:6*); praise (*Hebrews 13:15*); confidence in Christ (*Hebrews 4:14-16*); persistence (*Matthew 7:7-8*); desire for intimate knowledge of God (*Psalms 42:1-2*)
- ❑ Pray with an open Bible. Scripture can adjust our attitude and guide our praying. Also, God may answer prayer through His Word (the Bible).
- ❑ Develop a prayer list. For example, list family, friends, colleagues, authorities (*1 Timothy 2:1-2*), church leaders, other Christians (*Ephesians 6:18-20*), missionaries, people groups, persecuted Christians (*Hebrews 13:3*).
- ❑ Develop a prayer journal, listing prayer concerns & requests, related Scripture (if identified), and answers to prayer. Regularly review your prayer journal.



Reflection/Application

- As a Christian, do you regularly spend time in prayer? Are you talking with your heavenly Father? Set aside time each day for focused prayer, and pray often throughout the day.
- When you pray, what are your motivations? What is primary? God’s glory, or your comfort and success? Is it God’s will, or only your will? Are you praying about “kingdom business?” Seek to grow more concerned about God’s concerns.
- Read all of the Scriptures referenced in this handout, and commit to learn more about prayer. But remember that we learn to pray by praying, in both personal prayer and group prayer.

⁷ ‘bread’ (*artos* – food) – refers to our material necessities, recognizing God as provider.

⁸ Being forgiven is connected with forgiving others. God forgives us when we confess our sins and repent (turn from sin to God). If we are truly repentant (if our heart is right before God) we will also forgive others. A forgiven person is a forgiving person. Not forgiving negatively affects our relationship with God and our prayer life (Mark 11:25).

⁹ A request for God’s protection from the power of sin, and for the ability to avoid falling into sin. Jesus’ pattern prayer in Matthew 6 adds ‘but deliver us from the evil one.’

¹⁰ Sin, in general, is the main obstacle to prayer because sin results in a broken relationship with God. This is the fundamental problem for the nonbeliever. However, if the nonbeliever’s prayer is truly humble, seeking, and penitent, God listens. The believer has access to God through faith in Christ (because of Christ’s atoning work), but sin in the believer’s life still hinders prayer because it affects the quality of relationship with God.

¹¹ Obstacles/hindrances include sin in general (Isaiah 59:2), lack of relationship with Jesus Christ (Ephesians 3:12), unbelief or lack of trust (James 1:6-7); wrong motives (4:3); pride and self-sufficiency (4:6); neglect of God’s Word (Proverbs 28:9; John 15:7); wrongs not righted (Matthew 5:23-24); wrong treatment of marital partner (1 Peter 3:7).