

This week we will focus on what is called the “The Lord’s Prayer.” However, it really should be called the “Disciple’s Prayer” because he was teaching them (and us) how to pray.

August 12. Before we look at the Lord’s Prayer itself, we need to first identify the context in which it was given. In Luke 11:1, just as Jesus is finishing His prayers, He is approached by one of the disciples requesting specific instructions on how he and the others should pray. As rabbi, Jesus was expected to guide His disciples in all matters spiritual – not the least of which was their prayer life. It is important here that we recognize the humility and willingness to take instruction that Jesus’ disciples demonstrated. (James 4:10) Like the disciples, we, too, need to seek the Lord’s guidance when it comes to our prayer life. (Matthew 7:7-8) In doing so, we must be receptive to the things God would have us pray about. Even when we are unsure how to proceed in prayer, as the disciples were in this instance, we must also remember that God’s Holy Spirit is there to intercede on our behalf. (Romans 8:26).

August 13. In Luke 11:2, Jesus establishes, first and foremost, to whom we are praying. Notice, in this verse, He doesn’t say “My Father,” but rather “Our Father.” This is important. Indeed, Jesus was and is the Only Begotten Son of the Father, but the spiritual adoption we experience when we accept Christ and become co-heirs in His Kingdom establishes God’s paternity over our very souls. (Romans 8:15) The very next thing Jesus emphasizes is the holiness of the One to whom we are praying. God’s name is described, in the original Greek, as “hallowed,” meaning blessed, sacred, revered and respected above all other names. This “hallowed” status is affirmed repeatedly in both the Old (1 Samuel 2:2; Isaiah 6:3) and New Testaments. (1 Peter 1:16) When we pray, we must do so in recognition of just how awesome God, Our Father is. Our prayers allow us to approach the very throne of the Most High: Creator of the entire universe! (Hebrews 11:3) That is huge! What’s more, this “hallowed,” all-powerful God of ours is actually listening to our prayers. (2 Chronicles 7:14) That knowledge should serve to both awe and humble us. It is in Luke 11:2 that Jesus identifies the #1 prayer priority for Christians everywhere: for the return of God’s Kingdom to Earth – and the sooner the better. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus repeatedly emphasizes the importance of seeking God’s Kingdom. (Matthew 6:33) It is the same kingdom David spoke of in wonderment (Psalm 145:13), the place from which our Savior hailed (John 18:36), and the hope for the future of mankind John saw in his vision on the Greek island of Patmos. (Revelation 21:1-4) Because of Christ and the sacrifice He made of Himself for humanity’s sake, the return of God’s Kingdom is a matter of “when,” not “if.” (Mark 1:15) We, as believers, must therefore recognize this part of the Lord’s Prayer not as wishful thinking, but rather as the very real and imminent climax to all human history. This “Kingdom Come” was set in motion at Calvary. Will you be ready when it gets here? (Matthew 24:4-14, 44)

August 14. Another important aspect of Luke 11:2 is Jesus' emphasis on God's will being done – as opposed to our own. We human beings make a ridiculous habit of thinking we can bend God to our own will. Sure, we'll pray the words "Thy will be done," but what we're really hoping is that we can convince God to do what we want. Then, of course, we're disappointed when God doesn't come through. (James 4:3) Isn't God supposed to give us what we want if we ask in His Son's name? Sure, Jesus did say something along those lines (John 14:14), but that's not all He said... Yes, God will give us what we ask for in Jesus' name, provided it is something that will bring glory to His name. (John 14:13) He also added that such requests only carry weight when they come from true and obedient believers. (John 15:7) We have to get to a place in our prayer life – and in our faith as a whole – where we are willing to submit fully to God's will, no matter the cost. Jesus did no less for us. (Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42)

August 15. In Luke 11:3, Jesus sets the guidelines for a lifestyle that many modern, prosperity-driven Christians are uncomfortable accepting: the notion of complete and total dependence on God for all of our physical and financial needs. (The original Greek translation of this portion of the Lord's Prayer described it as "our daily bread.") Jesus explains the full extent of what such absolute trust in God's provision looks like in Matthew 6:25-34. The call to live a God-dependent lifestyle is a sentiment echoed again and again throughout Scripture. We witness it in action as the Israelites wander the wilderness, leaning – sometimes begrudgingly – on God for all their physical needs. (Deuteronomy 2:7) Trust in God's provision is the very essence of King David's most famous psalm: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." (Psalm 23:1) And the understanding that "God will meet all [our] needs" (Philippians 4:19) is further reaffirmed by Paul in his epistle to the church at Philippi. Still, we struggle to submit. In our quest for financial security and full bellies, we have a tendency to second-guess God and His provision. (Matthew 6:24) God knows we have this tendency, and He forgives us. Ultimately, though, He wants us to get to a place in our lives where we are willing to forego the "rat race" and make do, for better or worse, with what He provides. (Philippians 4:11-13)

August 16. Jesus' instructions on praying for forgiveness in Luke 11:4 are two-fold. On the one hand, we are to pray for our own forgiveness knowing that absolution is assured for those who belong to Him and seek Him with contrite (remorseful) hearts. (Isaiah 43:25; 1 John 1:9) But coupled with seeking our personal forgiveness is the caveat that we must also forgive those who have wronged us. The first part is easy; it's that second part that usually gives us trouble. Nevertheless, it is what God requires. After all, He forgave us when we were still His enemies, did He not? (Daniel 9:9) He even went so far as to pay the sin "debt" we owed with the life of His Son! (Romans 5:8) It is illogical – if not utterly selfish – for us to expect God to forgive us of our own sins if we are not willing to forgive others in kind. (Matthew 6:14-15; Mark 11:25).