

To Pray
Luke 111-13

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May the words of my mouth and the ears of our hearts be open to the word of God this day. AMEN.

“So, I say to you. Ask and it will be given you, search and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.” Jesus said to ask, seek, knock - Do this and it will be opened to you. So how come it seems so hard to do such a simple thing?

The door stands ready to open, it is ajar already. It is not locked, bolted or shut tight, God has promised that nothing can separate us from his love. And yet we find it so hard. Even the disciples didn't get it.

These mostly Jewish men knew how to pray. Each one, as a child of Israel would have recited the prayers of Passover and called upon God during Yom Kippur and the Feast of Booths. And again at home, each day in the morning and at night, at the meals they prayed. Not to mention all the prayers that they probably have heard at synagogue each week at worship. So they knew prayers, and knew how to pray. But they still want Jesus to teach them to pray.

Why? One of the things that motivated the disciples to ask Jesus was that they saw Him pray. He prayed often in everyday ways. Not like the rabbis in the temple or synagogues. As He was ministering to the crowds by teaching, preaching and healing, he would invoke God in prayer. He often would go off by Himself afterward those healing and preaching times and spend hours talking with His Father, coming back rejuvenated and with purpose. He also prayed on special occasions: when He was baptized, before he chose the twelve, before Peter's confession of faith, when He was transfigured on the mountain, when the 72 returned from their mission, when He fed the 5,000, when He instituted the Lord's Supper—and those agonizing hours afterwards when he awaited his betrayer. He prayed on the cross itself, and He prayed when he ate with the disciples after they stopped on the Emmaus Road on that resurrection Sunday. The disciples had seen Jesus doing it and they would continue to witness Jesus' prayers along the way and so it was natural that they wanted to know what he was doing, “Lord, teach us to pray.”

But mimicking wasn't the only reason, probably that they asked Jesus to teach them. Often there was a tradition that a wandering religious teacher would teach his students specific prayers that would identify them by their beliefs. His followers may have just wanted a prayer that would identify them as Jesus' disciples. Even to this day, the Lord's Prayer is something that is almost universally shared by Christians wherever you go, despite the little differences of translation of words such as debtors, sins, trespasses. When you pray it you identify yourself as a Christian. The disciples of Christ may have wanted this type of prayer for that very reason to identify

themselves as followers of Jesus.

And yet lastly, perhaps the disciples request to pray as Jesus prayed, was because they longed for that relationship that Jesus had with God. They saw Jesus, and knew that he was in a close relationship, unlike any they had seen before in any priest speaking to the Almighty. Jesus spoke as one who seemed to know God and believed God knew him. Many times the scriptures would say he spoke with authority. His prayers had that same authority. Those disciples wanted that assurance to be part of their prayer life, to be in that kind of closeness with God the almighty. Probably all of us want that same relationship with God, to know God in such a way as a loving caring creator that does know us and loves us.

So it could be out of admiration or out of long standing traditions or even because they desired that relationship with God found in prayer, whatever the reasons those disciples come to Jesus and ask him to teach them to pray.

And so Jesus shows them a pattern for prayer. He gives them the Lord's prayer. A simple pattern of a few short phrases that captures the entire essence of a truly vital prayer.

First address the prayer to God - "Father, hallowed be Your name." Even when he was a boy, this was a major concern for Jesus. He asked his worried earthly parents, "Why were you searching for me? Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" "Abba" in his native tongue, or "Daddy" to us, expressed His own intimate relationship with His Father—a relationship of complete and total trust, as a young child has for his or her loving parent. As part of His work on earth in which He humbled Himself for us, Jesus made Himself completely obedient to His heavenly Father. And through Jesus' sacrifice he has made us also children of God.

"Your kingdom come." Jesus went about preaching and teaching to all towns about the Kingdom of God that has come. We know that the Kingdom of God will come no matter if we pray or don't pray but when we say this we are asking that the kingdom will come to us also. We want to be close to Jesus, we want to be part of his kingdom now and forever, may your kingdom come.

"Give us this day our daily bread." A petition for our needs of life. God gives us everything we need to live by, he has created it and continues to show mercy on his creation. In this petition we are reminding ourselves that God is our provider and he knows what we need.

"Forgive us our sins." We also need this gift, the gift of forgiveness. Jesus was always forgiving people, much to the dismay of his enemies. He forgave the sins of many that people didn't think worthy of forgiveness, the unclean and the hurt. And yet ultimately he went to the cross to forgive the sins of all saying in a prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." We are forgiven by Christ's sacrifice and so live as Christ like as possible, forgiving others.

“Lead us not into temptation.” Jesus withstood an incredible amount of temptation during His earthly life, as we see in His forty-day temptation in the wilderness by the devil. But I am sure the temptations didn't end there. Jesus knew that his disciples would be tempted, and strained as they picked up their crosses to follow him. Satan works against anyone following in the footsteps of Christ. So we ask God to help us in these times of trials.

It is a simple prayer but very meaningful, full of short images that impact every part of our lives. In these few lines, our entire existence of our daily walk of faith is revealed. It is so simple and easy to learn. All prayers can use this same pattern, all prayers can be like this in conversation with God and yet . And is the basis for any conversation we can have with God.

God knows our needs and our thoughts, we are given the grace of Christ as a promise, but Christ tells us to converse with God anyway, to talk to our loving father who wants to give, he tells us to ask in prayer, seek and find, knock and it will be opened. Hopefully, your wife or husband already knows how you feel about them. Or perhaps your children, or parents, or friends. But that doesn't mean you don't tell them anyway! You talk with them and tell them you love them, you say thank you and please. You share your life with them in respect and dedication. God wants to hear from us in the same way. Christ tells us to come to God, the one who loves us and share our lives with him, seek and he is there, knock and the door will be opened.

It is such a simple thing to pray and yet we make it so hard? Ask, Seek, Knock and the Holy Spirit will fill you and guide you. The disciples learned these words from Jesus. We learn these words of the Lord's prayer. Open now your hearts and minds and share in that Spirit asking, seeking, and knocking so that God can come into our lives. It is not hard, it is quite simple.

May you walk and talk with God, may you ask, seek, knock, and receive. May you be filled with the Spirit this day. Amen.

May the peace and Grace of God be with you this day and throughout the week to come. AMEN.