

“LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY”

OUR METHOD in this COURSE

To place ourselves at the feet of Jesus and to learn from Him.

OUR AIM in this COURSE

To imitate the prayer life of Jesus, and so to share in His effectiveness.
We especially want to apply the power of prayer to growing as Jesus’ church at Highland Village.

OUR PREPARATION

Read the Scriptures and lesson.

Answer questions.

Pray for the lesson’s principle to grow in you.

Practice that principle.

This course is designed for use in our classes and groups. Usually one new lesson is studied each week, which suggests that the course can be completed in about three months. Group interaction is encouraged through **Thought Questions**. Participants can read ahead and prepare their answers. Then they will be ready to take part in the discussion of each lesson. For practical growth in prayer, it is important for each participant to decide on a definite action to take after each lesson. “Extra References and Notes” at the end of the course may assist you with preparation for teaching.

LESSON ONE

. JESUS shows us how to PRAY

Prayer is the highest privilege known to human beings.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the best guide for how to pray.

This Bible course is based on such ultimate truths.

To be a disciple—a dedicated follower of Jesus—is to pray. To be a growing disciple is to be growing in prayer.

Prayer itself is rooted in the inviting nature of the true and living God. It appreciates and applies grace in the most intimate and practical way. Because it taps into the Creator’s awesome power, there is no force on earth greater than the power associated with prayer. Because prayer is so effective, it is a key to all spiritual protection and progress.

1.1 OUR METHOD

Our method in this Bible study is to place ourselves at the feet of Jesus to learn from Him. We seek to imitate the prayer life of Jesus, and so to share in His effectiveness. There is no greater teacher and example. Indeed, the way into God's presence is paved by Jesus Himself. The privilege of prayer was bought at the highest cost to God and His Son (Heb 10:19-22). That being so, this course aligns with God's will, that we should fulfill His purpose for prayer.

The beauty of this course is that it carries, in the Scriptures, the seeds of your success. As you apply biblical prayer, its divine power will take you from strength to strength. You will experience what it means to be a new creature. While bad habits fade away, the new you—created in the image of Jesus Himself—will emerge more clearly. You will grow in spiritual discernment and maturity. You will pray with confidence and take on life's challenges with courage. Through you, God will accomplish what once seemed impossible. Jesus said it this way:

If you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, "Move from here to there," and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you (Mt 17:20).

In this course, we will explore this amazing promise, and many more! Above all, we will come to know better the One who gives these promises, Jesus Christ. *He* is the secret of successful prayer—as a disciple recognized in Luke 11.

1.2 A SURPRISING REQUEST

Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when He finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples" (Lk 11:1).

At first, this disciple's request might seem surprising. Jewish people are familiar with prayer. It is one of their great traditions, known and practiced since childhood. Some of Jesus' own followers have learned from John the Baptizer, who emphasized both prayer and fasting (Lk 5:33; 7:33; 11:1). By this time in Jesus' public work, some have been with Jesus for about three years. They have heard lessons on prayer, like those in Matthew 6. Seventy of their number have just served as special messengers preparing each town for Jesus' arrival. To their own amazement, these messengers have used wonderful powers (Lk 10:1-20). So they might easily see themselves as experienced workers with God.

Yet here in Luke 11, immediately after these events, a disciple makes the most basic request: "Lord, teach us to pray." This seems like a child's request. If he says, "teach us *more* about prayer," there might be room for adult pride, suggesting, "We already know something about praying; we just need to improve." Instead he says something simpler: "Lord, teach us to pray." He includes his fellow disciples: "Teach *us*." He knows that they too need to learn prayer. Just

a little earlier Jesus asked His followers to pray for more workers in the harvest fields (Lk 10:2). The disciples want to do that very thing, to join Jesus in the vitality and effectiveness of His prayers. But this honest man realizes that they are mere children in the school of prayer. So he goes back to the beginning, with the most basic request, “Lord, teach us *to pray*.”

1.3 WHY DOES THE DISCIPLE FEEL THIS WAY?

Luke 11 shows us the context for the disciple’s request to learn prayer.

Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when He finished, one of His disciples said to Him, “Lord, teach us to pray” (Lk 11:1).

Something about the way Jesus prayed, something about His relationship with the Father, caused His followers to yearn for a similar experience. Through the very depth of Jesus’ praying, the disciples recognize their need for prayer.

And isn’t this true for us? The more we see of Jesus, the more we recognize our own emptiness. How far we have fallen from the glory of God! No wonder Jesus says that we cannot enter His kingdom unless we “become like children” (Mt 18:3-4 cf. Lk 18:17). We cannot make progress until we realize that we are like helpless babies in spiritual matters. Our praying is so lacking in strength of spirit, in consistency, in spiritual vision, in confidence and in effectiveness. When we recognize our smallness, weakness and ignorance—how childish we are compared with the Master’s maturity—then we are ready to enter the school of prayer. We become serious about learning. We too plead, “Lord, teach us to pray.”

1.4 THE QUALIFICATION OF JESUS

For this course, we take as our theme the example of Jesus in prayer. There is no better way to learn prayer than to watch and to imitate the Lord Himself. There is no better teaching on prayer than His teaching. In a very true sense, Jesus is the “one Teacher” and “one Shepherd” we follow (Mt 23:8,10; Jn 10:4,8,16).

The disciple of Luke 11 knows where to go to learn prayer. He probably does not know, at that time, just how supremely qualified Jesus is to teach prayer. John the Baptizer also taught about prayer (Lk 11:1). Yet he said that Jesus held a far higher rank than himself “because He was before me” (Jn 1:30). John was not referring to earthly age, for John was six months older than Jesus. Through inspiration John was referring to Jesus’ pre-existence as God.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (Jn 1:1 cf. Jn 1:14).

Previous to being born in the flesh, Jesus eternally enjoyed His position in the Godhead. What does that imply about Jesus' qualification to teach about prayer? Jesus, as God, has witnessed every prayer ever prayed. Through the centuries, He enjoyed prayers from believers like Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Ruth, David and, yes, even Anna just before His arrival on earth. His own divine heart had suffered with Job, Hannah, Naomi and Jeremiah. Then too, Jesus, as God, had recoiled from the stench of so-called prayers mouthed by the hypocrites, the selfish, and the foolish. Their prayers are "an abomination"—hated by God (Pr 28:9).

Since Jesus "was with God, and... was God," He is fully qualified to teach us about prayer. Peter prayed, "You, Lord... know the hearts of all" (Ac 1:24). As the One who reads every heart and hears every prayer, Jesus knows how to train our hearts in prayer. John the Baptizer pointed to Jesus' unique position for teaching us, when he said,

He who comes from heaven is above all.... He bears witness to what He has seen and heard (Jn 3:31-32).

Jesus tells us about what He Himself experienced in heaven. Knowing where He came from, we pay special attention to His life as a human living among us—described in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. We see Jesus' complete dependence on the Father in heaven. We watch Him apply on earth the principles of prayer that He knows so well from heaven's perspective. We find Him matching what He *teaches* with what He *does*. We recognize Him as the supreme practitioner of prayer. He understands prayer completely from both sides, first from God's side, then from man's side. The divine and the human combine in Jesus to make Him the most qualified to teach prayer. So we fully agree with, and share in, the disciple's heart-felt plea, "Lord, teach us to pray."

Thought Questions

1. In Luke 11:1 a disciple says, "Lord, teach us to pray." Considering his background, what seems surprising about such a basic request?
2. Have you personally had a background in prayer already? In other words, are you already experienced in prayer, or is prayer new to you?
3. What does the context of Luke 11 suggest about why the disciple felt the need to learn prayer?
4. What are some of Jesus' unique qualifications for teaching us to pray?
5. Thinking about your own prayer life, what would you like to gain from this Bible course? That is, what need would you like the course to meet? In what aspects of prayer would you like to grow?

