

Home Group Leaders Discussion Guide
Luke 11:1-13

- Q. Describe your prayer life. What are some habits/practices you use? What are some challenges you face (or have faced) in your prayer life? How is your prayer life different now compared to, say, 10 years ago?**
- Q. How did you learn to pray? Who taught you?**
- Q. Describe an especially special gift your parents gave to you. Why was it so special? (possible ice breaker)**

In this passage we see what is commonly referred to as “The Lord’s Prayer”. The content of it is almost identical with Jesus’ teaching on prayer within the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew, but in a very different context. Chances are, Jesus presented this to them more than once. (Repetition is the key to learning as they say.) And usually the “stickiness” factor of teaching is the motivation of the learner. In the Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount this teaching on prayer is embedded within a much longer teaching. Here in Luke (and, again, likely a different occasion) the disciples specifically ask Jesus to teach them how to pray. So the main difference isn’t the content...which, again, is nearly identical to stuff they had heard in the past...but now they are ready to learn.

- Q. Can you think of anything your parents tried to teach you, but you didn’t “get it” until sometime later...when you were wanting to learn it?**
- Q. Jesus’ prayer life obviously cultivated curiosity and intrigue. Whose faith cultivated interest in you, that caused you to want to learn and grow?**

(***)A quick note to parents out there: sometime we want our kids to grasp something—some truth, some idea, some value or principal—that they are just not interested in yet. As frustrating as that can be...because we know how important it is for them to grasp it...they have to want to learn it. The best thing we can do is set a consistent example for them of what it is we want them to learn. Then, hopefully, in time they will want to learn it. As the old saying goes, “You can lead a horse to water but you cannot make him drink.” Be patient, be gracious, be prayerful.***)

As was mentioned in the sermon this past Sunday, the prayer Jesus taught His disciples to pray is very God-centered. (Which only makes sense since it is a God-centric universe we live in.) And while prayer should always be God-focused, it should also be communally framed. (Let’s rely on Matthew’s version of the Lord’s Prayer as the more complete one—Matthew 6:9-13) Notice the plural pronouns used: “**OUR** Father in heaven...”, “Give **US** today **OUR** daily bread.”, “Forgive **US OUR** debts as **WE** also have forgiven **OUR** debtors. And lead **US** not into temptation, but deliver **US** from the evil one.”

This runs counter to the western individualistic mindset. In our culture people are conditioned to think of faith, religion, spirituality, as a very personal/individual thing. The primacy of the individual is one of the fruits of the Enlightenment...of which we are children of. The problem with this is that it's not the mindset of Jesus or the writers of Scripture. They (and really the majority of the world, past and present) think with a group-mindset. They functioned less from a place of individual identity and more from a place of group identity. So as we (21st century western Christians) approach Scripture, and the Christian faith in general, we're sort of immediately handicapped because the lens we see things through is completely different from the writer's perspective. The way we conceive of our faith is very different. That is not to say that there aren't any individual/personal aspects of the faith...it's just there is a much larger group/communal aspect to it than we are accustomed to.

Q. How, or in what ways, do you think having an overly individualized/personalized concept of the Christian faith can distort our experience of it? What are some ways in which we can overcome some of our individualistic/personal hang ups and embrace a more communal approach?

Time to get a little "geeky Greeky" (as I like to call it). In verse 8 there is a word that is translated a number of different ways. Some translate it "persistence", or "boldness", or "importunity". The newer NIV translates it really well, "shameless audacity". When I think of "shameless audacity", I think of my kids. (Other parents out there might be able to relate.) My kids have absolutely no scruples when it comes to asking me for what they want. Zero filter. No thought to whether it is feasible, good, right, practical. They have a want...and they voice it, unashamedly. On one level it is annoying. But on another level, I love the fact that I know their hearts. (I may not always like what I see from their hearts, but I love that in their audacity to voice even the slightest want, they are showing me their hearts.) I might wish that they would want different things, but I'm nevertheless glad that they voice their wants.

And we would be amiss if we think that Jesus' teaching in this passage is about how to get what is requested. The point of this passage is about RELATIONSHIP. Think about it: who would you be willing to shamelessly, audaciously make a request of? I'm going to guess it's not your next door neighbor. (This goes back to our individualized/personalized concept of life...we don't cultivate the type of relationships where we can be so audacious. And asking for a cup of sugar or an egg does not count as shamelessly audacious☺)

The fact that Jesus uses the context of friendship and parenthood for His illustrations in this passage stresses/emphasizes the point that the real point of prayer is cultivating a relationship...namely a relationship with God. Going back to the question of who would we truly be willing to make a shamelessly audacious request of: I'm guessing it's probably our parents, or a very small/select group of friends. Why them? Because there is a deep foundation of relationship there where we aren't too concerned about what they'll think of us.

Q. Who would you be willing to make a shamelessly audacious request of? Has there ever been a time when you made such a request? Explain.

The very last verse of this passage is key. *“If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven **GIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT TO THOSE WHO ASK HIM!**”* (11:13, emphasis added) I want my kids to ask me for anything. That DOES NOT mean I want or plan on giving them anything/everything they ask for. But there are some things I will absolutely give them any and every time they ask (at least to the best of my ability).

Jesus/God definitely desires us to come to Him with any and everything...simply because He desires to have a loving relationship with us. And we need to trust that He will give (or withhold) with our best interest in mind. But the one thing He will give every time is Himself.

- Q. Do you go to God to get what you can't get yourself, or do you go to God to get God? (Or, do we want God to “bless us” or do we want the blessing of God Himself?)**
- Q. The Lord's Prayer can be broken down, or outlined, into 6 components. (If you were at Nehemiah Night this past Sunday this will look familiar.)**

The Father's Character: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.

The Father's Kingdom: Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

The Father's Provision: Give us today our daily bread

The Father's Forgiveness: Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

The Father's Guidance: And lead us not into temptation

The Father's Protection: But deliver us from the evil one.

Which of these components to you tend to spend to most time praying about? The least time praying about?