

Luke 11 is one of the two places that the Lord's Prayer is recorded in the Bible (see Matthew ch.6 also). After Jesus gives the Lord's Prayer, he highlights the confidence we have that our God will answer our calls to him, and do what is best for us. And so here is a great place to open the Bible, for today's answer to "What's life like for a follower of Christ?" **Read Luke 11:1-13.**

1 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." 2 He said to them, "When you pray, say: " 'Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. 3 Give us each day our daily bread. 4 Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation. ' " *5 Then he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, 6 because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.' 7 "Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' 8 I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs. 9 "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 10 For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. 11 "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? 12 Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? 13 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!"*

I'm going to put up some thoughts people through the years have expressed about the Lord's Prayer. Join the discussion!

It was once said: "There is **no nobler prayer** to be found (than the Lord's Prayer)."

Why might someone offer that description?

Here is a simple way to offer "all kinds of prayers & requests" (Eph.6:18):

*"The Lord's Prayer covers all the needs of body and soul, but it is **also** concerned about the needs of all our fellow Christians **and** of all the uncounted millions who do not yet know Jesus as their Savior."*

(People's Bible Matthew p.89)

Someone might reply, "But it was written almost 2,000 years ago. Don't you think it's become outdated or irrelevant? We could come up with something more current."

Here's a quote that argues with that conclusion:

• "The Lord's Prayer is **a prayer for the ages, and** a prayer for the needs of **every age of life.**"

Do you agree or Disagree? Why?

You don't outlive its usefulness or the need of the requests; and even the very young can be taught the meaning.

"...couched in few and simple words, and yet so profound and so expressive that it includes all that is required in every age & condition of life, and [it includes] the substance of prayer for the whole Church of God now and always" (Ylvisaker, P.275).

That all said... The Lord's Prayer has also had attached to it the description: "There has been **no greater martyr on earth.**"

Kids: What's a martyr? Why would that description be given to *a prayer*?

Martyr: Someone that suffers. In this unique case we're describing *something* suffering harm. So what harm could happen while saying the Lord's Prayer? Well, just try saying it without getting distracted and losing track of what you're praying for! If thoughts interrupted him, Martin Luther expressed: "*If you are able to speak one Lord's Prayer without any other thoughts of your own, I shall consider you a master. I cannot do it; in fact, when thoughts come to me, I am glad if they go as readily as they came*" (What Luther Says, P.1087).

And so, we have good reason to dig into and mine out the treasures contained in these words of the Lord's Prayer. Our goal for our time today - put in the form of a prayer - is: (please join with me to pray) "*Holy Spirit, guide us to the depths of meaning contained in these words, so that we may pray them with minds full of understanding, hearts full of appreciation, and complete confidence. Amen.*"

We're going to especially focus on the first few words of the Lord's Prayer today. [I know there is "tons" more in the Lord's Prayer, and on prayer in general we could cover.] These first few words of the Lord's prayer will lead us to soak in the joy and privilege that is ours to pray: Our Father in heaven.

"*Our Many Views of God*" is the title of a newspaper opinion piece I've clipped and saved (Standard-Examiner, Ogden UT, Oct. 7 2006). A survey conducted by Baylor University arrived at the following statistics. 5 percent of respondents were atheists. Then, based on the assessment of the polling data, the remaining respondents fell into four basic views of God:

- 31 percent saw God as authoritarian ("listen to me, or else you're going to get it!"), very involved in our affairs and a God who punishes.
- 24 percent saw God as a distant force that created our world, but who is disinterested in our lives or future.
- 16 percent saw God as critical, ready to pass future judgment, but not too active in our lives right now.
- 23 percent saw God as benevolent (kind & generous), more prone to forgive and be active in our affairs.

How do you feel after hearing that? My reaction? We have so much to share with a world of individuals who are hurting and lost. At least $\frac{3}{4}$ - 76% - are missing the comfort you and I know from this word: "Father."

"Father"? "*Judge would be a more fitting name from my unclean lips. Yet, Jesus teaches me to call God my Father*" (For Living Saints, 2006). How is that?

Let's review how we have come to have this status "child of God", with the privileged position of "access to the ear of God."

We didn't start out as children. Far from it! We didn't recognize him! We didn't know him! In fact, we were hanging out and hiding out in the darkness of sin and unbelief.

"...though the world was made through him, the world didn't know him... didn't receive him." – John 1:10-

Caught up in the crime of our sins, we'd have been left to only dread God as Judge ~ if He hadn't come seeking us.

"God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." 2 Cor. 4:6

Through his Word the Holy Spirit showed you how much you are loved by God. You learned just how much it cost God to adopt you into His family. 30+ sinless years; 40 days of intense temptation in the wilderness, & other temptations his life through; 3 nails, 1 cross – 1 perfect life in my place & 1 death to remove my sin's punishment. The truth the Holy Spirit made shine in your heart taught you, changed you.

Faith in Jesus is an inexpressible gift from God. Holy-Spirit-worked faith in Jesus enables me / you to confidently call out: "Father."

In a very real way, the Lord's Prayer serves for us as a confession of faith. The requests express a great deal about what we believe. Even the opening two words, spoken with proper understanding, unpack where we stand: it is by grace and by faith that we are able to call God "our Father."

John 1:12-14,18: "... to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to **become children of God** – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, **full of grace and truth.**"

"Full of grace and truth." That takes my mind back to the newspaper opinion piece (*Our Many Views of God*). Remember the varied views. The concluding line of that article stated: "...we worship the same God in our individual ways..." That's a head-scratcher to me. Remember the different descriptions: "Authoritarian & punishing; critical, ready to pass judgment & not too active in our lives; a distant (powerful) force, but disinterested in our lives or future." Is that the description of the God you worship? That is not the God I worship. In fact, if the Baylor University summary is correct, ¾ of the respondents are missing God altogether – lacking knowledge of our **Savior**-God.

Consider this explanation given in the People's Bible: "God is the Father of all people in the sense that he created them all and gave them life. But only those who know him as their heavenly Father through faith in Christ Jesus have the privilege of coming to him in prayer."

You see... without faith in Jesus – who came down to earth to save us –, a person does not know the Father or pray to the Father. "But," the objection you'll hear raised, "I don't think that's fair to say that about so many sincere people out there. Many other 'faith groups' besides Christians address prayers in the same way – to God. Many of them believe that there is only one God. Who says their prayers aren't accepted?"

A very telling exchange takes place in John ch.8 (8:34-47, 54-59). There's a group who stakes their claim: "the only Father we have is God himself." Jesus responds to these individuals: "You belong to your father, the devil..." You see, they wanted a claim to God on their own terms. But they rejected Jesus as Savior - as the source of right-standing with God. And the conclusion Jesus clarifies is: without faith in Him, one does not know the Father or pray to the Father.

Let me share one more biblical example – an attempted “prayer,” which went like this: “God, I thank you that I’m not like other men – robbers, evil doers, adulterers. I fast... and I give 1/10th of all I get” (Luke 18:11). Jesus’ commentary on the man declared: he did not go home justified (that is, forgiven and in a right-standing) before God. Someone might say: “But he prayed to God.” Ah, but what did he pray?

“He does not want to take (receive) from God; but he wants to give to Him, so that God must pay and be glad that He gets a man so holy as a friend. But God says no to this. He will neither hear nor heed the prayer of anybody unless he comes relying on His pure grace and mercy in Christ and says with the publican: ‘God be merciful to me, a poor sinner’” (P.1077, What Luther Says).

You and I come bringing nothing but our sin; we come asking everything from God’s gracious hand. That’s how we come here; that’s why we come here. And oh what joy to come, knowing our Father in heaven is ready to hear and answer us for Jesus’ sake.

“Father.” A word of confession. A word expressing relationship – the most intimate in nature. So, Christian, “crawl up on his lap with confidence!” (For Living Saints, 2006). I love the image that stirs in my mind when I hear that. Maybe even better than the image of climbing up on his lap is – can you picture? -: “your head on his shoulder.” (Look for Brandon holding Asher.) See...with his head on his father’s shoulder, as his father holds him close to his heart. When you pray, dear child of God, your heart couldn’t be any closer to God’s heart. Pray, with “your head upon your Father’s shoulder.” With your heart pressed to his in prayer, he hears your heart - he feels it.

My Father in heaven...

“is not some earthly father whose love is limited and whose reach is curtailed. ‘Nothing is impossible with God,’ Scriptures assure me. My Father ‘is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine’ (Eph. 3:20). Unlike earthly fathers, my heavenly Father never makes a mistake. When Life makes it seem so – if what has come my way seems heave and hard – it’s time to look up again to the One who sent it. That’s my heavenly Father, whose power guided by his love will take good care of me and all those who are his in Christ Jesus.” (For Living Saints)

And so - join with one another - in words from your heart to God’s heart – as we approach God’s throne of grace – with confidence in the one we ask - let your words ascend to our dear Father in heaven.

Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us; Lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.