

“Lord, Teach Us to Pray
Luke 11

Introduction: Today we begin a new sermon series on prayer. The leadership of Faith believes that God is leading us as a church to call upon Him for a deepening experience of prayer. Here is how the vision statement describes this desire:

We desire for every member to have a rich, growing life of prayer, and for every ministry of the church to begin in petition and end in praise. We join the original disciples in asking Jesus, “Lord, teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1). We believe that each of our members can have a deep experience of prayer, whereby they commune with their Heavenly Father, growing in their knowledge of God through conversation with Him. We believe that prayer can be more than just a petitionary listing of our needs before God. When our petitions grow out of prayers of worship and thanksgiving first, our faith grows accordingly. We desire a fuller expression of corporate prayer among us. We desire to provide leadership and appropriate structures in order to facilitate prayer. Finally, we desire that prayer permeates all the ministries of Faith—no matter how large or small—so that in all we do, we begin and end in thankful dependence on God.

Our hope is that during the next several weeks, as we focus on this critical area of prayer, God will indeed bring each of us as individuals and as a church to a deeper experience of prayer.

Opening Discussion: Steve said:

Children, generally speaking, talk to God the way they talk to their parents. Just like young children think that their parents can do anything, they have this wild idea that God can do anything. And it shows up in the way they pray. . . But something often changes in our praying on the way to adulthood. Things get more complicated. Maybe you go to church and you hear feature-length prayers that give you the impression that you have to use certain words in certain combinations if you’re really praying. When we face disappointments in our lives, we wonder if God can be trusted. Or we pray for certain outcomes – a relationship to be healed, a body to be healed, the safety of a loved one – and God doesn’t do what we’ve asked. As a result we become much more guarded in our prayers or we quit praying altogether. And then there are all the theological difficulties with prayer. If God is all-knowing and if God is all-compassionate and all-powerful, why do we have to pray? If I have the ability to do meet some need, I’m going to do it without being asked. So why does God have to be asked? And how can we be sure what to ask for anyway? And how do we know if prayer makes a difference anyway? There are also the realities of our lives and our lifestyles: we’re busy people, busy in mind and in body. When we pause to pray our minds are flooded with so many thoughts and anxieties that two minutes later we’re off **doing** something. Prayer, quite honestly, doesn’t seem like a very good use of our time. Then there’s the issue that praying is a lot “harder” than watching TV or doing Facebook or reading the newspaper or talking with people.

- Have you faced any of the issues that Steve mentions? If so, how have they affected your prayer life?

Read Luke 3:21-22, 5:15-16, 6:12, 9:18; 11:1-4

1. What observations can you make about Jesus' prayer life (ask who, what, when, where, why and how of each of these passages)?
2. How would you summarize Jesus' prayer life from these passages?
3. In Luke 5:16 we are told that Jesus would "often slip away to the wilderness to pray." What is significant about this?
4. In Luke 11:1 the disciples ask Jesus to teach them to pray. Why do you think they asked him this question?
5. How much do you personally connect with the disciples' request for Jesus to teach them? Why?

Steve said:

The disciples didn't ask Jesus to teach them **about** prayer; they asked Jesus to teach them **to** pray. There's a huge difference between the two requests.

6. What is the difference between being taught **about** prayer and being taught **to** pray?

Steve said:

This pattern of intentionally teaching His disciples to pray suggests that Jesus will surely also teach **us** to pray as well. Over the next two months we are going to put ourselves in a position to learn from Jesus how to pray. We are going to examine His teachings and His example, and invite Him to teach us to pray. We are going to provide some actual opportunities to pray; ultimately we learn to pray by praying. But it all begins by wanting it. And so I invite you to join me in making this simple request of Jesus:

7. How hungry are you for Jesus to teach you to pray?