



Good News **for all people.**

The Gospel of Luke

Week 10 **LEADER** Discussion Questions

Week of 10/30/22

Text: Luke 11:1-13 (Boulder and Thornton), 37-54 (Erie)

Boulder and Thornton Questions: Luke 11:1-13

Icebreaker: Who taught you how to pray or set an example with prayer that you'd like to follow?

1. Luke's version of "The Lord's Prayer" varies slightly from the longer version in Matthew 6, but they are more similar than different. What main elements do you see in Jesus's prayer?

The prayer begins by acknowledging God's position and place. He is set apart or revered ("hallowed"). Next, we see the desire expressed for the kingdom to come—for the rule and reign of Jesus to be fully realized on earth. Then, we have a request that God would provide what's needed for each day, followed by the acknowledged need for God to forgive us of our sins. This is in-turn directly related to our forgiveness of others' sins against us. Finally, there is the request that God would not lead us into circumstances that might result in sin. In all, we see the combination of "vertical" and "horizontal" requests, but also of kingdom-sized and personal requests.

Application: What differences and/or similarities do you notice if you compare Jesus's prayer with your own?

2. Verse 1 helps us see that prayer is an essential part of being a disciple. John taught his disciples to pray and here Jesus is teaching about it as well. Why do you think prayer is so important for a disciple?

This is probably easy to answer but it's an aspect of discipleship that can be easily neglected in favor of things that make us feel more active or productive. Prayer is something commanded by God, so we should see it as essential. It's also modeled repeatedly by Jesus in the Gospels and by God's people throughout Scripture. Prayer engages our hearts and minds in God's will and our own desires are conformed to God's as we pray ("Thy will be done..."). Even when we're not sure how to pray, we know the Spirit is praying for us (Rom 8).

Application: How would you describe your prayer life?

3. Jesus's illustration in verses 5-8 reflect a culture where it was shameful to be inhospitable. This drives the "friend" to do something shameless. What does this kind of desperation have to do with prayer?

First, the word used in the ESV in v. 8 is one we may not be familiar with: *impudence* (it's also sometimes translated as *persistence*). One definition of the original word is this: "lack of sensitivity to what is proper, carelessness about the good opinion of others...shamelessness...ignoring of convention." The person is feeling such pressure

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that it motivates this kind of action. This is often what fuels an out-of-the-ordinary desire to pray. Our prayers can grow more fervent and sincere as we feel like we're in a situation that is urgent and beyond our ability to resolve.

Application: Think of a desperate time from your own experience. Did it drive you to pray any differently than normal? What happened?

Prayer may not always be our first impulse in desperate circumstances, so people may find it hard to come up with an example. That's ok. Maybe this can be a reminder of how we should respond in the future.

4. Jesus commands us to “ask,” “seek,” and “knock” with the assurance of a response. What do these words imply about the character of God?

God is not stingy or reluctant to withhold his blessings from those who ask. He is generous and good, which doesn't mean we will always get what we want, but that we can count on him to provide according to what is best from his eternal, omniscient (all-knowing) vantage point.

Application: God knows what we need before we ask (Matthew 6:8), so why do you think Jesus wants us to pray anyways?

Prayer is an act that acknowledges and cultivates our dependence on God for all that we need. Through it, we see that God hears us and responds when we ask.

5. Jesus emphasizes God's generosity and goodness with the comparisons of verses 11-13. How do people's beliefs about God's character influence the way they pray?

We will probably find it difficult to pray if we believe God is stingy or reluctant to give. On the contrary, if we believe God is generous and good, prayer can be a first and recurring response when we are in need.

Application: What are one or two examples of how God has been generous to you in response to your prayers?

Erie Questions: Luke 11:37-54

Icebreaker: Are you a rule-follower or a rule-breaker? Explain!

1. In this day, washing before a meal was a religious ceremony and not about hygiene. Why do you think Jesus uses such strong language here to rebuke the Pharisees?

We might be more stirred up today about the hygiene aspect, but Jesus's words are motivated precisely because it's about an empty religious display. This is the central issue with the Pharisees. They want people to follow customs that display a greater devotion to God than what truly existed in their hearts. This is the hypocrisy that Jesus cannot tolerate.

Application: Have you seen an example where others (not you, of course) were so caught up in a display of religious devotion that they lost sight of something more essential?

To get you thinking, we have a lot of places in our lives today where we can “perform” our faith rather than live out our faith. A worship service might be a place where we can display a greater devotion than we really have. Social media might be another place where we can create the impression that we are more devoted than we truly are.

2. The Pharisees were rule-creators, rule-followers, and rule-enforcers. According to what's going on in this passage, what's the danger of religious rules?

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Rules can easily obscure the principle or behavior they are meant to facilitate. They can become “the point,” and ironically, a barrier to what they were established for in the first place. Strict rule enforcement can lead to resentment, cynicism, or an even greater degree of “faking it” as people go through the motions to avoid trouble with the enforcers.

Application: Our background and personalities can influence us in this area, but why do you think setting up and following religious rules can appeal to us?

Some of us immediately recoil at rules while others of us look forward to an opportunity to do something that’s “right.” It can be appealing to set up rules because it’s easy. They are aimed at addressing outward performance. It’s far more difficult to try to shape someone’s motivations and affections.

3. The lawyers were part of the same system of religious corruption as the Pharisees. How does Jesus’s impression of them compare with what’s implied about their own view of themselves?

A degree of surprise is implied by the line of verse 45, “Teacher, in saying these things you insult us also.” It’s almost as if the lawyer expects an apology or disclaimer that would exclude the lawyers from Jesus’s harsh rebuke toward the Pharisees. In all, it would seem that the lawyers believe they are pleasing God.

Application: How does this happen? How can people become so out-of-step with God’s perspective? Have you seen something like this occur in our day?

We don’t have to look too far in our culture to see people who hold some kind of Christian religious credential or claim to Christian faith who openly talk or act in ways that are in sharp contrast to God’s plainly revealed will in Scripture. Some may have sinister motivations, but it appears that others genuinely believe they are doing what pleases God. It’s self-deception that reminds us of Isaiah 5:20—“Woe to those who call evil good and good evil...” There are multiple ways this question could be answered. Self-deception can happen when a person is in community with others who are also deceived. It can happen by being isolated from a community that pursues God’s truth in humility. It can happen when we are more concerned about the opinions and impressions of other people rather than God’s.

4. Verses 53-54 express the growing hostility of these religious authorities toward Jesus. What does Jesus’s approach in this passage and their response to him tell us about these leaders’ receptivity to correction?

Jesus doesn’t try to win them over because he knows their hearts. He knows their resistance to God’s justice and mercy so that the only fitting response to them is one of rebuke. They will not accept the gospel.

Application: This is tough stuff! Why do you think Jesus is so harsh with these leaders in comparison to how gentle he is with others?

Ironically, we see the same heart of Jesus for humanity in this passage, but from a different angle. Author and scholar Dane Ortlund asks, “what fuels such terrifying censures? It is [Jesus’s] concern for those being misled and mistreated by these revered religious PhDs...They wished to use the people, to build themselves up. Jesus wanted to gather the people under his wings the way a mother hen gathers her chicks under her wings for maternal protection (Matt 23:27).” *Gentle and Lowly*, 109-110