

Sermon Title: **Lord, Teach Us to Pray – Beginning Series on Prayer**

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Vessel: Russ LaFlamme

Scripture Reference: **Luke 11:1**

Thesis: **The disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray;**

Purpose: **Today we will explore the importance, meaning, and purpose of prayer.**

Key Word: **“Prayer”**

Key Points:

- #1 The Purpose of Prayer
- #2 The Power of Prayer
- #3 The Priority of Prayer

I) Introduction: Our Scripture Reading is: **Luke 11:1**

A) The Setting:

1) Illustration Notebook: Repentance (Repaint)¹

(a) **There was once a Scottish tradesman; a painter called Jack, who was very interested in making a pound where he could.**

- (i) So he often would thin down his paint to make it go a wee bit further.
- (ii) As it happened, he got away with this for some time.

(b) **Eventually the local Baptist Church decided to do a big restoration job on one of their biggest churches.**

- (i) Jack put in a painting bid and because his price was so competitive, he got the job.
- (ii) So he set to work, with a right good will, erecting the staging and putting up the planks, and buying the paint.
- (iii) and...yes, I am sorry to say, thinning it down with the turpentine.

(c) **Well, Jack was up on the scaffolding, painting away, the job nearly done,**

- (i) When suddenly there was a horrendous clap of thunder.

(ii) **The sky opened and the rain just poured down,**

- Washing the thin paint from all over the church,
- Knocking Jack right off the scaffold,
- Causing him to land on the lawn.

(d) **Now, Jack was no fool. He knew this was a judgment from the Almighty,**

- (i) So he fell on his knees and cried, *"Oh, God! Forgive me! What should I do?"*
- (ii) And from the thunder, a mighty Voice spoke out to Jack, **"Repaint! Repaint! And thin no more!"**
- (iii) Jack needed to get back on the right track with God.

2) **Have you ever needed to get back on the right track with God?**

- (a) Although, we might not like to admit it, from time to time, we all need to get back on the right track.
- (b) But we are not alone in this.

3) **The Bible is full of stories of those that needed to get back on the right track; for example...**

- (a) Abraham feared for his life because Sarah was so beautiful, so he called her his sister instead of his wife.
- (b) Samson, though he possessed supernatural strength, kept letting his lust for Delilah get in the way of doing the Lord's work.
- (c) David, though he was known for having a heart for God, found his heart wandering so badly that he committed adultery . . . and in an attempted a cover it up, committed murder and tried to pretend that none of it happened.
- (d) And if we had time, I could give you many, many more examples.

4) **One of the best ways to get back on track with God is to do what Jack did and spend some time with Him in prayer.**

- (a) Today, we begin a summer series on Prayer.
- (b) We will explore the importance, meaning, and purpose of prayer.
- (c) During the majority of it we will be exploring the Prayer that Jesus used as an example on how to pray.
- (d) But today as introduction to this series we will just focus on prayer in general

5) **What is prayer and why do we need it?**

- (a) Even Jesus' disciples had trouble with this.

- (b) So, we are basing our lesson today on just one verse found in **Luke 11:1**; so, lets turn there in our Bibles and follow along as we read it.

B) *Sermon Prayer*

C) (The Hook)

- 1) **Ill. If you ever seen the movie "Cast Away" with Tom Hanks then you probably know who Wilson is.**
 - (a) The story goes that Hanks plays the part of Chuck Nolan, a fast paced FedEx executive that gets stranded when his plane goes down in the middle of the South Pacific.
 - (b) In trying to survive, he started a fire with a sharp stick and cuts his hand severely.
 - (c) In anger, he takes the Wilson volleyball and throws it as hard as he can.
 - (d) When it lands he sees his bloody hand has made an imprint which looks like a fiery head. With his finger he draws a face in the blood & and imaginary companion is born.
 - (e) He spends the rest of his time in solitude talking to his new friend.
- 2) **What you should also notice is that all through the film Tom Hank's character never prays to God.**
 - (a) He'll talk to the volleyball, but never to God.
 - (b) Now, you should ask yourself why you think he never did that.
 - (c) **But then you also have to ask yourself why people trust in all kinds of other things rather than God.**
 - (i) They will talk to their friends,
 - (ii) They will talk to Dr. Phil on national TV about the most intimate subjects;
 - (iii) They will talk to the dead through mediums;
 - (iv) They will talk to a therapist who likely has just as many problems as they do.
 - (v) But, will it comes to talking to Jesus; for many the answer is no.
- 3) **Just as we pointed out many of the saints listed in the Bible had to get back on track with God.**
 - (a) When we feel that God is not with us . . . who do you think it is that has moved?
 - (b) God is constant; but we can get lax and stop communicating with God in a meaningful way;
 - (c) That's we can get ourselves out of line with what God desires.

TS: **So as we begin our study this morning let us first focus on . . .**

II) Body: (Key Points)

A) Key Point #1: **The Purpose of Prayer**

- 1) **Why do people pray?**
 - (a) People's reasons for prayer are many . . .
 - (b) Perhaps, we can better understand the purpose of prayer if we look at the some of the reasons that people pray.
- 2) **Some pray to ask God's blessings and to thank God for what is provided. (we call these Prayers of Supplication- asking God to supply our needs)**
 - (a) This is the reason the pilgrims celebrated Thanksgiving.
 - (b) For the early settlers this was a big deal; enough food to last the harsh winters equaled a much greater chance for survival.
 - (c) We should remember to always thank God whenever He supplies our needs.
- 3) **Some pray for the needs of others (Intercessory Prayers on their behalf)**
 - (a) Praying for their healing health needs.
 - (b) Or one that all to often is overlooked praying for financial needs.
 - (c) I believe that God wants us to Pray for specific needs.
 - (d) If we are not specific in our requests how do we know when God answers a need?
- 4) **Some pray cafeteria prayers that can sometimes sound like praying to Santa.**
 - (a) God, I would like some of that . . .
 - (b) Please give me the job I want.

- (c) Or please help this girl or boy to like me.
 - (d) And I would like a big house or a new car . . .
 - (e) And let's not forget wealth, winning the lottery?
 - (f) **Is this how Jesus taught us to pray?**
- 5) **Some people pray like the Pharisees looking to gain the praise of others.**
 - (a) In **Matthew 6:5**, Jesus taught, "**And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites** (Speaking of the Pharisees), **for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.**" (NIV)
 - (b) In **Matthew 6:6**, instead Jesus rather told His disciples, "**But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.**" (NASB)
 - 6) **YOU SEE WE NEED TO GET ALONE WITH GOD.**
 - (a) God wants personal time with us.
 - (b) Away from distractions so we can speak and hear God in the quiet.
 - (c) One of the most special things a parent cherishes is spending quality time with their Children.
 - (d) Our Heavenly Father desires the same thing.
 - 7) **Some people pray to confess their wrong doings.**
 - (a) Kind of like Dennis the Mennis when he knelt to pray one night and began praying, "**Alright God, I am here to turn myself in.**"
 - (b) They come to ease their consciences by admitting what they did.
 - 8) **All of these have an element of prayer, but they don't really capture the true purpose of prayer. . . Prayer first of all is a gift from Jesus made possible by His atoning sacrifice on the Cross.**
 - (a) Before Jesus came to die on the cross, we needed a priest, an ambassador to carry our petitions to God.
 - (b) Even then, they had to offer sacrifices before God would be approached.
 - (c) **But now, when we have accepted Jesus' atoning sacrifice for us by asking Him to be our Lord . . .** we are made right with God and can boldly approach His throne of Grace with our own prayers.
 - (d) This is accomplished through the Holy Spirit which God sends to comfort and guide us.
 - 9) **THE PURPOSE FOR PRAYING IS FIRST AND FOREMOST TO COME NEARER TO GOD.**
 - (a) To find out what He is doing.
 - (b) To become a part of His plan.
 - (c) To pray according to His will.
 - 10) **To do this we must draw near to God by:**
 - (a) First, Humbling ourselves and acknowledging our place before the God of Creation.
 - (b) Second, we must have faith that God has the POWER to hear and answer our prayers even when it doesn't seem like God is listening.
 - (c) Third, we must trust that God has the right answers even when it is not the ones we think it should be.

TS: So our purpose in praying is to draw near to God through the Holy Spirit so we can be guided to ask for things that are according to God's will; next, we will look at . . .

B) Key Point #2: **The Power of Prayer**

- 1) In **Matthew 7:7-8** Jesus told His disciples "**Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened."** (NASB)
 - (a) These verses are often misinterpreted thinking Jesus is talking to unbelievers.
 - (b) We picture Jesus as standing at the door of our heart waiting to be let in.

- (c) But a careful reading of these verses in context reveals that Jesus was speaking to His disciples concerning God's expectation for prayer.
- (d) S.M. Zwemer stated, "*True prayer is God, the Holy Spirit, conversing with God the Father in the name of God the Son, and the believer's heart is the sanctuary where this interaction takes place.*"
- 2) **God desires that we continue to ask HIM for His guidance and believe that He will provide that which is needed to do His will.**
- (a) Jesus taught His disciple about the POWER of prayer as seen in **1 John 5:14-15**, "*This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 15 And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.*" (NASB)
- (b) In **James 5:13-16**, we are commanded to pray for one another, "*Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises. 14 Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; 15 and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. 16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.*" (NASB)
- (c) *A righteous person prays for the will of God and trusts in God's answer.*
- 3) **Prayers of Confession, when appropriate, involves the smallest circle possible for the sin committed.**
- (a) We are to pray for each other so that healing can take place.
- (b) Studies have proven that those who are prayed for do much better than those who are not.
- 4) **John said the prayers of a righteous man are POWERFUL and EFFECTIVE.**
- (a) In **Acts 11:5**, Peter had a vision while praying.
- (b) Peter was released from jail by supernatural means while others prayed for him in **Acts 12**.
- (c) Jesus said that the exercising of certain demons could only be done by fasting and prayer in **Mark 9:29**.
- (d) Jesus even raised Lazarus from the dead with a prayer in **John 11:41-42**

TS: Now that we have seen the Purpose of Prayer and the Power of Prayer, let's take a closer look at . . .

- C) Key Point #3: **The Priority of Prayer**
- 1) **Too often someone will describe some catastrophic event that has hit them and say, "All we can do now it pray."**
- (a) Those who pray this way only pray in a Crisis with these Dart prayers shot into heaven.
- (b) I use dart prayers all the time; but this is not my only or main focus for praying.
- (c) An example of this would be when I am talking with someone and I ask God to help me discern wisdom to help the situation.
- 2) **All too often people think of prayer as a last resort when they have run out of all other options.**
- (a) When we come to the point where we have done all we can do, we think now is the time to humble ourselves before God
- (b) And admit our complete and utter helplessness and ask God for help?
- (c) But Jesus says "*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*" (**Matthew 6:33**)
- (d) In other words our relationship with God should be our first priority; praying should come first so that we stay in tune with God's will before something happens.
- 3) **Sometimes I think that God waits for us to exhaust all our efforts.**
- (a) So we will then finally realize it is God who deserves the credit;

- (b) God answers the prayers and not because we will it so.
 (c) Someone once said that when we get out of the way, then God can act.
- 4) **Paul said in 1 Timothy 2:1, "I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people" (NIV) . . .**
 (a) Paul is telling his young protégé that the first priority is to pray.
 (b) Paul says that these prayers may be made not just for some . . . but for everyone!
- 5) **In the next verse, Paul tells Timothy to especially include the Kings and those in authority.**
 (a) That means we are to pray for our President, our Governor, and all other elected officials . . . and even the boss you don't like.
 (b) We are commanded to pray even if we didn't vote for them or like them.
 (c) Paul says that praying like this is GOOD and PLEASING to God.
- 6) **The real priority that God desires is that none should perish, 2 Peter 3:9 "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."**
 (a) This is the truth of the Gospel; that everyone will come to a saving knowledge of the truth.
 (b) What truth? That Jesus died so that we might live!
- 7) **I think it is impossible to PRAY for someone and remain angry and fight with them.**
 (a) This is what makes us different from the world.
 (b) This is a witness to the Power or Prayer.
 (c) We can do our part by praying and trusting God even though we don't always see the bigger picture.
 (d) And we do that when we are making Prayer a priority.

TS: So, we have seen the purpose for Prayer, and that there is Power in Prayer; but Prayer also needs to be a priority in our lives; so, to sum this up?

III) Conclusion (Life Application)

- A) **Prayer is important and we need to be talking to God and listening for His leading.**
 1) Prayer is a powerful and effective tool when we pray according to God's will.
 2) Prayer helps us to connect with the Father.
 3) Prayer humbles us to admit our place and need before God.
 4) The prayer of the righteous is the amplifier that turns up the power of God to work in our lives and helps us to grow in our faith.
 5) Certainly, then it needs to be a priority in our lives.
- B) **Prayer also plays an important role in our growth and development as Christians, as we are becoming new creations.**
 1) Prayer plays an important role in our outreach with the truth of the gospel message.
 2) It helps to prepare us and to prepare those with whom we will come in contact.
 3) Prayer should not be our last resort; but our first priority.
 4) Going without prayer is like a builder going without blueprints.
 5) We must pray for each other and in this way we will be showing God's love and God's formula for success.

C) **In the coming weeks we will get look at every aspect of what Jesus taught His disciples in teaching them to pray in hopes that we will learn how better to pray.**

IV) Invitation: **Let us Pray!**

V) **Bibliography**

¹ This illustration was taken from a message entitled **I Mean It!** by Paul Decker, Denomination: Baptist m, Date Added to SC.com: September 2002, Audience: General Adults (31 - 49)