

GOOD AND BEAUTIFUL GOD SERMON SERIES DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR SMALL GROUPS

19 & 20 JUNE 2021

THE GOOD AND TRUSTWORTHY FATHER

Scripture: Luke 11:1-13

The recommended time allocation for your group meeting is:

If you meet weekly :

- Worship through song (10 mins)
- Discussion - 1 session worth of core questions (40 mins)
- Discussion - 1 session worth of additional questions (30 mins)
- Sharing, Prayer, Fellowship (30 mins)

If you meet fortnightly :

- Worship through song (10 mins)
- Discussion - 2 sessions' worth of core questions (60 mins)
- Optional - additional questions (10 mins)
- Sharing, Prayer, Fellowship (30 mins)

Luke 11:1-13 Passage breakdown

Context	
Relationships as Jesus' disciples and children of God	<p>From Luke 10:25, the Bible records Jesus' teachings about how his disciples should exercise different relationships:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship to neighbours: Lk. 10:25-37 - compassion and mercy • Relationship to Jesus: Lk. 10:38-42 - humble undistracted attention to Jesus • Relationship to God the Father: Lk. 11:1-13
Topic of prayer elsewhere in Luke's gospel	<p>Luke 3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28; cf. 22:32, 40-44; 23:46</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus received the Holy Spirit from the Father while he was praying • Jesus frequently withdrew to pray by himself • The disciples had taken such notice of Jesus' persistent prayer life that they asked him to teach them how to pray
Observation	
vv.1-4	<p>Jesus teaches the disciples to pray, by giving an example</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence: the LORD's name is divine and to be revered • Provision: God provides for us what we need

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pardon: God forgives; we should forgive those who sin against us ● Protection: God can lead us away from temptation
vv.5-8	Jesus teaches through parables: our prayer life should be boldly persistent
vv.9-13	<p>Jesus teaches through examples from daily life: prayer reveals God's faithfulness and generosity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If earthly fathers (usually) give good/excellent gifts to their children, God's gift is exceedingly good ● We should ask God for the gift of his Holy Spirit

Core Questions for Discussion

(If your group meets fortnightly, combine Core Questions of two sessions and choose one Further Question from either session.)

1. Jesus' faithful and persistent prayer life reflects the trust He has in God the Father. What aspects of God's trustworthy character can we recognize in the Lord's prayer (vv.2-4)?

- The eternally **present** LORD is truly worthy of our praise: His Name is to be hallowed (Gr. *hagiasthētō*, literally, "to sanctify") or to be revered and honoured as divine, creator and King of the universe. As children of our heavenly Father, we see the work of His mighty hands in all of creation. As Christ's disciples today, we recognise the presence of God's inaugurated Kingdom, and trust in the assured hope of His Kingdom coming at the "fullness of time, to unite all things in (Christ the Son), things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph. 1:10).
- God the Father truly **provides** for our needs: as God's children, we trust in His faithful and continued provision and blessing *this day* (Matt. 6:11) and *each day* (Lk. 11:3). This also harkens back to God's provision of manna to the Israelites in the wilderness (Ex. 16:4). The Father faithfully sustains us each day. His children are invited to trust and obey Him, just as Christ His Son, the true bread of life (Jn. 6:25), did.
- God alone **pardons** and forgives our sins: God keeps "steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin" (Ex. 34:7a). In praying for God's continued forgiveness of our sins, we recognise our own sinful human nature because of the Fall. In placing faith in God's provision of His Son as the one atoning sacrifice for our sins (1 Jn. 2:2), His children recognise continued repentance and forgiveness that is a mark of remaining in fellowship with God (1 Jn. 1:5-10). Because the Father has forgiven us in Christ, we *can* forgive our debtors.
- Though God allows us to go through many temptations - Gr. *peirasmon* or trials in life, God alone **protects** us as His children to be led through and away from them by faith;

turning to and remaining in Christ Jesus, the Good Shepherd. This again reminds Jesus' disciples of God leading the Israelites through the forty years in the wilderness. As the New Adam and New Israel, Jesus placed His whole trust in his Father when God's Spirit led Him into the wilderness to be tried and tempted by the devil (Lk. 4:1-13).

- The characteristics and pattern of the Lord's Prayer (praise, provision, pardon and protection) were not new or radically different from the prayers found in the Old Testament (OT) scriptures (e.g. Psalms, prayers of Daniel, Nehemiah and other OT characters). This pattern is also seen in the New Testament, especially in Paul's letters.
- The prayer Jesus taught his disciples reminds us of who our heavenly Father is; The God of the Bible is our trustworthy Father and the covenant God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

"Israel is my son, my firstborn; let my people go, that they may serve me" (Exod. 4:22-23); "When Israel was a child I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son" (Hos. 11:1). Calling God "Father" not only evokes all kinds of associations of family life and intimacy; more importantly, it speaks to all subsequent generations of God as the God of the Exodus, the God who rescues Israel precisely because Israel is God's firstborn son. The title Father says as much about Israel, and about the events through which God will liberate Israel, as it does about God. Jesus' own sense of vocation, that of accomplishing the New Exodus, was marked principally by his awareness of God as Father. Now in the Lord's Prayer he invites his followers to consider themselves Exodus people.

- N.T. Wright, *The Lord's Prayer as a Paradigm of Christian Prayer*

God's covenant relationship with Israel as their Father demonstrates His steadfast loyalty to His children, particularly in the story of the Exodus from Egypt. Because of faith in Christ, Jesus' work on the cross marks a New Exodus for all who are now called God's children. This New Exodus is departure and deliverance from fallen humanity's slavery to sin and death.

- Exodus 2:23-25: having heard the cries and prayers of His children the Israelites in slavery, God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and put His plan into action by calling a deliverer, Moses.
- The plague of death was God's final plague He brought over Pharaoh and Egypt, demonstrating His power over life and death (and all of Egypt's gods). God provided the Passover sacrifice to protect the Israelites, by passing over the doors marked with the lamb's blood.
- In Christ Jesus, God provides the true Passover Lamb; the bread and wine of the Passover meal now symbolise Jesus' body and blood on the cross. The cross on which Jesus died, covered in His blood, points to the door of a New Exodus in Christ.

Jesus is also the true Deliverer, through whom we experience forgiveness and freedom from sin.

- The New Exodus also marks New Birth; God's Fatherly love for us is seen in how God is now able to call us His children because of the New Birth we have in Jesus Christ His Son (1 Jn. 2:28-3:10).

2. Trusting His Father's will and purpose is another key characteristic in how Jesus prayed. The Lord's prayer in Matthew's Gospel (Matt. 6:9-13) includes the clause "your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven".

2A. What do passages like Philippians 2:6-11 and Isaiah 53:1-12 reveal about the Father's will, His trustworthy salvation plan for humanity?

- Ph. 2:6-11 - Though Jesus is the Father's eternal Son and fully God, He was born fully human, taking the form of a servant. Isaiah 53 prophesied God's salvation plan in providing a suffering servant, who though sinless would bear the sin of all humanity and resulting affliction.
- In Ph. 2:6-11, Paul recognised Jesus as the Messiah and God's suffering servant. As prophesied, God the Father's power and glory is revealed in the most unexpected manner; without any majestic form or appearance, a suffering servant, despised and rejected by others.
- Isa. 53:10 - although Jesus' suffering seems irrational, we see that this is entirely the will and plan of the LORD; Jesus himself is our one true sin offering, through him the Father's purpose is accomplished.

2B. In Luke 22:39-46 Jesus prays for His Father's will to be done, not His own, even if it meant receiving God's cup. How does the prayer on the Mt. of Olives reveal Jesus' trust in His Father?

What does God's cup refer to here? (Cross references to Psalm 75:8-9 & Isaiah 51:17-22)

Although this may seem to refer to the suffering he was about to endure during his trial, flogging and crucifixion, the "cup" more accurately points to "the cup of God's wrath" that was to be poured on Jesus, as He bore all of fallen humanity's inequity, transgression and sin on himself.

- In Jesus' prayer (Luke 22:39-46), we see Jesus' plea for his Father to remove His cup of wrath and affliction from him, but also true faith, obedience and submission to His Father's will and plan to deliver fallen humanity.
- On the Mt. of Olives, Jesus the Son trusted his Father's salvation plan, even as he entered into his suffering on our behalf; Jesus the sinless servant was counted among rebellious humanity, but intervened on our behalf to bear our sins on the cross.

3. Jesus made it a point to illustrate through a parable that our prayers should be bold and persistent. From vv.5-8, what basis does Jesus give for such confidence in prayer? In what circumstances do you find it difficult to be bold or persistent in prayer? How will you pray differently after studying this Scripture passage?

- As a group, look at different English Bible versions of Luke 11:8.
 - Your group will notice that a range of translations are used, describing one's "persistence" (NRSV, NKJV), "impudence" (ESV), "shamelessness" (NASB), "shameless audacity" (NIV), or "shameless persistence" (NLT).
 - This is because the Greek word *anaideia* occurs only here in the New Testament, and its meaning in other Greek literature has the connotation of shamelessness, i.e. boldness or audacity.
 - Thus, various translations bring in both ideas of boldness and persistence in this parable.
- This parable therefore encourages boldness in prayer before a trustworthy Father. For "unlike the neighbor who is disturbed in the night and perhaps responds only grudgingly, God is ready and waiting to respond to us." - Darrell Bock, *Luke*, IVP New Testament Commentary
- Unanswered prayers do not mean that our heavenly Father does not listen to or understand us (the Israelites spent 430 years in Egypt before the Exodus).
- Just as God heard the prayers and cries of the Israelites in Egypt who placed their trust in Him, the act of bold and persistent prayer reflects our trust in the LORD.
- God the Father often answers our prayers graciously in ways we can barely fathom in human terms.
- As imperfect humans, unanswered prayers are a reminder that our heavenly Father who loves His children is also sovereign over all things. Some of our prayers, though earnest and sincere, may therefore not be according to God's will for us. Recalling Q2, praying for our Father's trustworthy will to be done and not our own is the perspective His children should have when praying.

- Bold persistence in prayer, directed to a trustworthy heavenly Father, helps us to be aware and confident of *what* we should be praying for, according to His will.
- Do take time for group members to reflect and share on the final part of the question:
How will you pray differently after studying this Scripture passage?

4. Recall any of the previous BRMC series about who the Holy Spirit is; what His role and relationship within the Trinity is, and his role working in us today, both corporately as the church and as individual disciples of Christ. With this in mind, why is the Father's gift of the Holy Spirit such an important topic of prayer for Jesus in vv.9-13?

- The Holy Spirit is God's personal presence, eternally present in a loving relationship with the Father and the Son.
- The Holy Spirit is life giving: God breathed his Spirit-breath (Heb. ruach) into Adam.
- In the OT, God anoints specific prophets/judges/kings with His Spirit, empowering them to accomplish God's will. This foreshadows the coming Messiah.
- The start of Jesus' gospel ministry is marked by the anointing of the Holy Spirit during His baptism; all that Jesus accomplished in His Father's will was in the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Before his crucifixion, Jesus promised the Father giving "another advocate" who is the Spirit of truth to His disciples who remain in faith and obedience to Him.
- At his ascension, Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit will empower His disciples to be his witnesses to the whole world.
- Until this point, the Holy Spirit did not yet abide in every believer; the indwelling of the Holy Spirit was an extraordinary gift that Jesus' disciples could ask for. As Christ's disciples today, the Holy Spirit is still an unfathomable gift we receive by faith in Jesus from our heavenly Father.
- In Acts, on the day of Pentecost, the promised Holy Spirit rested on and filled Jesus' disciples, inaugurating the church and her gospel ministry.
- In summary, we can place our faith and trust in God who has given us His very own Holy Spirit who empowers us to continue Christ's gospel ministry.

Further Questions for Discussion

(Optional question for discussion if time permits. Do allocate adequate time for prayer and fellowship.)

5. Why does Luke's record of the Lord's prayer omit two sub-clauses that are included in Matthew's Gospel (Matt 6:10b "your will be done..." and Matt 6:13 "but deliver us from the evil one")?

- *"Luke's record of Jesus' teaching the Lord's Prayer differs significantly enough from Matthew's account that we can safely conclude that **Jesus gave similar teaching on separate occasions**". - [Expository Notes of Dr. Thomas Constable](#) (emphasis added)*
- The setting of Matthew's and Luke's record of the Lord's prayer are different; within the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew, and while teaching his disciples on a separate occasion in Luke. Although the target audience of Matthew's and Luke's Gospels differ (Matthew's primarily Jewish audience vs. Luke's likely Hellenistic and urban audience), neither record is in contradiction to the other.
- The purpose of this question isn't to highlight theological or practical differences in how or what to pray for. The petitions included in Matthew's Gospel supplement the immediately preceding petitions and are seen as sub-clauses;
 - "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" follows "may your kingdom come". This reminds God's children of our current place in a fallen world to submit to His will and purpose. These petitions also express the eternal hope of the Kingdom to come when Christ returns in glory.
 - "But deliver us from the evil one" follows "lead us not into temptation". Just as the Israelites struggled to recognise the LORD as their deliverer in their testing in the wilderness, Jesus' disciples are also reminded that our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, authorities and powers over the present darkness - spiritual forces of evil (Eph 6:12).

6. Suggested Spiritual Workout: Counting our Blessings

(For each session in this sermon series, a spiritual workout will be suggested for you to exercise on your own or together as a group. We encourage you to try this spiritual exercise, then share at your next small group meeting how it has impacted you.)

How have we been recognising God’s love and provision for us in our lives? Recall Paul’s opening doxology and prayer in his letter to the Ephesians (Eph 1:3-14); how have you been encouraged knowing that God the Father has already “blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places”?

(The following is extracted from *The Good and Beautiful God*, by James Bryan Smith)

Most of us are accustomed to waking up and thinking about our problems. This exercise will help us shift our focus away from the few things that are wrong to the many things that are beautiful and wonderful.

- Make a list of all of the things God has blessed you with, all of the things that make life wonderful.
- Pay attention to the details of your life. Look for the hidden things. Take notice of all of those wonderful things you easily overlook.
- Start small: try to come up with a list of ten things God has blessed you with. It can include things like your loved ones, material provision or opportunities you have been given. It can also include things in the created world: the sun, the stars, the mountains and so forth. Or you might want to include things you love, like coffee or ice cream!
- Finally, also include things that God has done for you. Each day God is at work providing for us, even though we cannot always see it.
- Keep adding to your list each day. Strive to make a list of fifty things.
- Then keep going! See if you can come up with one hundred blessings, things you are thankful for, this week.

7. Prayer Suggestions

Notice that Jesus taught the disciples that praising God should be at the forefront of our prayers. Also note that Jesus taught to pray for “us” corporately rather than an individual “me”.

Would you consider praying for the following:

- In response to our trustworthy heavenly Father’s will and purpose for us as His children, pray that we are able to praise our Father and ask for His provision, pardon and protection, just as Jesus did.
- For God’s love and provision over others in your family, community and wider society.