

Let's go to Luke 11. Now, prayer is one of the most beautiful/frustrating and perplexing things imaginable. Like I think we all would have one of those stories of this moment where something was occurring or we wanted this thing or we didn't want this thing, and we prayed and we prayed and we prayed and we through it out there. And God came in like a knight in shining armor and rescued us in our dilemma. And it stirred up our hearts and passion towards Him, and we got all excited about Him. In fact, we put out on the church sign, "God answers knee-mail." And we really bought into, "God answers these things, He does these things, He hears us. Yea God!" Some of us have those stories. And then there's this darker side to prayer that we don't talk about it a whole lot. I don't know that I've ever heard a testimony on the darker side. Now, I have heard it over drinks and lamentations at Starbucks and dinner, but I've never heard it on the stage, that's for sure. Like there are these moments and there are these things occurring and we are just laying ourselves out to God. I mean, we are laying it out as bare as we can get. And in our finite mind, it's got to go the way we're paying. "I mean, 'surely God wants my marriage reconciled, surely God wants my child not to be sick, surely wants me to get a job so I can move out of my mom's house. Surely God wants that and He's going to answer. He wants my business to be held together. Because if my business does well, then that give me capital, and if I've got capital, I can solve this FloMo thing.'" And then it goes silent or the answer is unbelievably perplexing. And I've rarely heard somebody from the stage acknowledge, "I prayed my guts out, and it got worse...I prayed my guts out and knew there was not way it could get any uglier, but as soon as I said 'Amen,' the phone rang and it got uglier." But this happens, doesn't it? I think everybody in this room, if you would be honest, had times where you were praying and at times felt like you were crazy.

So let's chat here a little bit. The book of Luke is going to do more with Jesus' prayer life than any other book in the Bible. In fact, there are nine prayers in Luke. Seven of those nine are only found in the book of Luke. They're not found in any other gospel. So you can see he treats Jesus' prayer life as one of the center pieces of how Jesus lives on earth. So I think there are some things we can learn if we dig in to one of these prayers. If we dig in to how Jesus is praying and how He teaches us to pray, I think we might be able to get some answers here on what's going on, at a macro level as well as a micro level. So let's look at Luke 11. We'll pick it up at verse 1. "Now Jesus was praying in a certain place..." This is always happening, right? Jesus makes a consistent, constant habit of withdrawing. And sometimes it doesn't even say He's praying, but He's withdrawing to an isolated place to be by Himself. Jesus values those quiet moments of silence where no one else is around and it can just be Him and God and Him-God and the Holy Spirit just in one place. Jesus makes a habit of quieting things down, getting alone and in this case, He has withdrawn to pray. The disciples are constantly watching Him pray. Out loud, withdrawing before He does certain acts, this is something that He's constantly doing. So, the disciples want some help because apparently they've got some pretty weak prayer lives. "Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.'" There are two ways that I know of on a scale to teach. One is a systematic building approach. Take language for instance. You go, "Here is the alphabet." And then they learn the alphabet. "Here's when you put certain letters together they form words. Here are small words. Here are bigger words. Now here are the functions of those words, nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs. Here's how they function. Here's a sentence. Here's sentence structure. Here's how you build a paragraph. Here's how you build multiple paragraphs. Here's how you put together a chapter." And that's how you teach language, systematically, slowly, one piece at a time. But then there's another way to learn language, and that's just to take someone and drop them somewhere. I see a couple of our China team in there, and they've got a hearty "amen" to this one. So you've got the systematic approach and then you've got the "Good luck, I hope you don't die" approach. "I hope you can figure out how to eat. I hope you can figure out how to say hello. I hope you can figure out

how to get back to your apartment.” And then you just bail on them. We call that “sink or swim.” And your hope is that you can unpack the whole thing and then they can backtrack and pick up the rest as they get the whole picture.

Now, Jesus is not about to go systematic here. He is going to take this request, teach us how to pray. He’s not going to start with basic prayers, He’s not going to start with, “Hey, let’s try this,” He’s not going to start, “Let’s do supplication and supplication leads into…” He’s not going to do that. He’s going to throw out big, varsity, pinnacle, mature prayer, and He’s going to say, “You pray like that.” So let’s look at it. “And he said to them, “When you pray…”” The Greek word used here is “whenever.” So whenever you pray, whenever you close your eyes, whenever you’re in your car, whenever you’re on your knees, whenever you’re just walking through the store, whenever ever you pray, if there is a time that you are praying, whenever a prayer occurs, if you’re mature, it looks like this. “Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.” I want to stop there, backtrack and show you why this is pinnacle type prayer. This is mature, this is varsity. This is high-level praying. He starts out like this, “Whenever you pray, anytime you pray, here’s what it looks like. “Our Father, hallowed be Thy name. Great is Your name. Let Your name, let Your renown, let Your reputation, let who You are be seen and magnified and glorified and exalted and loved and wondered about and written about and pursued.” So whenever you pray, it’s God-centered. Whatever you’re praying about, no matter what it is, the cry of our heart is not for a certain thing but in that certain thing God be magnified. So He’s doing two things in this verse. Both are difficult, both are profound. The first thing He’s saying is, “Hey, don’t forget who the center focal thing is in the universe. God. God is unraveling this thing. God is telling this story. God is working all things to His glory, to His name, to His renown. Join God in what He is doing. ‘Our Father, hallowed be Your name.’” If you’ll remember from other gospels, “Your kingdom come, Your will be done.” And then He is exposing the idolatry that exists in all of us. He’s saying here that if you’ve got this thing, whatever this thing is, and it’s your ultimate, it’s your real goal, if you’re pleading and pleading with Jesus to accomplish this thing for you instead of saying “Your will be done, Your name be magnified, Your name be seen as great, Your name be worshiped,” but we go, “I want this, I deserve this, I should get this, I want it to play out this way,” then you’ve got in your heart idolatry. In the end, what we want is not the name and renown of Christ to be exalted, we want what we want. And we’re using Jesus as a means to get that. He’s exposing both of those things with one quick “Here’s how you pray whenever you pray. ‘Hallowed be Your name.’”

Now He’s not going to leave this line of thinking in this prayer, ever. Let me show you what I mean. He says, “Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread…” Now don’t read this out of context. Don’t go, “One…two…three…four.” Because that’s not what’s happening in the prayer. He says, “Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come.” So we’re to say, “Glorify Your name in my circumstances today. Let Yourself be seen great, mighty, powerful, almighty.” And then He’s going to say, “Give me everything I need today to see You hallowed. Give me today’s portion, give me today’s bread, no more or less than that, so that I might have the strength, mercy, energy, grace and wits to hallow Your name in every area of my life today. So at home, at work, at play, in the life of my mind, in the energies of my heart, give me today my daily bread so that I might hallow Your name.” The prayer is still about God. Let me read to you Proverbs 30:7-9. “Two things I ask of you, O LORD; do not refuse me before I die: Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, ‘Who is the LORD?’ Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God.” His concern is the name and renown of God on both ends of the spectrum. “Don’t make me wealthy. If You make me too wealthy, I’ll go, ‘Who’s God. I don’t need God.’ But don’t make me too poor, because if You make me too poor, I’m going to steal some stuff.” This is God-centered. His concern is the name and renown of God, not his circumstances. He goes, “Listen, I know my heart, God. Give me today, just what I need today. Don’t give me more, don’t give me less. I have a wicked heart.” And I have found that the majority of men and women spend a bulk of their energy on fantasy. It is statistically accurate to unpack for you that if you are miserable and in debt making \$50k a year, you will be miserable and eventually in debt at \$50 million a year. Because the zeros have changed, but the you hasn’t. And I think you can

apply this to everything. I think you can apply this to your marriage. Some of you guys, because marriage is difficult for you, you have this picture in your mind that there's this other woman that's not going to be as difficult when the chances are that part of the reason your marriage is miserable is you. It could be that you being in your marriage has made your marriage difficult. And if you'll go back to Genesis 3, God commands the man, "Cultivate all things." And when sin enters into the world, God tells the man, "All that you were meant to cultivate will war against you. There isn't anything but fixer-uppers, man. So, "Give me today what I need to glorify You, to exalt you."

Let's keep going. "Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us." There's a couple of things I want to point out here. I think that some of us really struggle with prayer because when the lights are out and we have a chance to be honest with ourselves, we're scoundrels and we know it. I think that's why we struggle. We think that if we get near God, He might just destroy us or He'll point out some things we'd just rather He didn't point out. Like I love Mike Luna's testimony where he says, "He just loves me too much to let me stay where I am." I'm telling you, if you invite Christ in, it's just this haunting thing. You're not going to be able to get Him out. You're going to try to take things back, and He's like, "It's a blood covenant. It doesn't work that way." He's just going to haunt you and haunt you and haunt you. Which is why mediocre, pedestrian Christianity is a nightmare. Because you get none of the joy of the gospel, but you don't get to enjoy blatant sinfulness for the season before it destroys you either. It's just absolutely miserable. The good news is there will be plenty of people to blame for that misery. So Jesus is acknowledging here that you're going to come to Him as a sinner. Praise God for that. This isn't, "When you pray, pray like this..." with no mention of brokenness, no mention of short circuits within our spirit, no mention of the fact that we're not there yet. Jesus is acknowledging that. "When you pray, pray this way: 'Forgive me my sins.'" But then He's acknowledging that when grace has taken root in the person's heart, they become able to extend grace. "As we forgive." There is an immense trust in God as God for those who are able to forgive. Because if God's not God, you've got to handle it. But if He is God, you don't have to handle it. And I don't mean, "Dear Jesus, kill them. There, I've given that to the Lord." That's not what's occurred here. "Forgive me as I have extended grace, mercy and forgiveness." There's few things more miserable than a human being who expects everyone to extend them grace and mercy but refuses to give it to anyone else. And when I say miserable, I'm not just talking about for the rest of us, I'm talking about for them. And then look at this last piece. "And lead us not into temptation." This is still about Jesus. Here's what He's saying, "Help me." That's all that is. If you're like, "Oh, the Bible confuses me." Just write out to the side, "Help me. Help me. Help me." He's acknowledging that even the righteous man is tempted. This is just wrought with good news. Yes, sinners can still approach, and men and women who are still drawn to things that are unrighteous are not to that place where they have gotten victory over those things can still come to Him and say, "Help, help, help. Lead me not into temptation. Protect me, guide me, cover me."

This is a beautiful prayer. And it's God-centered. God, God, God, God. And you see examples of this all over the place. Is this not Christ in the garden? "I don't want it to go down like this. If there's another way, I want the other way. But this isn't about Me. It's about You. Your will be done." This is what Paul does in Acts 20. "I'm headed to Jerusalem, and in every town, every city, there are warnings given to me that suffering, imprisonment and death await me. So will you help me with my battle? I don't want to do this, but this is what God has for me. The Spirit has testified to me that I go. It's not my will, it's His will." This is not, "Give me a million dollars," this is not so many of those really trite prayers that fill most of our minds.

Now, He's going to follow this up with an illustration that seems really strange outside of the context of the rest of this passage. You have to see this passage from one point of view, not another, or it gets goofy. "And he said to them, "Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything'? I tell you, though he will not get

up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs." So here's the story. A friend shows up at your house at midnight. He's got no food, he's got big time visitors who have just shown up, there's no Wal-Mart, he's banging on your door, but for whatever reason the whole crew is in your bedroom. You just got everybody to sleep, it's a long day tomorrow, the rooster's going off at like 5:00AM, and you're not even opening the door. You're like, "Ray, what are you doing at my house?" And Ray's like, "Well, I have some friends at my house and I need some bread." And you're like, "No, if I get up and start preparing bread, I'm going to wake up everybody in this house, tomorrow will be a nightmare. So, no." But what does Ray do? Knock, knock, knock. "I'm not leaving. Give me that bread." And he just knocks and knocks and knocks. And the point of the story is this. He might not give you the bread because he likes you, but he'll give you the bread to get you off his porch at midnight. Now here's why it's such an interesting parable. If you read it from the side of the guy who's in bed, it does not make God gracious and loving, does it? "Ugh! Here. Quit asking me stuff." It makes Him look harsh. But we're going to find out in the next verse that He's telling the story not that you would see it from the point of view of the man in bed but rather that you would see it as the man searching for the bread. You've got to see it that way. If you see it that way, everything lines up correctly. "And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." So He didn't say, "If you just get up and give it to him the first time, you can go right back to bed." No, the point of the story rolls from the guy who's knocking. He says the same thing again in verse 10. "For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened."

So here's what I want to do. I want to just take these three ideas that He's unpacking, teaching us how to pray. He's going to throw three things out there. Persistently ask. Persistently ask that the name of God be hallowed in every area of your life. Persistently ask. Now that's the easy part. And here's where some of us fall off the rails. Ask and seek. Not only do we persistently ask, but we persistently seek, put action to our prayer. So we're persistently asking, persistently seeking and then persistently knocking, knocking on the door again and again and again. So let me just point out a few breakdowns in regards to the power of prayer and prayer in our lives. One of the first breakdowns is persistently asking for things that have nothing to do with the name and renown of Christ, selfishly asking, revealing your heart as idolatrous when you don't care what the will of God is, this is what you want. No concern for the Lord, no concern for what He wants, no concern for His plan; it's what I want. With my limited view, with what I know, I want what I want. That's the first problem. Or there's just complete non-prayer outside of anything but tragedy. But I think most of us get the ask part. But here's where I've seen as a pastor this just derail over and over again. Ask, but then seek. Let me tell you why I think some of you are perpetually stuck in the same cycles over and over again. You will say, "Lord, take this from me. I hate this about me. Please do something here. . . . It's still here, Lord. Please take this from me." Let me give you some solid examples. Some of you know you have a short circuit when it comes to relationships. You destroy every relationship that you get in, so you just keep asking the Lord to change your heart, but you do nothing, counseling, Recovery, take any kind of step to see that through. Some of you are in very difficult marriages and right now, you're in that place where you're like, "Please Jesus, please heal my marriage. Please work in my marriage." But you're just expecting some kind of marriage fairy to show up while both of you are sleeping and the next morning you wake up going, "I love you. Walk with me to the kitchen." You'll skip into the kitchen, drink your coffee together and all will be well. Normally it's the husband. Normally you've got wives going, "Something's wrong. Let's get help." And the husbands are going, "No, I know something's wrong, but we'll do it." You'll do what? Crash the thing into the ground? If your wisdom has gotten you into a jam, your wisdom is not going to get you out of the jam it got you into. "Well, my best laid plans have really blown my marriage to kingdom come. I'll get us out of it." I'm poking fun because I hope you'll hear me. Go to counseling; there isn't any shame in that. Go to Recovery; there's no shame in that. It's such a weird animal when guys would rather hide the fact that marriage is difficult than to move and get help for it because they might be embarrassed about that. Divorce is more embarrassing. Persistently ask, persistently seek and persistently knock. So we're asking and we're moving and we keep asking and we keep asking and we keep asking because we believe that He can.

Some of my favorite stories are stories of long suffering. Like I love the fact that God shows up to Abraham and Sarah and goes, "You are going to have a son." And they're like, "Look, we are old. I mean, we're not mid-life, we're old." And the angel is like, "No, you're going to have a son." And then a decade goes by and there's no son. Another three years goes by with still not son. So they were like, "Look, we're as good as dead as it is. We can't have no baby." And then fifteen years later there's still no baby. But God's a God of His word, so eventually there's a son. Ask and it will be given to you. Hallowed by Thy name. Seek and it will be given to you. Hallowed be Thy name. Knock and knock and knock. There's a sense of desperation there. And if there's one major frustration that kind of fuels and spills out in you a bit, it's the real lack of desperation in people's hearts and minds when it comes to spiritual things. You completely lack desperation until the whole thing's in flames.

Let's finish this thing out. He's going to put it in the context that will help us see His love, see His mercy and understand why sometimes the answer is "no." "What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" A loving father would never give to his son or daughter something that would harm them or pervert them. They will say no even as the child pouts and gets angry and thinks the father's a moron. And we will do all that we can to try to explain to them why this is harmful. At least we all start out trying to explain in the beginning, and by the time that they're seven you're just beat down so it's just "No!" But I think it starts out trying to explain, "Here's why...If you do this, then this will happen... If I let this go on, this could be the end." It starts by us voicing our concern. It starts by us reminding them of how deep our love is, how much we want them to experience joy, how much we prefer their laughter to their tears, our passion for them and their lives and their hearts the fullness of all things. But the majority of time, it falls on deaf ears. But only the wicked father gives in to such things. Only the wicked father knows in ends in destruction but says, "Oh, don't play in the street. I know, shame on me. I know that broke your heart. Go play in the street." Only the wicked father does that. The good father always gives to his sons and his daughters what he sees and he knows with the vision he's been given will bring value and depth and meaning in life for the child. So God who is infinite in knowledge will at times, as you plead for health, for life, for the removal of pain, for closure, will say "No." It's not because He's angry with you. And it's not because you've done something wrong. And it's not because when you were in college you did that thing that weekend and He will not let you forget it. It's because He loves you and He can see what you can't see. The bottom line in here today, as we've unpacked this text, the question is: Do you trust Him? Do you trust Him as the loving Father? Because what's going to come out is whether you do or don't. What's going to come out in your prayer life, in your emotions when it comes to the God of the universe is: Do you really trust and believe He's good, that He's the good Father? I'm not pretending for a moment that you've got to understand it. I would never put that weight on you. I don't think the Scriptures put that weight on you. I've been in plenty of rooms where there is no understanding to be had, none; and years later there's no understanding. I'm not saying you have to understand, I'm saying you have to trust that He's good, that He could have stopped it or started it if He willed. But for some reason in His providence, in His beautiful, glorious, overflowing providence, if He did, it would hurt, wound or derail Him bringing all things new. And there will be this day where it makes sense, probably not while we're breathing this oxygen, but there will be a day where all of it makes sense.

So let me ask you just a couple of questions. What are the motives behind what you're asking for? Because I think some of us need to confess tonight that we're idolaters, that we have no real interest in Jesus or God or Him hallowed or glorified or magnified in our life; we've just got this thing that we want. We've got this thing that we want, and what happens to His name is of no consideration. He is to us some sort of genie or servant given to us to bring about what we want. And where He doesn't, we'll shake our fist at Him. What is the motive behind what you're asking? And please be careful not to dress it up in religion. "Oh no no no, Matt. If God gives me this, I'll be able to do this." No, you would do this now if you were going to. So what's the motive behind what you're asking for? Do you need to repent of idolatry

of having this thing that you don't just want to lay at the feet of Christ and say, "Okay, it's Yours." Are you seeking? Are you doing anything about your prayers? Are you seeking help where you need it? Are you being honest with anyone? Do you need to confess laziness? Do you need to confess that you haven't moved at all? Are you being persistent? And what I mean by that is do you need to confess that, when all is said and done, you don't really believe God can do what He says He can do? Do you need to confess and go, "Man, I just have these real doubts about whether or not You'll pull this off for my good and Your glory. I have no doubts about You pulling this off for Your glory. I have major doubts about my good in Your glory." These are evasive questions I know. What's the real motive behind what you're seeking? Are you putting feet to your payers at all? What movement needs to take place in your life? Are you desperate enough to knock and knock and knock and knock? At the end of the day, more than you need your marriage fixed, more than you need your wayward child home, what you need more than anything is to know personally and see the might and power of Christ in His cross. If you can see that, then there's hope for the rest of it. The gospel is not if you love Jesus, then you get everything you want. The gospel is you'll get Jesus and He'll be enough no matter what.

Let's pray. "Father, I thank You for our time together tonight. I pray that we would be read by the word, that You would expose in us idolatry, that You would expose in us spiritual laziness, that You would expose in us doubts of Your divine ability. I pray that this room might be rich tonight in repentance and that steps might be taken. Help us. It's for Your beautiful name. Amen."

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