

“One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples” *Luke 11:1*

We pray for God’s blessing upon the needs in His kingdom, in this world, and our personal needs. If there ever was need for prayer, it is today. The needs are overwhelming; yet, the prayers are few. We live in prayer-less times.

The One who prayed most is the Lord Jesus Christ. But in a sense, He needed it the least because He is God. He does not need to pray for the fulfillment of His personal needs. And yet, while on earth, our Lord subjected Himself by performing the duties of men. No one ever prayed like He! Over twenty times he mentions that our Savior prayed or taught others about prayer. The Gospel of Luke could be called the Gospel of prayer.

The request “teach us to pray” is a prayer in itself: it is a prayer for a prayer. Those who have begun to truly pray will ask the Lord to teach them to pray. The occasion of every true prayer is a confession of our inability to pray. Praying is not as easy as it seems. Everyone who is earnest about it will feel the need for guidance. Every sincere believer will feel his inadequacy. Prayer is a holy exercise that we never master; it is not a technique we can learn. There is no such thing as “five easy steps to prayer.” An eighty-year-old Christian, seasoned by a godly walk, will feel as much the need for divine instruction as an eighteen-year old young person.

There is a precedent for the disciple’s request. John the Baptist taught his disciples to pray, although there are no recorded prayers of him. Why did he teach his disciples to pray? One reason is that spiritual life was at a low at this time. The prayers of the Pharisees and scribes are notorious for their self-exaltation and self-complacency. The Lord detests such prayers. John had to teach his disciples how to pray again. This is one reason. Another reason may be because a new age is dawning. John was the forerunner of the great King, the promised Messiah. A new age requires a new song and new prayers.

Instead of instructing the disciples in the principles of prayer, Jesus simply gives them a prayer. He puts the words in their mouths, so to speak. He teaches them the Lord’s Prayer. He had done so on another occasion (Matthew 6), but here He repeats it. Jesus teaches His disciples a form prayer, i.e. a prayer to be repeated. Form prayers are great helps, especially for those who are inexperienced in prayer. However, form prayers can become a mere formality and an empty ritual. Form prayers are never meant to be recited thoughtlessly; yet how easily that can happen! Let us remember that our Lord never meant to turn this spiritual exercise into a thoughtless repetition of words. That defeats the whole purpose.

In the “Lord’s Prayer” Christ gives a model for all prayer.

1. It teaches that right prayer begins with worship,
2. It puts the interest of the kingdom before merely personal interest.
3. It accepts beforehand the Father’s will, whether to grant or withhold,
4. It petitions for present need, leaving the future to the Father’s care and love.