

**Jesus' School of Prayer**  
**"Teach us to Pray"**  
October 11, 2020

**Overarching theme:** In 2020, FUMC will be a **GO** church!

**Instructions:**

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. *The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.*

**Core Point:**

The past is the past. There is nothing that can be done about it. The past can only be used to gain wisdom for the future. What can change is the future. When we, as God's people, are willing to follow God in our daily lives, God will make a good way in the future. The way may be bumpy at times and have curves, but the process will be filled with God's love and grace.

**Luke:**

The Gospel of Luke was written by an unknown Christian who, after reading other accounts of the life of Jesus and after careful study, decided to write another. The same person also wrote the Acts of the Apostles. Ancient tradition says the author of both books is "Luke, the dearly loved physician" (Col 4:14), who was with Paul during parts of his missionary work. Nothing in the Gospel of Luke confirms or refutes this tradition. The Gospel was probably composed between 70 and 100 CE, after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple but before the Roman government began regularly putting Christians to death.

Luke and Acts are both addressed to the "most honorable Theophilus" (Luke 1:3; see Acts 1:1). The name means "God's friend" and could have been an imaginary or ideal audience, a kind of godly reader Luke's author kept in mind as he wrote. But Theophilus was more likely a real person, perhaps a wealthy and influential convert – like Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10); Cornelius (Acts 10); or Crispus (Act 18:8) – who served as Luke's patron, helping him distribute his book. Luke's Gospel presents Jesus as good news for Jews and Gentiles.

Luke seems to have had a copy of the Gospel of Mark, which he expands considerably by adding stories of Jesus' birth and childhood (Luke 1-2); much more of Jesus' teaching (especially in Luke 10-19); and Jesus' resurrection appearances (Luke 24:13-53). Luke keeps Mark's arrangement of a ministry in Galilee (Luke 4:14-9:50); a journey to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51-19:28); and a final ministry in Jerusalem that ends with the crucifixion (Luke 19:29-23:56). Luke stretches out the "journey" section, having Jesus do most of his teaching after his announcement that he's going to Jerusalem to be crucified. In this way, the traveling Jesus in Luke

matches the traveling missionaries of Acts. The story of Jesus is always on the move.

Jesus spends a lot of time eating in Luke. He eats with tax collectors (Luke 5:27-32; 15:2; 19:1-10) and Pharisees (Luke 7:36-50; 11:37-54; 14:1-24); with the wealthy (Zacchaeus, Luke 19:1-10); and the relatively poor (Martha, Luke 10:38-42). Jesus also uses the image of a banquet to describe what God's kingdom will be like (Luke 13:28-29; 22:30). Jesus, in addition to being identified as God's Son (Luke 3:22) and Israel's Christ (Luke 1:32-33), is a prophet. His powerful message and miracles remind others of Elijah and Elisha (Luke 7:61; 9:7-8). He uses his prophetic identity to explain why his own people reject him (Luke 4:24) and why he must die in Jerusalem (Luke 13:33-34).

-adapted from the CEB study bible, pp 103-104(NT)

### **Reflect on this Scripture:**

Luke 11:1-13 NRSV *He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples."* <sup>2</sup> *He said to them, "When you pray, say:*

*Father,*<sup>[a]</sup> *hallowed be your name.*

*Your kingdom come.*<sup>[b]</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *Give us each day our daily bread.*<sup>[c]</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *And forgive us our sins,*

*for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.*

*And do not bring us to the time of trial.*"<sup>[d]</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *And he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; <sup>6</sup> for a friend of mine has arrived, and I have nothing to set before him.' <sup>7</sup> And he answers from within, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.' <sup>8</sup> I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs.*

<sup>9</sup> *"So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. <sup>10</sup> For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. <sup>11</sup> Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for<sup>[e]</sup> a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? <sup>12</sup> Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? <sup>13</sup> 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<sup>[f]</sup> to those who ask him!"*

### **Commentary**

The Lord's Prayer is hands down one of the most famous prayers ever. So how ironic it is to notice that in Luke's presentation of this prayer, the narrative details are very sparse. Today if we were documenting the first-ever presentation of something that went on to become very famous and momentous, we'd want to nail it down to a specific date, place, and occasion. But in Luke 11:1, Luke very casually says that when Jesus uttered this model prayer, it happened "one day" when Jesus

was praying “in a certain place.” The curious reader wants to ask, “Well, WHAT day was it? WHERE did this happen?”

But Luke gives us no such clue. Given how sizeable Luke’s narrative skills are, you have to assume there was a reason for this. And I think we can guess at the reason: the disciples saw Jesus praying so often that it was, as a matter of fact, difficult to recall the precise day and location of the time he gave them this particular model prayer to follow. Had Jesus prayed only rarely or on only certain high ceremonial occasions, then maybe it would have been both easy and important to record a few more details. But Jesus prayed so regularly that in the minds of the disciples, it all blurred together. This was not like Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address—a one-time, rather unusual event worthy of a very specific memorializing. When someone prayed as much as Jesus did, it really didn’t matter where this precise incident took place—the point is that Jesus prayed all the time to the extent that the disciples finally just had to know how to do that themselves.

All of which leads to an important point when it comes to preaching on Luke 11: often we think that what the disciples asked for were the words to say when praying. But in reality what the disciples wanted was not a litany of key phrases or a checklist of prayer items. What they were inquiring after was how they could, in imitation of their Master, turn the entirety of their lives into an extended act of prayer, the same as they observed was the case for Jesus himself. (And if this perspective on Luke 11 is correct, we could observe a degree of irony in the fact that subsequent generations of Christians did turn the Lord’s Prayer into a word-for-word memorized form of prayer!)

When you frame the Lord’s Prayer as a way first of all to pray without ceasing, the specifics that Jesus mentioned make more sense and take on a new meaning. Because when you think about it, each petition and phrase Jesus gives is a nearly all-encompassing reality.

What do we pray for? The hallowing of God’s very Name. That’s pretty cosmic. What do we pray for? The coming of the kingdom. Hmmm, that’s pretty big, too. What do we pray for? Daily bread and ongoing forgiveness—we pray to be forgiven on the basis of the fact that we are *ourselves* engaged in acts of forgiveness *all the time*. What do we pray for? That we not be led into temptation. And when is it that we don’t want to be tempted? Is it just for the next half-hour or so? The balance of this particular day? Just tomorrow? Or is temptation something we want to avoid forever and anon?

Let no one who hears us preach on this passage conclude that what the Lord’s Prayer is mostly all about is a list of certain requests...

Bottom line: we tend to think that the *content* of prayer is the key. In truth, Jesus always seemed more interested in the incessant nature of prayer and its never-ending desire to stay connected to the Father, who alone gives us all good things.

- Adapted from Commentary on Luke 11:1-13 by Scott Hoezee, Calvin Theological Seminary

### **Questions to Ponder for accountability in the group:**

As you think about this passage, how can you respond to this Scripture:

1. In response to his disciple's question ("Lord, teach us to pray"), Jesus offers them a prayer that addresses God as "Abba," the most intimate, personal, accessible word for parent in the Aramaic language. What does Jesus' choice of address impact your view of God? How might believing that God loves you like an "Abba" impact your relationship with God?
2. Jesus then invites us to "hallow" God's name and pray for his kingdom to come. What would your world look like if you lived into this part of the prayer?
3. Why do you think Jesus links our request for divine forgiveness with our own practice of forgiving others?
4. Jesus encourages us to ask, seek and knock. Certainly this relates to praying for needs that we or our loved ones have. But Jesus concludes this teaching by implying that the best gift of God is the Holy Spirit. What do you think he means by that comment?
5. Compare your time spent with God in prayer with the time you spend with social media. How is that impacting you? What adjustments, if any would you like to make for the good of your soul?

### **Activity for the life of a disciple:**

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMC.
2. Ponder and pray on this Scripture this week: Luke 11:1-13 NRSV <sup>13</sup> *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<sup>14</sup> to those who ask him!*"
3. As you pray this week, ask God to lead and empower your prayers and living through the presence of the Holy Spirit.
4. As a spiritual exercise one day this week, keep track of your time on social media and compare that with your time in prayer.