

## Lesson 35

# Praying with Faith

### Group Icebreaker:

Name some things, which you have prayed for that were fulfilled?

### Introduction:

Jesus began to visit the towns and villages to which he had sent the seventy disciples. In November of 30 AD he arrived at Bethany and stayed at the home of Martha, Mary and Lazarus. From there it was just a short walk<sup>1</sup> to the Garden of Gethsemane where He liked to pray. At some point the disciples approached Him seeking to learn how to pray. Jesus obliged them and began with a rendition of what we now call the Lord's Prayer, which He had previously taught them during the Sermon on the Mount two and one-half years earlier.

### Reading the Scripture:

#### Praying with Faith Luke 11:1-4

*Scripture excerpts from "Follow Me: A Message from God"*

"And it came about that while He was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples." And He said to them, "When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.'"

### The Commands:

- ❖ When you pray say.

### Group Discussion:

1. What is the difference between hope and faith?
  - Hope is a **desire** for something.
  - Faith is the **assurance** of things hoped for.
  - *Therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye **desire**, when ye pray, **believe that ye receive them**, and ye shall have them.*

### The Lesson:

The first key element in praying is to become like the disciples, **ask the Lord**. "How then should we pray about such and such?" For as it is written, "*If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.*"

Jesus commands His disciples to begin prayer, with the Lord's Prayer.<sup>2</sup> Then He uses an illustration, which incorporates all three aspects of making prayer requests to God: Asking, seeking and knocking.

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<sup>1</sup> Bethany is about 2 miles southeast of Jerusalem.

<sup>2</sup> The prayer and its implications were taught in Lesson 12 of this discipleship series.

The illustration comes in the form of a parable, which I will call the “Parable of the Sleeping Friend”. It reads like this.

### Reading the Scripture:

#### Parable of the Sleeping Friend

Luke 11:5-13

*Scripture excerpts from “Follow Me: A Message from God”*

And He said to them, "Suppose one of you shall have a friend, and shall go to him at midnight, and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; and from inside he shall answer and say, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been shut and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.' I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs. And I say to you, **ask**,<sup>3</sup> and it shall be given to you; **seek**,<sup>4</sup> and you shall find; **knock**,<sup>5</sup> and it shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it shall be opened. Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?"

### The Commands:

- ❖ Ask
- ❖ Seek
- ❖ Knock

Upon reading this parable most Christians get the idea that Jesus wants them to persist in prayer to God about the same issue. That simply is not true!

Many illustrations that Jesus used were **comparative** parables. In other words, “something is **like** something else.” For example, *the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea*. However, the “Parable of the Sleeping Friend” is a **contrasting** parable. In other words, something is **unlike** something else.

In this parable a man goes to his friend’s house while he is sleeping asking for the loan of some bread. The friend in the parable stands in contrast to God, who is closer than our friends. Proverbs 18:24 says, “*A man of too many friends comes to ruin, but there is a friend who **sticks closer** than a brother.*” Second, God does not sleep. Psalm 121:3-4 says, “*He will not allow your foot to slip; He who keeps you **will not slumber**. Behold, He who keeps Israel will **neither slumber nor sleep**.*” And third, the man asks his friend to loan him three loaves of bread versus God, the owner of the cattle on a thousand hills, who cannot be **repaid**. So the point of the parable is that 1) if a friend will give you what you need if you are persistence no matter what time of day or night, 2) how much **more** will God do to meet your needs.

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<sup>3</sup> **Ask**. Keep on asking.

<sup>4</sup> **Seek**. Keep on seeking.

<sup>5</sup> **Knock**. Keep on knocking.

In fact, Jesus wants his disciples to **not** miss the point! So He even goes so far as to restate the meaning of the parable two more ways. Read it carefully! *So I say to you, **ask**, and it **will** be given to you; **seek**, and you **will** find; **knock**, and it **will** be opened to you. For everyone who **asks**, **receives**; and he who **seeks**, **finds**; and to him who **knocks**, **it will be opened**.*

### **Group Discussion:**

2. When you pray do you **hope** what you pray for will come to pass or are you **sure** that it will come to pass?
3. Are you reading and believing God's word as it is or are you substituting other words, like Eve did in the Garden of Eden.

### **The Lesson Continued:**

Jesus continues the point by using more contrasts. *“Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?”* In doing so He is explaining that if you ask God specifically for one thing, He won't give you something other than what you asked for. And secondly, if you ask for something good He won't give you that which is evil.

There are also two spiritual applications that can be made from his statement as well. Jesus used symbolic imagery consisting of a fish, a snake, an egg and a scorpion to convey these thoughts. In the previous lesson Jesus used the snake in regards to that which deceives and the scorpion in regards to that, which brings death. Here He contrasts them with a fish and an egg. In doing so the passage can be read as follows:

*“Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for **truth**; he will not give him **deception** instead of **truth**, will he? Or if he is asked for **life**, he will not give him **death**, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?”*

In using the contrasting illustration Jesus points to the fact that a good thing to ask God for is more of the Holy Spirit, which He will deny to no one. The Holy Spirit brings both truth and life to all men. So precious is this gift that the Apostle Paul wrote these things concerning the Holy Spirit:

*For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, **to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith**; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, **that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God**. Now to Him who is able to do **far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us**, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen. (Ephesians 3:14-21)*

*For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be **filled** with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all*

*steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. (Colossians 1:9-12)*

*And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be **filled with the Spirit**, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; (Ephesians 5:18-20)*

Just think! All that a Christian has to do to receive more of the Holy Spirit is to ask and believe that he has received it.

Since Jesus finishes His discourse with the thought that a truly good gift to ask God for is **more** of the Holy Spirit, it gives us pause to rethink the “Parable of the Sleeping Friend”. Notice that the man asked his sleeping friend for three loaves of bread. Why three loaves for just one journeying friend? In light of what Jesus said we could think about this in a different way. Since man is a three-part being the three loaves were needed to meet all the needs of the journeying friend: one each for his spirit, soul and body. The three loaves, themselves are representative of God’s gifts through the Holy Spirit to meet those needs: the **word** of God, the **love** of God and the **power** of God.

Also notice that the man came to the sleeping friend’s house at midnight. Why didn’t he wait until the morning? It shows that the Holy Spirit can meet a man’s needs at any time. And why didn’t the man have anything to give his journeying friend in the first place? This indicates that we by ourselves aren’t always able to meet the needs of others but that we do have instant access to the One who can. All we have to do is ask, seek and knock.

There is one final spiritual application that can be drawn from the “Parable of the Sleeping Friend”. And that is the sequence: seek, knock and ask. The man sought his friend first. “*But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*” (Matthew 6:33) Then the man knocked on his door to rouse him. “*Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name.*” (Psalm 100:4) And finally he asked for what he wanted. “*You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.*” (John 15:16)

### **The Point of the Lesson:**

Pray with faith.

### **Application:**

Work through the following prayer exercise. (For example)

1. Pray the Lord’s Prayer.
2. Seek the Lord’s will – (Father, we are looking for your wisdom and direction.)
3. Knock (rouse Him with praise and thanks) – (For you are wonderful and kind.)
4. Ask Him for what you need – (Fill us with your Spirit to overflowing.)