

# BULLEEN BAPTIST CHURCH

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"TEACH US TO PRAY" Study 1, Sunday, February 14, 2010

"Ask, Seek, Knock." (Luke 11:1-14)

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## Introduction to the Series:

Some years ago, the following snippet of "wisdom" was a popular diagnostic tool for judging a Church's health.

*"Numbers at the Morning Service shows how popular the Church is.  
Numbers at the Evening Service show how popular the Pastor is.  
Numbers at the Prayer Meeting show how popular God is."*

While I was on holidays recently, I was surprised to hear it used again ....

It always did rely on guilt for its effect - which one of us would feel comfortable about voting against God with our feet? And it quite inaccurately reduces the sum total and value of prayer down to an observable "event" ... in this case the mid-week Prayer Meeting that has largely disappeared from most Church's programs.

Emotionally inculcated Guilt can be a powerful motivator for the short term, but it rarely functions as an effective agent for long-term change. It would be easy to whip up a fair bit of guilt regarding prayer. All I would have to do is preach on the Prayer Life of Jesus, add in examples of those in history who have prayed long and hard ... and ask with furrowed brow and thunderous voice, "*which one of you will dare stand before God and defend your sorry excuse of a prayer life?*"

Let's agree that we don't pray as we should. This Series of Studies is not designed to increase our guilt, but to encourage us by :

APPRECIATING the privilege we have in entering into God's presence,  
SEEING prayer as the vital component in experiencing intimacy with God,  
GROWING in our understanding of the dynamics and power of prayer.

## Introduction to Today's Study

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**

"Lord, teach us to pray," the disciples asked. The context indicates that they had both observed Jesus' prayer life and knew of some teaching on prayer that John the Baptist had shared with his disciples. Their two frustrations were:

Firstly, they were DRAWN towards the intimacy that Jesus shared with his Father but felt themselves INCAPABLE of achieving that intimacy for themselves.

Secondly, they felt that Jesus had let them DOWN by not providing, in their view, ESSENTIAL teaching to help them.

Their observation of Jesus at prayer had led them to assume that this Prayer thing was DIFFICULT (at least, too difficult for them) and that what they needed was INSTRUCTION.

How Jesus responded to their request would have, I think, surprised them! Instead of "deep teaching" - inducting the Disciples into the complicated mysteries of prayer - he:

outlined a SIMPLE easily remembered prayer that would serve as a "model" for their prayers.  
reminded them of the essential NATURE of the God to who they were praying

## A : TEACH?

### Which Statement Is True?

*"Prayer is so PROFOUND, we will spend a life time learning ... if we can."*

OR

*"Prayer is so SIMPLE even a little child can pray."*

The disciples agreed that the first was true ... and would most probably have scoffed at the second. In fact BOTH statements are true. But because the Disciples could not see the truth of the second, they were intimidated by the very concept of prayer.

Jesus' purpose is not to cast the disciples in at the deep end; but to encourage them to wade in the shallows. Later, with experience of God's power and presence, they can explore further.

## B : A "MODEL" PRAYER

The construction of the prayer is deceptive; so profound that we will run out of life itself before we fully comprehend it, but so simple that a child has little difficulty understanding it.

Of the Lord's prayer, Andrew Murray writes in his classic, *"With Christ In The School Of Prayer"*

*"So simple that a child can lisp it, so divinely rich that it comprehends all that God may give."*

### 1. Its Simplicity Strikes The Hearer First ...

No complicated FORMULAE, no ritualistic CEREMONY and no HIDDEN meanings.

### 2. Its Invitation to:

- a. INTIMACY : "Our Father"
- b. PARTNERSHIP : "Your will be done on earth"
- c. DEPENDENCY: "Give us this day our daily Bread" / "Lead us not into temptation"
- d. TRANSPARENCY : "Forgive us our sins."
- e. CONSISTENCY : "As we forgive those who sin against us."

## C : THE NATURE OF GOD

Following after the prayer are two short parables. Both are "Contrast" Parables. The key to understanding them both is the line in the second parable at Luke 11:13

If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give ....

### 1. God Stands READY to Give (Luke 11:5-10)

This first parable often causes confusion because we do not recognise the construction and so it sounds as if Jesus is teaching that the Father is a reluctant giver.

In fact, the point made is that, in contrast to the person who reluctantly responds to a friend's boldness, God is ready to act in response to prayer ... and because he is God he has the power to act. So the lesson drawn by Jesus includes the assurance that God ANSWERS prayer

So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.. **Luke 11:9-10**

### 2. God GLADLY Gives. (Luke 11:11-13)

It is God's nature to give "good gifts." in abundance - the Father's HEART in action!

If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give .... **Luke 11:13**