

BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

*The Needy Friend Asking for Help:
Praying to a Gracious God*
Luke 11:5-13

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

Leaders' Responsibilities:

Important: Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a Unit of sessions needs to have access to the "Basic Information for Leading the Unit of Study". That information is often provided at the beginning of that Unit of sessions. The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.
2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)
3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

Prior to this Coming Session:

Gathering Time Leader:

Be ready to lead the group in the Lord's prayer.

Bible Study Leader:

If you have youth, be sure to get the material to whoever gives leadership to the youth group so plans can be made to dramatize the Bible study.

Worship Time Leader:

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The Needy Friend Asking for Help: Praying to a Gracious God – 10-29-03-en

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If you have youth, work with them on planning for a brief dramatization of the Luke 11 story of Mary and Martha.

Music Sources:

Here I Am to Worship, *The Worship Hymnal* #130; CCLI #3266032

Teach Me to Pray, CCLI #84843

Sweet Hour of Prayer, *The Worship Hymnal* #429; CCLI #32273 Public Domain

1

Copy this section for the Gathering Time leader.

Gathering Time: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)

***The Needy Friend Asking for Help:
Praying to a Gracious God***

Focal Text

Luke 11:5-13

Background Text

Luke 11:1-13

Main Idea

We can pray with assurance of God's desire to answer our prayers and grant us blessings, especially the greatest blessing, God's presence in the Holy Spirit.

Question to Explore

Can we trust God to answer prayer?

Teaching Aim

To lead the class to describe the understanding of prayer and the nature of God that arises from Jesus' teachings in this passage.

Gathering together:

Sing **Here I Am to Worship** and other songs related to prayer.

First thoughts:

Teach Us to Pray

In Luke 11:1 we read, "***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'***" Today we ask of the Father that same thing, "Lord, teach us to pray". Learning to pray is one of the first of the Christian's lessons of faith and it is one which continues throughout life. Today's lesson is for us all – the seeker, the new believer, the life-long believer. We continue to understand more and more of the power of prayer, the importance of prayer, the content of prayer and the answers to prayer.

Closing the Gathering Time:

As we begin today's study and worship, let us say together that teaching in Luke 11 found also in Matthew 6 which is known as The Lord's Prayer.

***“Our Father which art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy Kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
And forgive us our trespasses
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory forever.”***
Amen.

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

2

Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

Note to the Bible Study Leader: Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

Teacher Preparation

The Needy Friend Asking for Help: Praying to a Gracious God

Focal Text

Luke 11:5-13

Background Text

Luke 11:1-13

Main Idea

We can pray with assurance of God’s desire to answer our prayers and grant us blessings, especially the greatest blessing, God’s presence in the Holy Spirit.

Question to Explore

Can we trust God to answer prayer?

Teaching Aim

To lead the class to describe the understanding of prayer and the nature of God that arises from Jesus’ teachings in this passage.

Introduction to your personal study:

You will often find a person saying that they pray but their prayers just do not seem to go higher than the ceiling.

As we look at this study on prayer one of the things which stands out is the request of a disciple in verse 1, “**Lord teach us to pray...**” Prayer is not always easy and yet it is so vital to our Christian walk. This is a good prayer and one that we today can pray. “Lord, teach us to pray.” Our understanding of God as our Heavenly Father will grow as we come to Him in prayer. As we look at prayer in the light of the scripture passage in Luke 11 we will learn that God does desire to answer prayer. We will see that we can come to Him as we should be able to come to an earthly father. The key verse is the last one in the passage 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 the Holy Spirit to those who ask him”.

Background:

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Basic Information for Leading the Unit of Study**”, found at the beginning of this Unit. Whoever downloaded this session for you should have that material for you, as well.

There is only one incident recorded in Luke between the parable of the Compassionate Samaritan and this one. Luke 10:38-42 tells of Jesus and His disciples visiting in the home of Mary and Martha. Here we have two women who were followers of Jesus. Luke 10:39 (KJV) says, “***And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard his word.***” This verse implies that Martha would also sit at Jesus feet. Yet we find in verse 40 that Martha was extremely stressed because she was busy serving. One sister focused on Jesus while the Bible says the other sister was distracted. Martha was doing a good thing. She was being the hostess and tending to her guests. Why is there a problem? Martha felt like she was left to do all the work and her sister didn’t see the need to help. She goes to Jesus to ask Him to intervene. Look at what she says in Luke 10:40 “***Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me.***”

Martha was frustrated but Jesus was compassionate and showed her how to put things into perspective. He told her that Mary had chosen the one thing that was needed which was to spend time at the feet of Jesus. Sometimes it is easier to be “doing” than “sitting”. If we are busy about the ministry that God has given us to do we can so easily become like Martha and miss the blessing of sitting at Jesus feet. We can also become resentful of others who are not so active. We need to make sure that we have the balance in our lives of worship and service.

Focusing on the Meaning:

As we move into Luke 11:1-13 notice that Jesus’ action caused the question to be brought up - the question on prayer.

Luke 11:1: “***One day Jesus was praying in a certain place.***” Many times in scripture we read of Jesus going away alone to pray. Luke 9:18 says, “***Once when Jesus was praying***”. The disciples had seen this. Most likely they had heard Him pray often. The Jews knew about prayer. The Old Testament had much teaching on prayer. Verse 1 tells us that John taught his disciples to pray. So what was this particular disciple really asking? He wanted Jesus to teach them to pray as He prayed. They saw a difference in the way that Jesus prayed. He inspired them to desire a higher level of prayer.

Luke 11:2. Jesus said to them, “***When you pray say Father...***” The model that is given in these verses starts with acknowledging God and who He is. He is our Father. He is Holy and should be approached with reverence. This is not saying that God is unapproachable but that we should realise that God is Holy. We are being taught here

to focus first and foremost on God our Heavenly Father and who He is. We are taught to ask that the Kingdom of God come. This model prayer is in two sections. First we concentrate on God and then we come with our needs.

Luke 11:3 ***“Give us each day our daily bread.”*** It is very special to realise that God is not only interested in our spiritual lives but in our physical also. We can ask God to meet all of our needs. It may be food for the day but it is also whatever our need might be. Notice the phrase ‘each day’. When the children of Israel needed food in the wilderness they collected just enough for the day. If they collected too much what was left over would go bad. On the sixth day they were instructed to gather twice as much because the seventh day was a day of rest (Exodus 16:4-5). We often want to see how God will meet our needs tomorrow or next year or the year after that. God has promised in Philippians 4:19 that he ***“...will meet all our needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus”***.

Luke 11:4 ***“Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.”*** This could be seen as though we need to forgive in order to be forgiven. Rather it is more accurate to say that we forgive because we are forgiven. Remember that Jesus was not talking to outsiders but to his disciples who were in the kingdom and knew the forgiveness of God. The verse goes on to ask that we not be led into temptation. We ask that we be kept away from the things that would cause us to fall into temptation.

Luke 11:5–8. Jesus always brings into his teaching illustrations that make it easier for the listener to understand the concept. In this parable of the needy friend we must look carefully at the story so as to understand what Jesus is saying about God our heavenly father. Notice how Jesus personalizes this illustration. We can so easily identify immediately with what is being said verse 5 ***“suppose one of you has a friend”***. Everybody can probably say that they have at least one person that they can call a friend. The scripture goes on to say that this friend comes at midnight. We could wonder why someone would come knocking at the door at such a late hour.

Remember that we are talking about a hot country. Travel would be more pleasant in the cooler part of the day. Even so, midnight is an unusual hour in any country. Obviously he was not an expected guest or the friend would have been prepared. Hospitality was very important in Jesus’ day. There were not hotels or accommodation on every street corner. It was common practice for people to extend hospitality to travelers. In order to meet the need of his unexpected guest the man goes to his friend to ask for three loaves of bread. His friend isn’t too impressed at being awakened at such a late hour.

Many houses of the common people in Jesus’ day had only one story and sometimes only one room. This may have been divided into two sections with one being higher than the other. The higher section would be reached by steps and would be for the family. The lower level would be for the animals and the outside door would lead into this lower portion. Opening the door was a greater task than it is today and would take more effort. Verse 7 tells us that the man answered the knock by saying, ***“Don’t***

bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed.”

Jesus says that in spite of his reluctance to get up, the persistent or shameless knocking of the friend will cause him to get up and give him as much as he needs. The man did not give up just because he was at first refused. Notice that his request is not for himself but for someone else. He was concerned about the need of his friend and would not give up until the request was answered.

Luke 11:9-10. This parable is not saying that God is like this friend and is reluctant to answer prayer. The opposite is true because this is a parable of contrast. Jesus is pointing out that if a friend will help a friend even when it is inconvenient how much more will our heavenly father help us. We are told to “Ask, Seek, and Knock” because those who ask will receive. Those who seek will find. For those who knock, the door will be opened.

Luke 11:11-13. Jesus continues with an illustration of a father. Again he personalizes it by referring to fathers. ***“Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake or if he asks for an egg will give him a scorpion?”*** (verse 11). If we as human fathers know how to respond to our own children how much more will our heavenly father give good things to us. Jesus ends his discourse not by talking about provision for the physical but that God will ***“give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.”***

G. Campbell Morgan in *Studies in the Four Gospels* has this to say. “Confessedly this is a remarkable paragraph. They saw Him praying, and desired the secret. He gave them the sentences from the model, and showed them that the ultimate in prayer is the reception of the Spirit initially and continuously.”

Luke 24:49 says, ***“I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”*** Acts 1:8 reads, ***“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*** Here we see how the Holy Spirit came to the early church as Christ promised. God will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him. He always gives to his children what is the very best for them.

Your Goal as Leader of this Study:

Can we pray with assurance that God hears and answers prayer? Yes, we can pray with assurance that God hears and answers prayer. We can also rest in the knowledge that God knows what is best for us. The disciple wanted to know how to pray as Jesus prayed. They did not want the formula; they wanted that personal contact that Jesus had. Jesus points them to God that they might focus on who He is and then come with their personal requests. This passage is not saying that God is like the friend who is sleeping and doesn't want to be disturbed but rather He is a loving God who hears and answers prayer.

For Personal Reflection:

What have I learned from this study?

What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?

What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?

Bible Study Plan (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

The Needy Friend Asking for Help: Praying to a Gracious God

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc.

Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.

Focal Text

Luke 11:5-13

Background Text

Luke 11:1-13

Main Idea

We can pray with assurance of God's desire to answer our prayers and grant us blessings, especially the greatest blessing, God's presence in the Holy Spirit.

Question to Explore

Can we trust God to answer prayer?

Teaching Aim

To lead the class to describe the understanding of prayer and the nature of God that arises from Jesus' teachings in this passage.

Connect with Life:

Ask the group to give their own thoughts on prayer.

Give the opportunity for someone to tell of an answer to prayer that they feel comfortable in sharing.

Discuss the difference in corporate and private prayer.

Guide the Study:

Introduce the fact that we have four different incidents to consider. One is the visit with Mary and Martha and the other is the request from the disciple “teach us to pray”. Jesus gives the parable of the reluctant friend and then gives the illustration of a good father.

Give the background story of Mary and Martha in Luke 10:38-42. Point out that Martha was busy seeing to her guests while Mary sat listening to Jesus.

Ask the question. What was the difference between the two women? Was Mary’s love for Jesus greater than Martha’s? Have the group understand that Martha was a devoted follower of Jesus. Let them see that it is easy to be out of balance in our Christian life.

Discuss this need for balance in the light of this account of Mary and Martha.

What did Jesus mean by “**Mary has chosen what is better?**” (Luke 10:42).

Luke 11:1-13. Have someone read this scripture.

Notice that we have four sections within these thirteen verses.

a) We have the prayer which is part of the fuller account in Matthew 6:9-13. Have someone read Matthew’s account.

Compare the two scripture passages.

b) We have the parable of the needy friend.

Have the group study this and look at the different aspects of the story.

The friend in need.

The reluctant friend.

The late hour.

The persistence of the friend who was in need.

The fact that because the friend was persistent, the sleepy reluctant friend did get up and give him what he asked for.

Be sure to emphasize that we cannot compare the sleepy reluctant friend to God.

Point out that this parable shows the contrast between God and the reluctant friend.

The friend had to be pressured into getting out of bed to answer the need.

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God on the other hand longs to hear and answer our prayers. We can come to him as our Heavenly Father. Verse 2 says, **“when you pray say: ‘Father’”**.

You may have people in your group who have difficulty seeing God as a loving father because of their experience with an earthly father. Discuss this and have the group think of ways to help someone understand this aspect of God. Point out that in spite of personal experience we can know God as the loving Heavenly Father.

c) Jesus offers three important commands to the disciple: Ask, Seek and Knock (Verses 9 and 10).

Reflect on these three words. Have the group give their own thoughts as to what Jesus was referring.

You may have people in your group who have not made a commitment to Jesus Christ. Give the plan of salvation and explain that we need to ask Christ to forgive our sin and indwell us by his Holy Spirit.

d) Have the group look at Luke 24:49 and Acts1:8.

Point out that this is how the Holy Spirit came to the early church after Christ’s ascension.

e) We have the illustration of a father knowing how to give good gifts to his children. Comment that Jesus was showing the disciple the comparison between an earthly father and God our loving Heavenly Father.

Take time to have someone give a testimony about God’s goodness to them. Have someone share how they came to know God as their Heavenly Father.

Encourage Application:

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to move away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

Help the group to see the need to pray on a regular basis. Many Christians spend very little time in prayer.

Challenge the people to make a devotional time a part of their day. Just as we schedule other things in our lives such as meals, work, exercise, rest, or recreation encourage scheduling time to read the Bible and pray.

Have the group look at the possibility of sharing prayer requests that they can pray about during the week.

Have the group understand that they can take just a small amount of time if a devotional time is not something they are used to. This time will increase as they continue to read and pray.

Also point out that we are told to pray continually (1Thessalonians 5:17). This can be done just as we go about our daily activities.

The important thing is that God wants to have fellowship with us through prayer. Give opportunity for people to receive Christ. Suggest that they could talk with someone who could help them.

Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time. Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

Youth!!! Take Ten

Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

The Needy Friend Asking for Help: Praying to a Gracious God Luke 11:5-13

A youth will lead the following activity and comments. No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

Drama????

Today's Bible study would be an excellent basis for a dramatic interpretation to be used in the sharing time. One student could read the background Scripture while two girls and a boy act out the story. Or those actors could use the following dialogue. Enlist older children or adults to act if your group is too small to complete the cast of characters. (Note that this drama ends on page 16. You need both sheets).

Mary and Martha are seen in a home setting. Both are involved in domestic tasks.

Jesus arrives at the door and is warmly welcomed by Mary and Martha. Soon Martha returns to preparing a meal and Mary seats herself near Jesus. He begins to talk and Mary listens and asks questions. (Use the teachings of Jesus in Luke 10 as examples of what He was saying).

Martha bangs a pan loudly and pointedly, but Mary continues to listen to Jesus.

Finally, Martha approaches Jesus and says, ***“Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then, tell her to help me.”***

Jesus shakes his head slowly and sadly says, ***“Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only a few things are necessary, really only one, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”***

Have one of the three characters or another person address the audience and read the following:

We are like Martha. We get so busy with the tasks of daily life that we miss opportunities to listen and talk to Jesus. What do we need to do to change that? Our worship time today will help us reflect on this question.

Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***The Needy Friend Asking for Help:
Praying to a Gracious God***
Luke 11:5-13**Beginning the Service:**

Sing **Sweet Hour of Prayer**

Offering:**Praying for the World:**

During Ramadan, a meal is shared just before dawn and immediately after sunset. It is common for neighbours and friends to share the evening meal (*iftar*) together. Sometimes Christian believers are invited to share the *iftar* meal with their Muslim neighbours and friends. Pray for them to be able to lovingly and clearly share a witness in these settings.

Sharing Guide:

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God's call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

The Needy Friend Asking for Help: Praying to a Gracious God**Introduction:**

The title of today's study is almost a sermon in itself: The Needy Friend Asking for Help: Praying to a Gracious God.

We have examined the unusual story of Luke 11:5-13 in which Jesus uses the example of a person surprised by an unexpected visitor arriving late at night. The hospitality mandated by the culture required that food be offered to the guest in spite of the late hour. The host, however, had no bread on hand so he tried to awaken his neighbour to ask to borrow bread. The neighbour was reluctant to leave the comfort of his warm bed, unbar his door, and find bread to share. At first, he said no. Later, however, because of the insistence of the man asking for help, he did get up and give bread to the one who asked.

Jesus was teaching by contrasting a human response to the response God would make.

God does not sleep. Our prayers in the dark night of anguish are always heard. The Psalmist often speaks of this. In Psalms 63:6-7 (NAS) we read ***“When I remember Thee on my bed, I meditate on Thee in the night watches, For Thou hast been my help, And in the shadow of thy wings I sing for joy.”*** When we wake in the night and think of the problems of the day just past and the day to come, we think of God. The problems multiply and loom large until we meditate on God and receive His help. Even in the darkest hour we can sing in the shadow of his wings. God protects us as a mother hen protects her chicks. We are able to know His comfort.

God knows our need. The insistent neighbour brought a very specific need to his friend. ***“Give me bread that I may feed my guest”***. The human response was to wonder why anyone would bother a friend in the middle of the night to ask for such a common thing as bread. Why wouldn't one have bread or something else to give the guest? It was, in fact, the ordinariness of the request that made it annoying. If he had asked for medicine or help to fight a fire or even extra bedding, the response would have been more forthcoming.

God responds to our ordinary needs. He does not want us to wait until we are sick or destitute or friendless to ask for help. He does not expect that we should lose our job, have a marriage in peril or a teenager on drugs before we talk to him. He desires that we ask for daily bread, freedom from temptation and forgiveness from sin. These are things that enter our life each day. Consistent, daily communication about life's common needs gives us a relationship which enables us to confidently ask for God's help when the overwhelming issues of life surround us.

God desires this daily communication with him. Martha was busy about the demands of the day which involved preparing food for Jesus. However, she became so busy with that preparation that she failed to visit with Jesus. She missed the teaching he was giving. And she resented her sister, Mary, who was listening to Jesus. Martha was a close personal friend to the Saviour. She was glad he was at her house. But on this day she was too busy to listen to Him.

We are like that, too. We don't mean to leave Jesus out of our daily lives. We intend to read his Word and talk to him in prayer. But first, we must prepare a meal, take out the garbage, do homework with the children, call a friend, work on our budget and suddenly the day is gone. It grieved Jesus when Martha did that. He said, "***Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things, but only a few things are necessary, really only one, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.***" Time with Jesus is necessary and time spent with Him shall not be taken away from us.

When we pray, we are praying to a gracious God. Unlike the neighbour who only responded because he became tired of the demands made upon him, God gives us unlimited and gracious attention.

Call to Commitment:

An old hymn speaks of our telling Jesus about our worries, griefs, sorrows, sins, fears, and anxieties. Listen to the words of the hymn and commit to follow its admonition.

Tell It to Jesus

Are you weary, are you heavyhearted?
Tell it to Jesus,
Tell it to Jesus;
Are you grieving over joys departed?
Tell it to Jesus alone.

Do the tears flow down your cheeks unbidden?
Tell it to Jesus,
Tell it to Jesus;
Have you sins that to men's eyes are hidden?
Tell it to Jesus alone.

Do you fear the gath'ring clouds of sorrow?
Tell it to Jesus,
Tell it to Jesus;
Are you anxious what shall be tomorrow?
Tell it to Jesus alone.

Are you troubled at the thought of dying?
Tell it to Jesus,
Tell it to Jesus;
For Christ's coming kingdom are you sighing?
Tell it to Jesus alone.

Tell it to Jesus,

Tell it to Jesus,
He is a friend that's well-known;
You've no other such a friend or brother,
Tell it to Jesus alone.

Words, Edmund S. Lorenz, 1876, translated, Jeremiah E. Rankin, 1877. Public domain.

Concluding the Service:

Allow for a time of silent prayer then ask for short prayers to be offered by any who choose to do so. Do not hurry this time of prayer.