

Learning to Pray

by J.R. Miller

J.R. Miller emphasizes the importance of learning to pray effectively and the transformative power of addressing God as 'Father'.

Scripture: Luke 11:1

Topics: "The Power of Prayer", "Learning to Pray"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the necessity of learning to pray, despite the simplicity of the act, as even the disciples felt the need to be taught by Jesus. He illustrates that prayer is a profound connection with God, where calling Him 'Father' opens the heart to divine communication and understanding. Miller shares anecdotes to highlight the transformative power of prayer, both in personal lives and in the lives of others, urging believers to submit their wishes to God and to expand their prayers beyond personal needs. He encourages a deeper exploration of prayer, suggesting that true prayer involves a willingness to accept God's will and to pray for the needs of others. Ultimately, Miller reassures that the gate of prayer is always open, inviting all to approach God with their needs.

Transcript

"Lord, teach us to pray!" Luke 11:1

We would say that we do not need to be taught how to pray. Anybody can pray. It is only talking to God, and anybody can do that. It does not require the learning of a new language in order to speak with God, for all languages are familiar to him. Men and women who are about to be presented at royal courts, have to be instructed in court etiquette, so that they may conform to the requirements--but there is no heavenly etiquette to master, before we can be admitted into the presence of God, to offer our worship, and to present our requests. Why then do we have to learn to pray?

Yet, as simple as prayer is, and as open as the door is to all who come to speak to God--we do need to learn to pray. The Bible is full also of lessons on praying. The disciples of Jesus had always prayed--but we are told that once when they saw their Master at prayer, something so impressed them, that they felt they never had really prayed. So they asked him to teach them to pray. And we all need to be taught how to pray. No matter how long we have been in the habit of praying, nor how much blessing we have received in answer to our requests, we are only beginners. Every day we should ask our Master to teach us some new lesson in praying.

There are certain people who seem to have found a secret of prayer which we have never yet learned. These favored ones may teach us how to pray so as to get richer blessing than we have yet received. A little child missed her mother at a certain time every day. The mother's habit was to slip away upstairs alone, and to be gone for some time. The child noticed that the mother was always gentler, quieter and sweeter after she came back. Her face had lost its weary look--and was shining. Her voice was gladder, more cheerful.

"Where do you go, mother," the child said thoughtfully, "when you leave us every day?"

"I go upstairs to my room," said the mother.

"Why do you go to your room?" continued the little questioner. "You always come back with your face shining. What makes it shine so?"

"I go to pray," replied the mother reverently.

The child was silent for a little while, and then she said softly: "Teach me how to pray, mother."

There are no more sacred moments in any home, than when a child is bending at a mother's knee, learning to lisp its first little prayer. A mother's prayers are never forgotten. The boy becomes a man--but in all his years of toil, struggle, temptation, duty and sorrow, he remembers his mother's early lessons in prayer. The childhood prayers themselves are never forgotten. They live on through all the life, and often become the daily prayer of old age, and are the prayers said in dying.

"When you pray, say 'Father'." Luke 11:2 That one word is the key to the whole mystery of prayer. When Jesus taught his disciples to speak to God, calling him by that blessed name, he gave them the largest of all lessons in prayer. When we can look into God's face and honestly say "Father," it is easy to pray. The world is different then. God loves to be called 'Father'. It opens his heart to hear all we say--and to grant all that we ask.

Such power has the word 'father' spoken by a child, to open a human heart. Such power too, has the name 'Father' to find and open the heart of God! If we can sincerely say 'Father' when we come to the gate of prayer, we shall be sure to find entrance. If God is really your Father, you will no longer have any question as to whether you may pray to Him, or as to how to pray.

You thought before you began to speak, that you knew what you needed. If only you could have that, your bliss would be complete, you said. But God wanted to make your happiness full, and he knew that this thing you asked for--would not make you truly happy. So he withheld the wish of your heart in its precise form--and gave you the good you needed in another way. You prayed that your godly sick friend, who seemed about to be taken from you, might be spared. However, death came on apace. "Why did not God answer my prayer?" Are you sure he did not? You loved your friend, and wanted the best thing that God had for him. Well, did not God give him his very best?

One of the first lessons we must learn in praying--is to submit all our wishes to God. Of course we cannot know what we ought to pray for--as well as God knows. To pray unsubmitively is, therefore, not to pray acceptably. The highest reach of faith--is loving, intelligent consecration of all our life to the will of God.

Some prayers are answered in strange ways. Here is a little story recently told. A lawyer came to his client and said he could not prosecute a certain claim. The client wanted to know the reason. The lawyer told

him of a visit he had made.

"I found the house and knocked--but nobody heard me. So I stepped into the little hall, and through a crack in the door I saw a cosey sitting room, and on the bed, her head high on the pillows, an old woman. I was about to knock again, when the woman said: 'Come, father--I am all ready.' Down on his knees by her side, went the old, white-haired man, and I could not have knocked then, for the life of me. Well, he then began to pray. First he reminded God that they were still his submissive children, and that whatever he saw fit to bring upon them, they would accept. It would be hard for them to be homeless in their old age. How different it would have been if at least one of the boys had been spared! The old man's voice broke then, and a thin white hand stole from under the coverlet and moved softly through his snowy hair. He went on presently, saying that nothing ever could be so hard again--as the parting with the three boys had been--unless mother and he should be separated. Then he quoted several promises assuring the safety of those who put their trust in God. Last of all, he prayed for God's blessing on those who were demanding justice."

The lawyer then said to his client, "I would rather go to the poor-house tonight myself--than to stain my hands and heart with such persecution as that!"

"Afraid to defeat the old man's prayer?" asked the client, with hard tone.

Replied the lawyer, "You couldn't defeat that prayer. Of all the pleading I ever heard, that moved me most. Why I was sent to hear that prayer, I am sure I do not know. But I can no longer handle your case."

"I wish," said the client uneasily, "that you hadn't told me about the old man's prayer."

"Why so?"

"Well, because I want the money that the house would bring. I was taught the Bible myself when I was a boy, and I hate to run against it. I wish you hadn't heard a word the old man said. Another time I would not listen to petitions not intended for my ears."

The lawyer smiled. "My dear fellow," he said, "you are wrong again. That prayer was intended for my ears, and yours, too. God Almighty meant it so. My mother used to sing, 'God moves In a mysterious way.'"

"Well, my mother used to sing that, too," said the client, and he twisted the claim papers in his fingers. "You can call them in the morning, and tell them that the claim has been met."

God will always find some way to answer his children's prayers. We need not trouble ourselves as to how he can do this--that is not our matter. All we have to do is to lay our need before the throne of mercy, and God will answer us as he desires.

Another thing many of us need to learn, is to widen our prayers. Some of us live in a little room without windows, and never get a glimpse of anybody's needs but our own. A minister had a parishioner who did not believe in missions. One day he said to him: "I am going away for a month, and I have a request to make of you. It is that while I am absent, you will not pray once for yourself or any of your own family." The man promised--it seemed easy. The first evening when the time came for prayer he knelt as usual--but he couldn't think of anything to say. He had always prayed for himself, his wife, his little girl, his home, his business. Now he must leave out all these, and there seemed to be nothing else he cared enough for to bring it to God. He discovered how selfishly he had been living. It was a hard month for him--but he

learned his lesson. When his pastor returned he could pray for all men, all the world, and for missions. It would do many of us good--to leave out in our praying all requests for ourselves and our concerns, for a month. Then our prayers would be widened.

Some of us find life hard. It is full of cares and questions, of tasks and duties, of temptations and dangers. There are thorns and briers, among its roses. There are pitfalls in its sunniest paths. If we do not know how to pray--we can never get through the days. The privilege of prayer is always ours. The 'gate of prayer' is always open! Any moment we can look up and say 'Father', lay our need before the throne of mercy--and God will answer us as He desires!

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jr-miller/learning-to-pray/>

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