

## STUDY GUIDE

**DUTCHTOWN BAPTIST CHURCH**  
**AUTHENTIC**  
**THE DISCIPLINE OF PERSONAL PRAYER**  
**LUKE 11:2-4**  
**05/29/2016**

### MAIN POINT

We must practice personal prayer that is real, simple, worshipful, submissive, practical, repentant, and expectant.

### INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**This previous session's application activity challenged you to ask critical questions and take notes as you read God's Word. If you're comfortable, share what you experienced while studying the Bible.**

**Did you feel your perspective about personal Bible study change over the course of last week? How?**

**What can we do as a group to help sustain the momentum we've built in the discipline of personal Bible study?**

**What ideas or images come to mind when you hear the word "prayer"?**

Prayer, as James MacDonald will help us see, is the hardest discipline of the Christian life. Because it is, but also because it is vital for every Christian, we should pay careful attention to the way we pray. The discipline of personal prayer requires us to pray in a way that is real, simple, worshipful, submissive, practical, repentant, and expectant.

### UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

**ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ LUKE 11:2-4.**

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**What general principles about prayer can you identify from these verses?**

**Why do you think prayer is such a difficult spiritual discipline for us to engage in?**

As we develop the core disciplines of a sincere faith, we must work on prayer. Even those who have grown up around praying people need instruction. Fortunately, in this text, we find Jesus giving instruction on how we should pray. James MacDonald will help us in this session ask some key questions about our personal prayer lives to further develop this discipline.

**WATCH THE TEACHING SEGMENT FOR SESSION 3 FEATURING JAMES MACDONALD.**

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What questions do you have after watching James's teaching?

How would you characterize your typical experiences with prayer? What happens?

When do you feel tempted to pray in a way that's hypocritical or insincere?

Respond to James's statement: "The secret to prayer is prayer in secret. Prayer by myself is the foundation of all prayer. And I would just suggest to you that it is the hardest discipline of the Christian life."

As painful as it is to say, the litmus test for the vitality of your spiritual life is what's happening in that private place that only and God know about. Everything else that happens in your spiritual life, if it's genuine, is rooted in what goes on just between you and God.

Who among your friends and family does a good job of praying in a simple way?

What steps can you take this week to improve your experiences with personal prayer?

What steps can we take to improve our experiences with prayer as a group?

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What are some of the main obstacles for you spending a focused time in personal prayer on a daily basis? How are you going to attack those obstacles?

This week, make an effort to expose yourself to prayers that are real, simple, worshipful, submissive, practical, repentant, and expectant. Search the Scriptures for examples of prayer, identify prayers within hymns and worship songs, or read famous prayers that have been recorded through the centuries. As you contemplate these prayers, seek to identify attributes that make them memorable and meaningful.

## PRAY

Pray for your group. Ask the Lord to burden your hearts for intentional and personal prayer, and pray for the courage and discipline to remove obstacles to a vibrant prayer life.

Visit [LifeWay.com/JamesMacDonald](http://LifeWay.com/JamesMacDonald) to purchase the study guide for more in-depth personal and group study.

## COMMENTARY

### LUKE 11:2-4

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11:2. Jesus was the master of the teachable moment. He did not waste time correcting this erroneous analogy but used this opportunity to further the disciples' understanding of how to relate to God in prayer. Often called the Lord's Prayer, what

followed was a model the disciples might use to shape their prayers. Jesus took for granted they would pray. He did not argue for them to pray but merely began “Whenever you pray.” Each part of the Model Prayer demonstrates an aspect of the believer’s relationship with God as Father. The believer does not approach the throne of God with fear but with the familiar anticipation of a child crawling up on a father’s lap.

Yet believers should not take God for granted or treat prayer casually. Immediately after addressing God as Father, Jesus’ prayer acknowledged the holy nature of God’s name. The name of God was so sacred to Jews that they would not even pronounce the Lord’s proper name. This phrase indicates more than reverence for the specific name of the Lord. It shows respect for His character and Person. The word “holy” describes the sacredness of God, worthy of veneration and worship. Before approaching the Father with personal requests, Jesus called for His disciples to acknowledge and yield to the rightful reign of God in their lives. “Your kingdom come” is a way of acknowledging God as King, and it embraces the desire for God’s rule to come in the lives of God’s people as well as in the world.

11:3. Jesus encouraged the disciples to ask the Father to meet their needs, but in doing so they were to display faith in His provision. Believers may ask for bread, representing whatever material needs they might have. The inclusion of the words “each day” and “daily” suggest that the Lord can be trusted to provide what is needed every day.

Prayer for excess is never appropriate because it betrays a heart of greed and a lack of faith. Believers are not to beg for their bread, nor are they to demand it. Give us carries the sense of a person in prayer sharing a need with the full expectation the Father will gladly hear and provide. When we pray, we are not to focus solely on our needs but are to offer our prayers inclusively. The use of terms such as “give us” and “our daily bread” demonstrates the collective nature of Christian prayer.

11:4. This verse does not appear to be a separate section but is part of the previous request as shown by the conjunction “and.” Jesus thus tied the request for forgiveness to the request for daily needs. The implication is that the efficacy of one’s prayers for sustenance is directly linked to one’s request for forgiveness. Daily, believers should ask God to forgive. Again, the use of the pronouns us, our, we, and ourselves indicate the inclusive nature of believers’ prayers. We are personally guilty of sin but we are also collectively guilty. The phrase “forgive us our sins” is an admission of wrongdoing against God and the need for God’s forgiveness.

The word “for” links what comes after with what has gone before, so that we acknowledge our plea for forgiveness with forgiveness of others. Does this mean God will not forgive us if we do not forgive everyone who is in debt to us? The commentary about mutual forgiveness found in Matthew 6 suggests God judges the sincerity of our pleas for forgiveness by the way we offer mercy to those who have offended us. Understanding our sinfulness, we should be more sympathetic and forgiving of others.

The final part of the Model Prayer focuses on the disciple’s desire to live in a way pleasing to God. That we should ask God to not bring us into temptation somehow seems illogical. Since God is holy and does not tempt anyone to sin (see Jas. 1:13), why should anyone have to ask Him to do what is already in His nature. We are to ask God for personal strength and spiritual direction to avoid temptation, to help us keep from doing evil. Just as God’s name is holy, even so His disciples also need to be separate from that which is evil. The use of the plural us indicates our mutual responsibility to pray not only for our direction in holiness but also for God’s help for one another. Interceding for other believers is part of the inclusive nature of Christian prayer.