

Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – Season after Pentecost, Proper 12
Lesson Plans for Adults

Scripture: Luke 11:1-13

Even on a sultry summer day, the wind of the Spirit hovers — almost imperceptibly. Our lives rarely accommodate a slower pace for the summer. Yet, we are invited to notice, again, the priorities that drive us. We are invited to stop, however briefly, the manic activity and consider options Jesus offers us.

A Notation for This Week's Gospel

The Lord's Prayer. We have said it so many times the words may have lost some of their power. What if we chose to really search and knock, expecting the door to open? What is the Holy Spirit longing for us to request?

Theme: Rediscovering the Prayer Jesus Taught His Disciples

Before Class: You will need Bibles and copies of *The Book of Common Prayer*. You will probably have to make some choices as this is an exceptionally full passage. If you do not have time to do all three sections, choose which one, or ones, to do. If these lesson plans are also being used with children in your church, and you have parents of these children in your group, you may want to be sure to cover the first section, as that is the focus of the children's lessons.

Beginning: You may choose to invite the group to help decide which sections to discuss today:

- Section One digs into the meaning of The Lord's Prayer.
- Section Two deals with persistence in prayer.
- Section Three conveys God's desire to give us what is good.

Opening Prayer: Invite the group to open Prayer Books to page 364 and say together the version of The Lord's Prayer you hear the **least** frequently when you worship at your church.

The Scripture: Section One: Luke 11: 1-4 Invite someone to read the first section.

Questions:

With Bibles open to this passage, and *The Book of Common Prayer* open to page 364, take the Lord's Prayer, verse by verse and paraphrase what each communicates.

"(Our) Father..." Decide what you think about calling God "Father." Clearly, Jesus regularly referred to God as his Father. Could this be reinforcing the male imagery of God, or communicating the image of a deeply loving God? Honor your responses to the use of the word, Father.

"Hallowed be your name..." How would we define "hallowed?" (Holy? Awesome? What else?)

"*Your kingdom come...*" (In what ways would our world be radically different, if we did things in God's kingdom fashion? What might be much better? What might we have to give up?)

"*Give us each day . . .*" (In our consumer-products bloated culture, what could this mean to us? At the same time, do we think we are being called to live only for the day, saving nothing for the future? How do we manage this paradox?)

"*Forgive . . .*" (Notice the trade-off: Forgive us — "for" we forgive everyone . . . To amplify the meaning of this passage, see Luke 6:37b-38. Could it be that we have the capacity to receive forgiveness only to the extent we have already forgiven others, emptied ourselves of rage?)

"*The time of trial...*" (We pray to be spared the time of trial. Is it our experience that anyone gets through life with no trials? Perhaps this is where the rubber of faith meets the road of life. Could this part mean: we trust that you, God, will go through trials with us?)

Option: For a startlingly different version of The Lord's Prayer, you might want to make copies of the following: The Lord's Prayer from *A New Zealand Prayer Book*, page 181. After reading through this version of The Lord's Prayer, you can discuss what stood out for them, what struck them as very different, what got in the way, what opened them to new thinking, etc.

Eternal Spirit,
Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,
Source of all that is and that shall be,
Father and Mother of us all,
Loving God, in whom is heaven:

The hallowing of your name echo through the universe!
The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world!
Your heavenly will be done by all created beings!
Your commonwealth of peace and freedom
sustain our hope and come on earth.

With the bread we need for today, feed us.
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.
In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.
From trials too great to endure, spare us.
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.

For you reign in the glory of the power that is love,
now and forever. Amen.

Section Two: Luke 11: 5-8 Invite a different person to read the second section.

Questions:

- Why does Jesus suggest the person at home would not get up to open the door for a friend? (Remind the group that people tended to live in one-room homes, all the family in one bed,

animals asleep beside the sleeping family. Imagine the commotion if someone got up and opened the door: dogs barking, cocks crowing, and babies starting to cry.)

- Discuss the "persistence" this passage addresses. (Whose attention is it difficult to get? Is it God's — or could it be our ability to stay focused?)
- Why do you think Jesus told this story — right after giving the disciples a format for prayer? (A useful format is only as useful as it is employed.)

Section Three: Luke 11: 9-13 Invite a third person to read the final section.

Questions:

- Notice the sequence in verse 9. Can you share times this has been your experience? And what about the times it has not?
- Consider this possibility: The order is backwards! If so, what happens when we "knock on the door?" (Could that be our opening ourselves — through prayer — to come into God's presence? What changes occur in us when we notice ourselves **in** God's presence?)
- What happens when we search? (What other options come into view when we are open to searching?)
- What, then, might change about what we ask? (What different focus might become available?)
- Perhaps it has been our experience to have an earthly father who was inept or even evil in what he provided (or did not provide) for his children. (Jesus is addressing his disciples, whom he knew well, so he must have noticed good fathering in them and knew they would get the concept. As we think of really "good" fathers we know, can we explore the concept of a God who loves us so much more than even these good fathers do?)

Getting Closure: If you have time, invite the group to share what they will take away with them from the study today.

Closing Prayer: Invite the group to sit, with eyes closed, while you read, slowly, phrase by phrase, The Lord's Prayer.

Luke 11:1-13

Section One

Jesus was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.’² He said to them, ‘When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come.

³ Give us each day our daily bread.

⁴ And forgive us our sins,
for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.
And do not bring us to the time of trial.’

Section Two

⁵ And Jesus said to them, ‘Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, “Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; ⁶for a friend of mine has arrived, and I have nothing to set before him.” ⁷And he answers from within, “Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.” ⁸I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs.

Section Three

⁹ ‘So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. ¹⁰For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. ¹¹Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? ¹²Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? ¹³If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!’

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