

Dear Friend,

We need to pray. I believe that as a nation, we have reached a crisis point. We are witnessing a political, social, moral and spiritual breakdown unprecedented in our lifetime. Never before has the scriptural example spoken of in 2 Chronicles 7:12–16 had a deeper meaning for those of us who are called to watch and pray for our generation.

You may be one who has found it hard sometimes to pray. There is no shame in that. However, if we are willing to be taught, Jesus is willing to supply all the direction and strength we need. I have learned to love to pray.

Let's pray together. The Lord will teach us how.

Yours, in Christ,

Pastor Carter Conlon

LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY

by Carter Conlon

Have you ever felt as if something is missing in your prayers—that somehow they are not as deep or as effective as they ought to be? After all, there is a great difference between prayer that is driven by human effort and prayer that is divine and truly lays hold of God. For example, consider the prayer of the famous Scottish reformer, John Knox, who stood on a mountaintop and cried, "God, give me Scotland, or I die!" Before long, people began to come out into the streets under the conviction of God.

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I want to pray that kind of prayer! I want something that goes beyond merely coming into God's presence every day with a list: God, bless my home, bless my finances, bless my mother, bless my father, bless my children. I want to pray prayers that will move men toward God; prayers that will bring the Church of Jesus Christ back to life! I want the kind of prayer that God instructed Ezekiel to pray: "Call out to the breath of

God to breathe upon these dry bones and raise the dead back to life" (see Ezekiel 37:9). Those are the type of prayers I want to pray!

We see in the Scriptures that Jesus' own disciples had a similar yearning. One day as Jesus was praying, their hearts were stirred. "*And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples*" (Luke 11:1).

Keep in mind that the disciples were no strangers to prayer. They had seen Jesus pray and miraculously multiply loaves and fish. Some were even with Jesus as He prayed on a mountaintop and they saw His countenance completely transfigured. Without a doubt, the disciples themselves also prayed as they personally walked with Jesus. However, this time they saw Jesus go into a certain place to pray, and it caused them to conclude that there was still something they had to understand about prayer. I can picture the disciples getting together and nudging each other, "You ask Him!" "No, you ask Him!" There was something in Jesus' prayer that made it evident that prayer was much deeper than they had experienced up to that point.

"Lord, teach us to pray!" one of His disciples finally implored Him. So Jesus began to teach them, saying,

“When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil” (Luke 11:2–4).

Over the years, I have read books on prayer, gone to seminars, listened to speakers who claimed to have insight on how to pray—yet I have never personally preached nor heard a message on these verses of Scripture that has truly stirred my heart. I have always been left acknowledging that yes, all these elements are true, for they came from the mouth of Jesus—but I still did not seem to have a satisfying answer to the request, “Lord, teach us to pray.” However, as we take another look at the Scriptures today, I believe the Lord will reveal something deeper about prayer and what He intended it to be.

■ THE LORD’S PRAYER

Let’s begin by briefly examining some of the basics that Jesus taught about prayer in Luke 11:2–4:

“Our Father”—We must understand that we are now in a relationship with God the Father through Jesus Christ. This grants us the right to stand before His throne and make our petitions known.

“Which art in heaven”—His ways are higher than our ways; His thoughts are higher than our thoughts. He lives in a place of absolute and total victory. There is no possibility of defeat in God.

“Hallowed be thy name”—God’s name and reputation can be trusted. He is just and will never speak anything to us that is contrary to truth.

“Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, as in heaven, so in Earth”—The way things exist in His heart and His mind are how they should be on earth. As you and I walk with God, we will have a growing inner desire to see His kingdom come in glory and in power; to see His will done on earth as it is in heaven.

There is a shift that ought to take place in our prayer. It should no longer be all about us but should now be focused on others. This is where the true power of prayer is found!

“Give us day by day our daily bread”—God will give us our daily provision as we ask Him for it and acknowledge that He is our provider.

“And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us”—You and I are ambassadors of the kingdom of forgiveness. It is therefore imperative that we forgive others, lest we be unable to represent the forgiveness of God on the earth.

“And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil”—We must trust God to lead and deliver us, recognizing that we are not smart enough to get through this life on our own. We are deceptive to the core of our beings, and we can create what we think is the leading of God, even though it is actually the leading of our own heart. We simply must not assume that the pathway we are on is right, even if it may appear so in our

sight. According to the Scriptures, “There is a way that looks right unto man, but its end is the way of death” (see Proverbs 16:25).

■ THE TRUE POWER OF PRAYER

We go to our seminars and quote the above verses, which we have come to know as “The Lord’s Prayer.” And it is generally at this point that we end our teaching on prayer.

However, I would like for you to notice something in this particular section of the Lord’s teaching: It is largely self-focused. Yes, these verses acknowledge who God is, which is of primary importance when we pray. But it is also all about us: “Give us, forgive us, indebted to us, lead us, deliver us!”

Please don’t misunderstand what I am saying, for when we come to God, we must know who He is and what He is willing to do for us. We must know that He is our Father, our provider, our deliverer; that we are forgiven so that we can become ambassadors of forgiveness. We must have an assurance in our hearts that God is faithful to protect us from every weapon of evil that is formed against us.

Nevertheless, I see this as merely a precursor to where the real power of prayer is found, which Jesus expounded on as He continued: “And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him?” (Luke 11:5–6). Notice the transition that takes place from the preceding verses. We see that once we are completely at rest in who God is, fully trusting in His provision and keeping power, there is a shift that ought to take place in our prayer. It should no longer be all about us but should now be focused on others.

This is where the true power of prayer is found!

I now understand the reason why I was left so dry every time I heard a sermon on prayer. It was because we only touched on “Part A” of what Jesus was teaching. We must move on to “Part B” where we are standing at the door, asking God not only for ourselves but for somebody else!

Notice also that verse five tells us that it was midnight. I am sure by now you are aware that we are living in the midnight hour. Everything as we know it is moving into a last and final rebellion against all the ways of a holy God. It was at midnight, as well, that Paul and Silas found themselves in an inner prison, yet they chose to pray and worship (see Acts 16:25). Suddenly, there was a great earthquake that shook the prison’s foundations. All the prison doors were opened, and everyone’s bands were loosed!

If only you and I can learn to pray like that in this dark hour! We can be sure that Paul and Silas were not simply praying, “Forgive us for our sins and give us our daily bread.” No! I believe they were crying out, “God, it’s midnight, and there is a need here that is much greater than we can handle. Friends have been set before us, and these friends are in prison—shackled and hopeless. You have entrusted us with this inner prison, so now You must give us the strength to make a difference. Put something within us that will cause heaven to move and hell to shake!”

How did God respond to their prayer? He put a song inside of them! As they began to worship God for answering the cry of their hearts, for the privilege of being thrust into that place of despair along with those who had no helper, suddenly everything began to shake and miracles started to happen! Even the Philippian jailor and his

entire household surrendered their lives to Jesus!

■ THE THREE LOAVES

The Bible tells us that this person came at midnight, saying, “*Friend, lend me three loaves; For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him*” (Luke 11:5–6). Now Jesus never just throws out a random number, so there must be some significance in this. Plus I don’t know anybody who can eat three loaves of bread in one sitting. So what exactly is He referring to here?

***We, too, will
need everything
that God has for
us, and so we must
be unashamed to
ask Him for it.***

This is the way I see it: The first loaf represents the compassion of God the Father. The Scriptures tell us, “*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*” (John 3:16). You and I need the compassion of God, for that is what will draw us out of living merely for ourselves. It is the compassion of God that will cause us to move beyond saying, “Give us bread, give us deliverance, grant us forgiveness.”

When we move beyond ourselves with the compassion of God, we will also move into what I believe is represented by the second loaf: The courage of the Son. When Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, He said: “If it be possible, Father, take this cup from Me. Nevertheless not what I will, but what You want for My life” (see Mark 14:36). You and I need that same courage in order to lay down our own will and lay hold

of God’s—living as His witnesses in this generation. We will need supernatural strength to go out into the marketplace and stand for Christ in the midst of a hostile generation that is resisting its own salvation.

In light of this, I thank God that there is also a third loaf: The power of God’s Holy Spirit. This is the Lord’s promise to those who belong to Him and are willing to engage in His work on the earth. It is for those who are no longer content to go into the prayer closet simply concerned about their own needs. Rather, they are moved by the needs of this generation. These are the people who will have power in their prayers.

■ REFUSE TO BE DENIED

“*And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. And I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needs*” (Luke 11:7–8). Importunity means that he simply would not go away. Today it would be the one who prays, “I know this generation needs bread, but I don’t have a sufficient supply. My knowledge is not good enough; my strength will fail me. My compassion is too meager; my courage is conditional. I don’t have the measure of the Holy Ghost that I need in order to make a difference in this generation. But I know that You have it, and I am not leaving until I get it!” That is the kind of prayer God is looking for!

Jesus continued, “*And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened*” (Luke 11:9–10). How many receive? Everyone! Not just a few superstars,

not just the occasional Elijah or Elisha—everyone! That means you!

God will give you the compassion, courage, and power to stop living for yourself and to start living for the benefit of others.

Keep in mind that the Lord is not referring to a casual asking. When the 120 disciples went into the Upper Room, they were not casually asking God for His Holy Spirit. They were well aware that stepping outside and facing that hostile crowd could result in death. Nevertheless, they also knew that Jesus had given them a promise that they would be His witnesses—and so they began to pray, refusing to be denied.

“If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” (Luke 11:11–13).

How much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him? God answered the prayer of the 120 disciples by filling all of them with the Holy Spirit, after which they went out

into the marketplace with boldness (see Acts 2:2–4).

We, too, will need everything that God has for us, and so we must be unashamed to ask Him for it. I know that I need the Holy Spirit more than ever before because it is midnight, and a friend of mine has come in his need. I don't have anything to set before him, but by God's grace I will be given all that I need because I am not going away. I am going to stay at the door of God until it opens!

If that cry is in your heart as well, trust that God will be faithful to supply you with all you need. He will give you the compassion, courage, and power to stop living for yourself and to start living for the benefit of others. And through it all, I believe you will experience for yourself true joy and power in prayer! Hallelujah!

Carter Conlon
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CARTER CONLON

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TIMES SQUARE CHURCH

Times Square Church was founded in 1987 by Pastor David Wilkerson, author of “The Cross and the Switchblade.” It is an interdenominational church located in the heart of New York City.

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WEEKLY SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Sunday	10:00AM	3:00PM	6:00PM
Tuesday	7:00PM	Prayer Service	
Friday	7:00PM	The Gate*	

*Youth and Young Adult Service

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