

DOES GOD HEAR ME?

by Luke Wagner and Michele Hershberger

KEY VERSE:

“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. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.” Luke 11:9-10

FAITH STORY:

Luke 11:1-13

FAITH FOCUS:

One of Jesus’ disciples asks Jesus a very direct question. He wanted to know how to pray. Jesus answers him first by telling him the Lord’s Prayer. Then Jesus goes on to tell two similar stories pertaining to asking and receiving something. Jesus continues by telling them what to do when they want something, followed by a short example of how God responds.

SESSION GOAL:

To help students understand the need for and the power of prayer.

SESSION OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this session, the students will:

- Think about times when they needed prayer
- Think about how God answers prayer.
- Have an opportunity to pray out loud.

MATERIALS NEEDED AND ADVANCE PREPARATION:

- 1 Bibles for students
- 2 Note cards and pencils for each student
- 3 Copies of the question sheets for each group
- 4 Persons from your congregation to lead small groups of students and pray with them. Meet with these persons prior to the class time so they are prepared to lead the groups. Spend time praying with these persons for the time they will share with students.

SESSION OUTLINE

FOCUS: (5 minutes)

When students arrive, pass out the note cards and pencils. Ask them to write down things they would like to have—as many as they can think of in two minutes. These “things” can be material possessions, life situations, emotional or spiritual requests.

CONNECT: (15 minutes)

After the two minutes are over, ask: What is the one thing on your list that you want the most? Invite students to share, but allow them to pass if they don't want to share. Then ask: Do you think these things are possible? After students have responded, ask: Has God ever not answered your prayers? Then tell a story from your life when God didn't answer a prayer the way you wanted it to be answered, and invite students to tell their own stories. You telling a story first gives permission for students to share their understandings and doubts. Be sensitive to students who may be sick or have terminally ill loved ones or other situations where God's answer to prayer was not what they wanted and there was significant emotional stress as a result. Work at helping the youth express both faith in the power of prayer as well as the obvious questions they have when prayer doesn't seem to get answered.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE: (15–20 minutes)

Invite students to open their Bibles to the passage for today: Luke 11:1-13. Ask one student to read verses 1 through 4, and another student to read verses 5 through 13.

After they finish reading aloud, break the students into three groups, with the third group having three students. Have group 1 work on the Lord's Prayer, giving them the sheet of questions. Have the second group work on verses 9 through 13, answering the questions on their sheet. Have the third group of students act out verses 5 through 8, assigning the parts of Jesus, begging friend, and friend being asked. Encourage them to have fun with it and paraphrase it into their own words. Give the groups 7-10 minutes to work, then call them back together.

After group 3 has acted out their part, ask the following questions:

- Did you like the friend in the story?
- What does the story have to do with prayer?
- Does this parable mean that God is like the friend—you have to keep bugging God—or that God is the opposite of the person who doesn't get out of bed?

Invite groups 2 and 3 to share their responses to their questions. Share a mini lecture that covers these points:

- Prayer does not have to be in a special place or with special words—prayer is simply you talking and listening to God.
- Prayer is not always answered instantly or in the way we envisioned.
- What we ask for is not always the best for us, but God knows what is best.
- Our desires must be godly.
- Verses 11 through 13 – God does not give bad gifts.
- God gives the Holy Spirit to those who ask.
- Prayer does always work—God always responds. Unlike the sleeping person, Jesus says that if you ask, you will receive. But it may be in a different way than you expected.

APPLY: (10–15 minutes)

Break the students into small groups with one adult leader per group. Have each group find a quiet place where they can talk and pray. Ask students to quietly evaluate their list they made earlier of things they desire and decide which are godly desires and which aren't. Have students share in their small groups the desires that they would like to pray for. Make sure students and leaders of the groups know this sharing is optional.

RESPOND: (5–10 minutes)

Call groups back together. Tell the students that God has heard them and that God will respond, *Say*: Remember, prayer is not answered immediately, or always in the way we expect it and think it should be answered. God is in control and knows what's best for us, and when it is best. But God will answer.

Close by praying the Lord's Prayer with both words and bodies—invite students to pray it and to come up with body movements that illustrate the words.

INSIGHTS FROM SCRIPTURE:

Prayer in the Bible is often defined as the spiritual response, either verbal or non-verbal to God. But prayer is much more than that. Luke reports that Jesus was constantly in prayer, either silently or out loud. That is because Jesus was talking and listening, communicating with God. Prayer is not just a spiritual response to God—it's a two way conversation with God! Jesus wanted his disciples to know and understand this, which is why he taught them how to pray. The disciples also noticed something about the way Jesus prayed, and it made them want to know more—that's why one of them asked Jesus how to pray.

Prayer is not always answered immediately; in fact that's the case more times than not. This is something that Jesus understood and knew the disciples needed to know as well. It may appear that Jesus is saying that if you pray enough for something you will get it— in other words, be persistent. But there's more to it than that. First of all, God does not do anything he does not want to. God also knows what is best for us, despite what we think. So, it appears that Jesus is saying that if your desires line up with God, your request will be granted when God sees it is best.

Towards the end, Jesus begins to wrap up his teaching on prayer by making an important point. Jesus encourages his disciples to bring their requests before God boldly and with the right desires, and God will answer them and when he sees fit (verse 9). Jesus also points out the similarities between the good father and God (verses 11-13). Just as the good father gives his son good gifts, God will give them the gift of the Spirit if they ask.

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SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS:

Group One

- 1** Is the Lord's Prayer individual (for me only) or corporate (for everyone)? What are the clues in the prayer that tell us?
- 2** What are the important parts or points of the prayer?
- 3** Why did Jesus feel it was important to teach his disciples this prayer?
- 4** How is this prayer similar to Matthew 6:9-13? How is it different?

Group Two

- 1** Do "good" parents give evil gifts? Do children always ask for the right things? What do verses 11-13 mean concerning our prayers?
- 2** What does the heavenly Father promise to give to those who ask?
- 3** Was Jesus saying that whatever you ask for you will receive? How do verses 11-13 help you answer this question?
- 4** Does God always respond to us as the perfect parent?