SMITH FOR CHRIST

TEACHING THE WORD · WATCHING THE TIMES



DEEP DIVE

Luke

Chapter Eleven, Verses 1–54

Lord, Teach Us to Pray — a pattern prayer, a knock at midnight, a stronger Man, a greater sign, and six woes at a Pharisee's table

NASB 1995 | VERSE BY VERSE | FOUR VOICES | WITH DIAGRAMS

A disciple watches Jesus pray and asks to be taught; Jesus gives a prayer, a parable and a promise. Then a mute man speaks, critics cry "Beelzebul," a crowd demands a sign, and a lunch invitation ends in six woes and a plot. Read through four teachers — **David Guzik**, **R.C. Sproul**, **C.H. Spurgeon** and **Matthew Henry** — with the Greek behind Luke's key words.

THE PASSAGE

Luke 11:1–54

prayer · power · sign · woe

THE METHOD

Verse by Verse

Color-coded by teacher

WHAT'S INSIDE

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Five movements from a place of prayer to a Pharisee's table

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"On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it." — Luke 11:28

SECTION I · THE PASSAGE

Luke 11:1–54

Lord, Teach Us to Pray — The Father who gives, the Son who overpowers the strong man, and the light that exposes the heart

† How to Read This Study

This study walks Luke 11 in 5 movements, in Luke's own order. Each movement opens with the full NASB 1995 text of those verses, marked with the Berean colors and shapes; then the Greek behind the key words; then the teachers, each in his own color — **David Guzik**, the pastor who walks the text verse by verse; **R.C. Sproul**, the theologian who presses every word for its doctrine; **C.H. Spurgeon**, the preacher who turns the doctrine into a call to the heart; and **Matthew Henry**, the Puritan commentator who gathers it into plain, practical counsel. The figures draw the passage so you can see where Luke is going. Read the Scripture first; then let each voice add its angle.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word — R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's
C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle — MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions; Command / instruction; Key repeated word; Sin / warning; Promise / blessing; Time / place / contrast

KEY VERSE · LUKE 11:9

"So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."

† Before the Passage

Luke 9:51 turned the story toward the cross: Jesus "was determined to go to Jerusalem." From there to Luke 19 Luke gathers teaching given on the road — much of it found only in his Gospel. Chapter 10 sent out the seventy, gave the Good Samaritan, and ended in Martha's house, where Mary "was seated at the Lord's feet, listening to His word" (10:39). Chapter 11 moves from listening to praying, and from a friendly home to a hostile dinner table.

No Gospel shows Jesus praying more than Luke. He prays at His baptism (3:21), withdraws to pray (5:16), prays all night before choosing the Twelve (6:12), and is praying when He is transfigured (9:29). So it is natural that a disciple, watching Him finish, asks, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples" (11:1). Luke's form of the prayer is shorter than the one in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:9–13); it appears to be given on a different occasion, and its five requests are the same skeleton.

The middle of the chapter is a contest of kingdoms. “Beelzebul” recalls Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron that King Ahaziah consulted (2 Kings 1:2); by Jesus’ day it was a name for the prince of demons. “The finger of God” (v. 20) is the phrase Pharaoh’s magicians used when they could not copy the plague of gnats (Exodus 8:19). Jonah and the Queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10) were Gentiles who listened to God’s messenger when Israel’s own leaders would not.

The last scene is a meal at a Pharisee’s house. Pharisees were a lay movement devoted to the Law and to the traditions that fenced it — washing before meals, tithing even garden herbs. The “lawyers” were the scribes, the professional interpreters of the Law. Jesus’ six woes (three to each) end with open hostility (vv. 53–54), and chapter 12 opens with the warning those woes prepared: “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.”

I
MOVEMENT

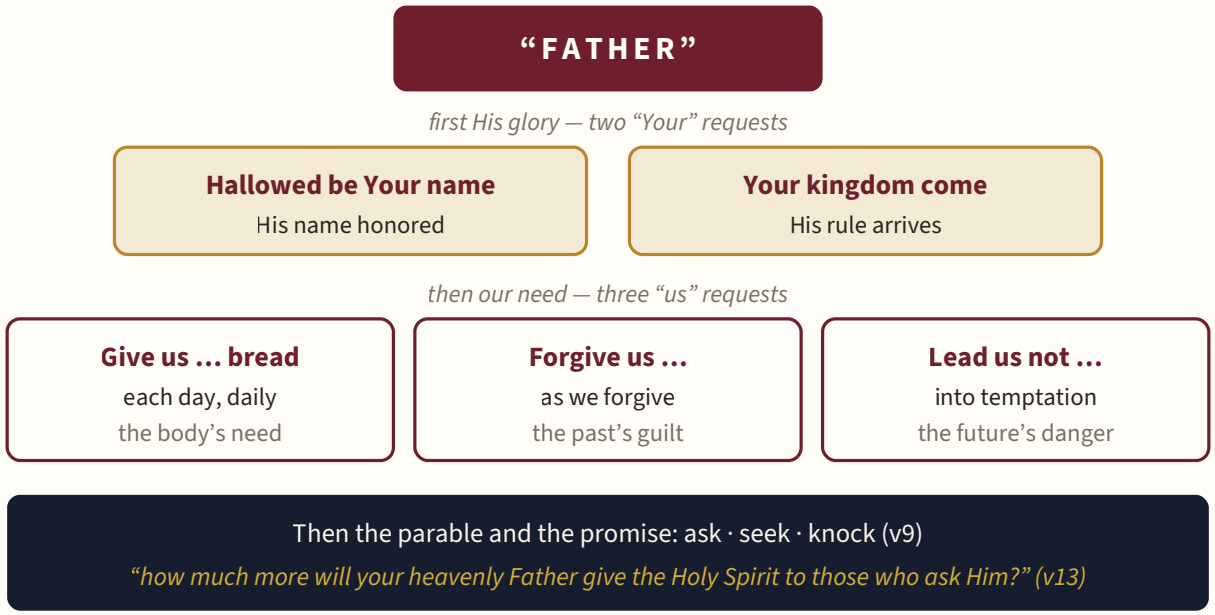
LUKE 11:1–4

Lord, Teach Us to Pray

A disciple watches Jesus pray, and Jesus gives a pattern for every prayer

> [1] *It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, “Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples.” [2] And 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 also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.’”*
>
> LUKE 11:1–4

FIGURE · THE PATTERN PRAYER



Read top to bottom: the prayer starts with the Father and His glory, then brings our daily needs — bread, forgiveness, protection — and the chapter ends the lesson with the Father's promise of the Spirit.

ἁγιασθήτω

HAGIASTHĒTŌ · "HALLOWED BE" · G37

From *hagiazō*, to make holy, to set apart, to treat as holy. The form is an aorist passive imperative: "let Your name be treated as holy." It is a request, not a compliment — the first thing Jesus teaches a disciple to want is that God be honored for who He is. The same verb describes believers who are "sanctified" (Acts 20:32; 26:18). We cannot make God holier; we can ask that His name be treated as holy, starting with how we ourselves use it.

ἐπιούσιος

EPIOUSIOS · "DAILY" · G1967

Used only twice in the New Testament — here and Matthew 6:11 — and almost nowhere outside them, so its exact sense is debated: "needed for today," "for the coming day," or "necessary for existence." Each reading lands in the same place. Luke adds *to kath' hēmeran*, "each day," and uses the present tense, "keep giving us." Like manna in the wilderness, the bread is asked for and received one day at a time.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes that the disciples asked to be taught after watching Jesus pray, and he insists the need is practice more than technique: "Our greatest need is simply to pray and to pray more and more." He quotes Murray: "Jesus never taught His disciples how to preach, only how to pray." Luke's shorter form carries the same order as Matthew's — honor for God's name and kingdom first, then daily bread, forgiveness and protection in testing. "This prayer is notable for its simplicity and brevity; it is a marvel of powerful prayer put in simple terms."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul's "A Simple Way to Pray" (22 September 2013) treats the Lord's Prayer as a pattern rather than a script: "This is the example to show you how you should pray." He retells Luther's little book written for his barber, which taught a man to pray through the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer — "We need to memorize the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, and the Lord's Prayer." He presses the first petition: "Don't you know that God will not hold you guiltless for using His name in a cavalier way?" Godly prayer is praying "with the mind of Christ, filled with Scripture and the Word of God," and "Our church will only be as strong as our prayers."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry begins with the duty itself: "Prayer is one of the great laws of natural religion," and the gospel does not cancel it but strengthens it. He reads the Lord's Prayer both as a form to use and as a pattern for every other petition. In the request for forgiveness he sees a daily account that must be settled — "That sins are debts which we are daily contracting" — so that the disciple needs pardon as regularly as bread. Henry also stresses that the prayer is plural: we pray for others as well as ourselves, to a Father.

II
MOVEMENT

LUKE 11:5–13

Ask, Seek, Knock

A friend at midnight, a father at the table, and the Holy Spirit for those who ask

5 *Then He said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and goes to him at midnight and says to him, 'Friend,*
lend me three loaves; 6 *for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him';*
7 *and from inside he answers and says, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been shut and my children and I*
are in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.' 8 *"I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him*
anything because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs.
9 *"So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to*
you. 10 *"For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened.*
11 *"Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will*
he? 12 *"Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he?* 13 *"If you then, being evil, know how*
to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who
ask Him?"

LUKE 11:5–13

ἀναίδεια

ANAIDEIA · "PERSISTENCE" · G335

Found only here in the New Testament. It is formed from *a-* (not) and *aidōs* (shame, modesty): literally "shamelessness." The KJV says "importunity." The man at the door is not polite; he is shameless enough to keep knocking at midnight for a guest. Jesus' point runs from lesser to greater: if a sleepy neighbor will get up for shameless asking, how much more will a Father who is not asleep and not annoyed (vv. 11–13).

αἰτεῖτε

AITEITE · "ASK" · G154

From *aiteō*, to ask, request. In verse 9 all three commands — *aiteite*, *zēteite*, *krouete* — are present imperatives, the tense of continuing action: "keep asking … keep seeking … keep knocking." Verse 10 turns them into a promise for "everyone." Verse 13 names the best answer: the Father will give "the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him" — the same verb again, now a present participle, "those who keep asking."

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik reads the friend at midnight as a call to earnest, repeated prayer: "God often waits for our passionate persistence in prayer." But the parable does not picture God as a grumpy neighbor; persistence works on the one praying. "Our persistence doesn't change God; it changes us, developing in us a heart and passion for what God wants." Ask, seek and knock describe ongoing prayer that grows more intense. And the father who will not hand his son a snake shows the heart of God: "The problem is in our receiving, not in God's desire to give."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul's "Asking & Knocking" (6 October 2013) starts with the obvious question: "If God already knows our needs and He is inclined to give these things, why bother to ask?" His answer: "The purpose of asking is not for God's benefit. It is for us." On seeking he is firmly Reformed: "The natural disposition of unconverted, fallen human beings is not to seek after God"; "You do not begin to seek God until you are converted," though "Once you are converted, that is not the end of the search." He also argues that Revelation 3:20 speaks to a church, not to the unconverted: "Dead people do not open doors." Many evangelical teachers use that verse differently.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's "Right Replies to Right Requests" (6 November 1870, on vv. 11–13) assures seekers that God never answers a true prayer with a counterfeit: "The fish is a fish, not a serpent, and the egg is an egg, and not a scorpion." He applies it to requests for faith, repentance and perseverance, then calls the gift of the Spirit the best prayer of all, the one surest of an answer, and pictures the Spirit as wind, water, light, fire, oil, dew and a dove. "He has most grown in grace who prays best." His exposition of the parable urges the same: resolve "to plead, and plead, and plead yet again."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry guards the parable from a wrong conclusion: "Not that God can be wrought upon by importunity; we cannot be troublesome to him, nor by being so change his counsels." He notices whom the man was asking for: "This man did not come for bread for himself, but for his friend" — a picture of intercession. Delay is not denial: "If he do not answer our prayers presently, yet he will in due time, if we continue to pray." And he names the chief request: "The gift of the Holy Ghost is a gift we are every one of us concerned earnestly and constantly to pray for."

III
MOVEMENT

LUKE 11:14–28

Someone Stronger Than He

A mute man speaks, critics cry Beelzebul, and Jesus plunders the strong man's house

14 *And He was casting out a demon, and it was mute; when the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke; and*
the crowds were amazed. 15 *But some of them said, "⚠ He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of the*
demons." 16 *Others, to test Him, were demanding of Him a ⇄ sign from heaven.* 17 *But He knew their thoughts*
and said to them, "Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and a house divided against itself falls. 18 *"If*
Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by
Beelzebul. 19 *"And if I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? So they will be your*
judges. 20 *"But if I cast out demons △ by the finger of God, then ☆ the kingdom of God has come upon you.*
21 *"When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are undisturbed.* 22 *"But when*
△ someone stronger than he attacks him and overpowers him, he takes away from him all his armor on which he
had relied and distributes his plunder. 23 *"⚠ He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather*
with Me, scatters. 24 *"When the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest,*
and not finding any, it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' 25 *"And when it comes, it finds it*
swept and put in order. 26 *"Then it goes and takes along seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they go in*
and live there; and ⚠ the last state of that man becomes worse than the first." 27 *While Jesus was saying these*
things, one of the women in the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, "Blessed is the womb that bore You and
the breasts at which You nursed." 28 *But He said, "On the contrary, ☆ blessed are those who hear the word of God*
and observe it."

LUKE 11:14–28

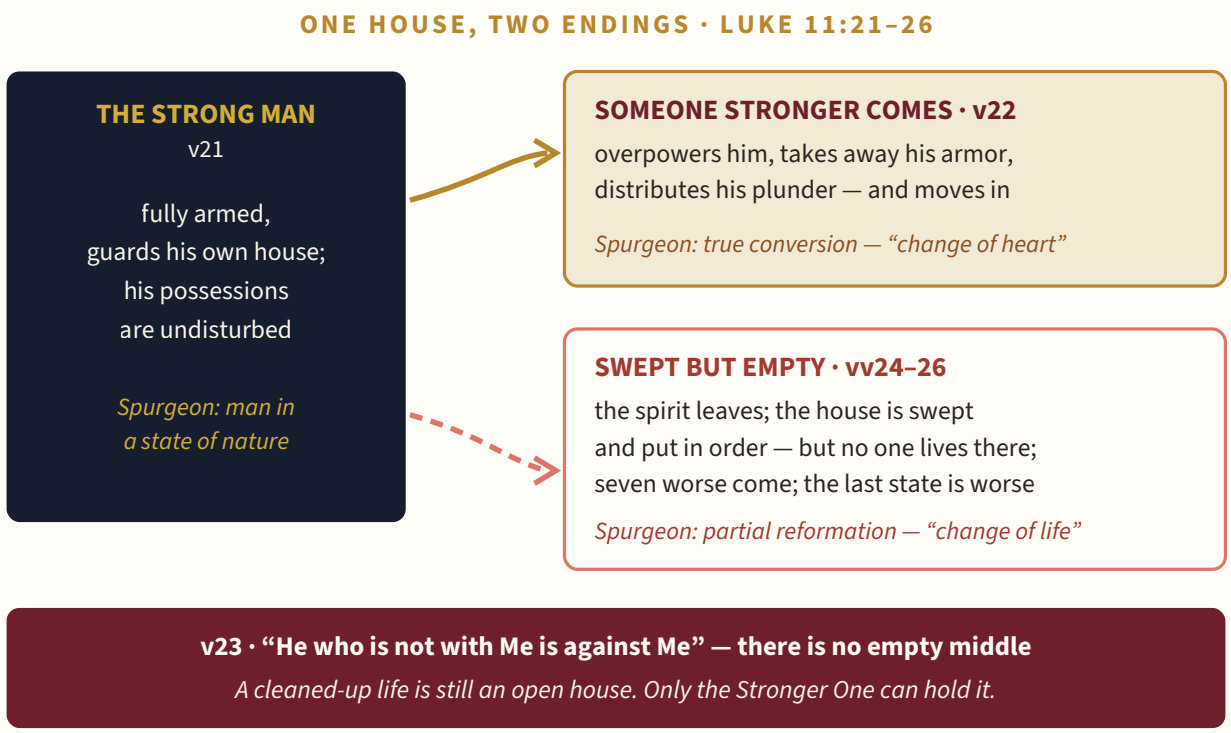
"Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God." But Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had said."

EXODUS 8:19

"Surely, thus says the LORD, "Even the captives of the mighty man will be taken away, And the prey of the tyrant will be rescued; For I will contend with the one who contends with you, And I will save your sons."

ISAIAH 49:25

FIGURE · ONE HOUSE, TWO ENDINGS



Follow the two arrows out of the strong man's house: one leads to the Stronger One moving in, the other to a swept, empty house that ends worse than it began.

δάκτυλος θεοῦ

DAKTYLOS THEOU · "FINGER OF GOD" · G1147

Daktylos, finger. Pharaoh's magicians said "This is the finger of God" when they could not copy the gnats (Exodus 8:19); it was the power no magic could copy. Matthew's parallel says "by the Spirit of God" (Matthew 12:28). The same word returns in verse 46: the lawyers will not touch men's burdens "with one of your fingers." One finger of God frees a man; the lawyers will not lift one finger to help one.

ἰσχυρότερος

ISCHYROTEROS · "STRONGER" · G2478

The comparative of *ischyros*, strong, mighty. The "strong man" (v. 21) is *ho ischyros*; the one who overpowers him is *ischyroteros*, "stronger." Luke used the same comparative in John the Baptist's mouth: "One is coming who is mightier than I" (3:16). Isaiah had asked, "Can the prey be taken from the mighty man, Or the captives of a tyrant be rescued?" and answered, "Even the captives of the mighty man will be taken away" (49:24–25). In Jesus that promise walks into the strong man's house.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes that the critics could not deny the miracle, so they slandered its source; Jesus answers that a divided kingdom falls, and Guzik quotes Bruce: "Satan may be wicked, He says in effect, but he is not a fool." Jesus is the stronger man who strips Satan of his armor, and with Geldenhuys he warns that "In the conflict against the powers of darkness there is no room for neutrality." An emptied life is not a saved life: "He did not come to merely empty the house, but to fill it with Himself." On verses 27–28: "This does not demean Mary; but it does honor and bless the one who hears and keeps God's word."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul's "A House Divided" (20 October 2013) insists on the limits of the enemy: "Satan is not God; Satan is a creature." "He does not have the attribute of omnipresence, nor is he omnipotent." Satan can produce lying signs and wonders (2 Thessalonians 2), but not true miracles, because miracles authenticate God's word: "The truth of sacred Scripture, the truth of the gospel, and the truth of Christ were authenticated by miracles." "There is nothing ordinary about a miracle." His practical warning matches verse 26 — casting out is not enough unless the person is filled by the Holy Spirit. In his next sermon he reads verse 28: "as blessed as Mary was to be His mother, you are even more blessed."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's "The Strong One Driven Out by a Stronger One" (No. 613, 5 February 1865) has three heads: man in a state of nature, partial reformation, and true conversion. Satan keeps his palace well — "You may find sleeping saints, but never sleeping devils" — and his captives feel no alarm. Worse is the man the devil leaves of his own accord: "The unclean spirit is gone out of the man, and that is all." Such a man may go to ruin respectably. Only when Christ enters by His Spirit is the strong man bound: "This is conversion, the other was only conviction; this is change of heart, the other was only change of life."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry calls the healing "a general proof of his divine mission, by a particular proof of his power over Satan," and the slander shows that "Obstinate infidelity will never be at a loss for something to say in its own excuse." The strong man's defeat is every conversion: "The conversion of a soul to God is Christ's victory over the devil and his power in that soul." The swept house warns the half-reformed: "Hypocrisy is the high road to apostasy." To the woman who blessed Mary he answers with Jesus: "Though it is a great privilege to hear the word of God, yet those only are truly blessed" who keep it.

IV
MOVEMENT

LUKE 11:29–36

Something Greater Is Here

The sign of Jonah, the Queen of the South, and the lamp of the body

29 *As the crowds were increasing, He began to say, "⚠ This generation is a wicked generation; it seeks for a ⟲ sign, and yet no ⟲ sign will be given to it but ◷ the sign of Jonah.* 30 *"For just as Jonah became a ⟲ sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to this generation.* 31 *"The Queen of the South will rise up with the men of this generation at the judgment and condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, △ something greater than Solomon is here.* 32 *"The men of Nineveh will stand*

up with this generation at the judgment and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, △ something greater than Jonah is here. 33 *"No one, after lighting a lamp, puts it away in a cellar nor under a basket, but on the lampstand, so that those who enter may see the light.* 34 *"The eye is the lamp of your body; when your eye is clear, your whole body also is full of light; but when it is bad, your body also is full of darkness.* 35 *"Then watch out that the light in you is not darkness.* 36 *"If therefore your whole body is full of light, with no dark part in it, it will be wholly illumined, as when the lamp illumines you with its rays."*

LUKE 11:29–36

σημεῖον

SĒMEION · "SIGN" · G4592

A sign, a mark, a token that points beyond itself. The word comes five times in these verses (vv. 16, 29 ×3, 30). The crowd wanted "a sign from heaven" (v. 16) on their terms; Jesus gives them a person: "just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to this generation" (v. 30). Matthew spells out the three days and nights (12:40); Luke stresses the preaching that called Nineveh to repent (v. 32). Either way the sign is Jesus Himself, dead and raised.

ἁπλοῦς

HAPLOUS · "CLEAR" · G573

Literally "single, simple, without folds" — the KJV's "single" eye. Only here and Matthew 6:22. Its opposite in verse 34 is *ponēros* (G4190), "bad, evil," the same word as the "wicked" generation of verse 29. A clear eye looks one way and lets the light in; a bad eye is double, clouded by other aims. The problem Jesus diagnoses is not a lack of light — the Light is standing in front of them — but eyes that will not receive it.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik sees the demand for a sign as a refusal dressed up as a request: "It is easy to overestimate the power of miraculous signs to change the heart of doubters and skeptics." Jesus offers only Jonah, and that sign is Jesus: "Jesus Himself is the sign; we are to believe in Him, not a sign." The Queen of the South and the Ninevites, Gentiles who listened to lesser messengers, will condemn a generation that ignored a greater one. On the lamp, he quotes Spurgeon: "If you do not see Jesus, it is not because he has hidden himself in darkness, but because your eyes are blinded."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul's "Seeking a Sign" (10 November 2013) says the generation was "wicked" because it had seen God incarnate and still asked for proof — more light made the unbelief worse. Jonah's time in the fish points to Christ's burial and resurrection: "God has already provided you with the ultimate sign." He presses the gospel as a summons: "God does not invite people to come to Jesus," he says, but commands all to repent and believe — "No R.S.V.P. comes with the gospel." And the lamp: "Without Him, your whole life is darkness." "The gospel is the light of the world because Christ is the light of the world."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's exposition of these verses reads the sign of Jonah as resurrection in picture: "Jonah rose, as it were, from the dead, for he was buried in the deep, in the belly of the whale." On the lamp of the body he warns that the most dangerous darkness is a false light — "If thy religion be irreligion, if thy hope be a false one, if thy highest aspirations are untrue," then the light in a man is darkness indeed. Guzik's page carries his line on the same theme: "If you do not see Jesus, it is not because he has hidden himself in darkness, but because your eyes are blinded."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry notes the openness of Christ's ministry — "Christ did not preach in corners" — so the generation had no excuse. The sign of Jonas points to His resurrection, and "The Ninevites would rise up in judgment against them, and condemn their impenitency," because heathen repented at one prophet's word. On the eye he counsels honesty with ourselves: "Take heed that the eye of the mind be not blinded by partiality, and prejudice, and sinful aims." A sincere, undivided understanding receives the gospel's light.

V
MOVEMENT

LUKE 11:37–54

Woe to You

Clean cups, dirty hearts, heavy burdens, and the key of knowledge taken away

37 *Now when He had spoken, a Pharisee asked Him to have lunch with him; and He went in, and reclined at the*
table. 38 *When the Pharisee saw it, he was surprised that He had not first ceremonially washed before the meal.*
39 *But the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the platter; but* ⚠ *inside of*
you, you are full of robbery and wickedness. 40 *"You foolish ones, did not He who made the outside make the*
inside also? 41 *"But give that which is within as charity, and then all things are clean for you.* 42 *"But* 🔁 *woe to*
you Pharisees! For you pay tithe of mint and rue and every kind of garden herb, and yet ⚠ *disregard justice and*
the love of God; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. 43 *"*🔁 *Woe to you*
Pharisees! For you love the chief seats in the synagogues and the respectful greetings in the market places.
44 *"*🔁 *Woe to you! For you are like concealed tombs, and the people who walk over them are unaware of it."*
45 *One of the lawyers said to Him in reply, "Teacher, when You say this, You insult us too."* 46 *But He said,*
"🔁 *Woe to you lawyers as well! For you weigh men down with burdens hard to bear, while you yourselves will not*
even touch the burdens with one of your fingers. 47 *"*🔁 *Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and it*
was your fathers who killed them. 48 *"So you are witnesses and approve the deeds of your fathers; because it was*
they who killed them, and you build their tombs. 49 *"For this reason also the wisdom of God said, 'I will send to*
them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and some they will persecute, 50 *so that the blood of*
all the prophets, shed since the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation, 51 *from the blood*
of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the house of God; yes, I tell you, it shall be
charged against this generation.' 52 *"*🔁 *Woe to you lawyers! For* ⚠ *you have taken away the key of knowledge; you*
yourselves did not enter, and you hindered those who were entering." 53 *When He left there, the scribes and the*
Pharisees began to be very hostile and to question Him closely on many subjects, 54 ⚠ *plotting against Him to*
catch Him in something He might say.

LUKE 11:37–54

FIGURE · SIX WOES AT THE TABLE

SIX WOES AT THE TABLE · LUKE 11:37–54

vv38–41 · The host is surprised Jesus did not wash. Jesus: you clean the outside of the cup — "did not He who made the outside make the inside also?"

TO THE PHARISEES	TO THE LAWYERS
WOE · v42 tithe mint and rue, neglect justice and God's love	**WOE · v46** load men with burdens, will not lift one finger
WOE · v43 love the chief seats and the greetings in the market	**WOE · vv47–51** build the prophets' tombs; your fathers killed them
WOE · v44 concealed tombs — people defiled without knowing	**WOE · v52** took away the key of knowledge; kept others from entering

vv53–54 · The answer to the woes: hostility, close questioning, "plotting against Him to catch Him in something He might say."

Three woes for the Pharisees and three for the lawyers, framed by a dirty cup at the start and a plot at the end.

οὐαί

OUAI · "WOE" · G3759

An interjection of grief and warning, like "alas!" — part lament, part sentence of judgment. Jesus says it six times in verses 42–52, three to the Pharisees and three to the lawyers. Luke used it first in the Sermon on the Plain: "woe to you who are rich" (6:24–26). A woe is not a curse thrown in anger; it is the voice of the One who will judge, telling the truth while there is still time to hear it.

κλείς

KLEIS · "KEY" · G2807

A key. The lawyers held "the key of knowledge" (v. 52) — the Scriptures and the right to explain them — and used it to lock the door. Matthew's parallel says they "shut off the kingdom of heaven from people" (23:13). The word comes again in Revelation, where the risen Christ holds "the keys of death and of Hades" (1:18). Verse 54's "catch" is *thēreuō* (G2340), a hunter's word for trapping game; it is found only here in the New Testament.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes that Jesus accepted the Pharisee's invitation and then offended him by skipping a ritual washing the Law never required. The woes expose religion that is all surface: "Being good at all the outward things of Christianity doesn't mean you are necessarily a good Christian." Concealed tombs were a horror to a Jew — "Walking over a grave ceremonially defiled a Jewish person, even if they didn't know it was there." The lawyers' last woe is the heaviest: "It is far worse to hinder another person from entering in." He quotes Morgan on the woes: "They stand upon the page for evermore speaking to us of 'the wrath of the Lamb.'"

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul's "Woes to Hypocrites" (24 November 2013) first defends the church against a cliché: "I simply do not think it is true that the church is full of hypocrites." Sin is not the same as hypocrisy: "If I claim to be sinless and then sin, I am guilty of hypocrisy." Of the meal he says, "No human being ever sat down for dinner with cleaner hands than Jesus Christ." The Pharisees' problem: "You look good on the surface, but inside, the filth remains." He notes soberly, "It was the clergy that hated Jesus," warns teachers of stricter judgment, and asks each hearer: "Is your Christian faith and Christian commitment a matter of the surface?"

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's exposition makes the cup personal: "One needs washing as much as the other. You are so careful of your hands; will you not be more careful of your hearts?" He sees party loyalty replacing obedience: "They would not violate the law of their sect or party for the world, but the law of God is of small account to them." The lawyers' rules were "like huge faggots or crushing burdens bound together" on other men's backs, and their final sin was the worst: "They ought to have helped men into the kingdom; instead of doing so, they hindered those who were entering."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry says Jesus reproves the Pharisees "for laying stress upon trifles, and neglecting the weighty matters of the law," and on giving he writes, "What we have is not our own, unless God have his dues out of it." The lawyer's complaint in verse 45 is typical: "It is a common thing for unhumbled sinners to call and count reproofs reproaches." Hiding the key is worse than ignorance: "It is bad for people to be averse to revelation, but much worse to be adverse to it." And the plot that follows is no surprise: "Faithful reprovers of sin must expect to have many enemies."

VI
THEME

CROSS-REFERENCES

The Passage in the Whole Bible

From the Father of lights to the blood of Abel

> *"He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?"*
>
> ROMANS 8:32

> *“Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.”*
>
> JAMES 1:17

> *“John answered and said to them all, “As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”*
>
> LUKE 3:16

> *“Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them.”*
>
> JONAH 3:5

> *“Now when the queen of Sheba heard about the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, she came to test him with difficult questions.”*
>
> 1 KINGS 10:1

> *“Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, “I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.””*
>
> JOHN 8:12

> *“so that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.”*
>
> MATTHEW 23:35

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry sums up the whole chapter’s invitation: “The gospel will come into those souls whose doors and windows are thrown open to receive it.”

SECTION II · STUDY HELPS

At a Glance

Four voices, one chapter

Four teachers, one chapter. Guzik walks the text and quotes a crowd of older commentators; Sproul preaches the doctrine — why we pray, what Satan cannot do, why the gospel is a command; Spurgeon pleads with sinners and saints to ask for the Spirit and to let the Stronger One in; Henry turns each verse into counsel. They differ in places — Sproul's reading of Revelation 3:20 is not everyone's — and agree on the main thing: the Father gives, and Jesus is greater than every sign.

THE MOVEMENT	GUZIK · the text	SPROUL · the doctrine	SPURGEON · the heart	HENRY · the counsel
I · The pattern prayer	Our greatest need is to pray more; a marvel of simplicity.	A pattern, not a script; pray with the mind of Christ.	— (no Spurgeon sermon on vv1–4 sourced here)	Prayer is a law of religion; sins are daily debts.
II · Ask, seek, knock	Persistence changes us, not God; the problem is our receiving.	Asking is for our benefit; only the converted truly seek.	No counterfeits: fish is fish; the Spirit is the best prayer.	God is not worn down; the man asked for his friend.
III · The stronger Man	Satan is no fool; no neutrality; Jesus fills the house.	Satan is a creature; miracles authenticate the gospel.	Nature, reformation, conversion — change of heart, not life.	Conversion is Christ's victory; hypocrisy is the road to apostasy.
IV · The sign of Jonah	Jesus Himself is the sign; signs cannot change a heart.	The ultimate sign is given; no R.S.V.P. with the gospel.	Jonah's rising pictures Christ's; a false light is darkness.	Christ preached openly; keep the mind's eye clear.
V · Six woes	Outward goodness is not a good heart; hindering others is worse.	Sin is not hypocrisy; the clergy hated Jesus.	Wash the heart, not just the hands; they hindered the entering.	Trifles over weighty things; reprovers must expect enemies.

LUKE 11:1–54 · A COMPARATIVE READING

† Key Insights to Carry

- **They asked to be taught after watching Him.** Luke shows Jesus praying more than any Gospel (3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:29). The disciples did not ask how to preach or heal; they asked, "Lord, teach us to pray" (v1). THE TEXT
- **God's name before my needs.** Two "Your" requests come before three "us" requests. Sproul: "Don't you know that God will not hold you guiltless for using His name in a cavalier way?" SPROUL
- **Shameless asking.** *Anaideia* (v8), found only here, means "shamelessness." The point runs from lesser to greater: if a sleepy neighbor gives, how much more a Father who never sleeps. THE GREEK
- **Keep asking.** All three verbs in verse 9 are present imperatives. Guzik: "Our persistence doesn't change God; it changes us." GUZIK
- **The best gift is the Spirit.** Matthew says "what is good" (7:11); Luke names the best of them — the Holy Spirit (v13). Spurgeon: the best prayer is the one surest of an answer. SPURGEON
- **One finger of God.** The finger of God frees a mute man (v20); the lawyers will not lift "one of your fingers" to help anyone (v46). Same word, *daktylos*. THE GREEK
- **A clean, empty house is not safe.** Spurgeon: "This is conversion, the other was only conviction; this is change of heart, the other was only change of life." Guzik: He came to fill the house with Himself. SPURGEON

- **Hearing and keeping beats every privilege.** A woman blessed Mary's womb; Jesus blessed "those who hear the word of God and observe it" (v28). Sproul: "you are even more blessed." SPROUL
- **Jesus is the sign.** Guzik: "Jesus Himself is the sign; we are to believe in Him, not a sign." Gentiles who heard lesser messengers will judge those who ignored a greater one (vv31–32). GUZIK
- **The worst woe is a locked door.** The lawyers took away the key of knowledge and hindered those who were entering (v52). Henry: "much worse to be adverse to it." HENRY

† Questions for the Table

1 **The disciples asked to be taught to pray after watching Jesus pray. If someone watched my life this week, what would make him want to pray?**

They asked after He had finished praying.

11:1; 5:16

2 **Which of the five requests in the Lord's Prayer do I skip most — God's name, His kingdom, bread, forgiveness or protection — and why?**

His glory first, then our needs.

11:2-4; Matt 6:9-13

3 **Where have I quit asking God for something, and what would "shameless" persistence look like there?**

Keep asking, keep seeking, keep knocking.

11:5-10

4 **Jesus says a cleaned-up life with no one living in it ends worse than it began. What have I swept out of my life that I have not yet let Christ fill?**

Change of heart, not only change of life (Spurgeon).

11:24-26

5 **What signs do I still demand from God before I will trust Him, when He has already given the sign of the risen Jesus?**

Jesus Himself is the sign (Guzik).

11:29-32; 1 Cor 15:3-4

6 **Where am I clean on the outside and dirty on the inside — and is there anyone I am weighing down with burdens I will not lift myself?**

Did not He who made the outside make the inside also?

11:39-46

Luke 11 begins with a disciple asking to be taught to pray and ends with religious experts lying in wait to catch Jesus in His words. In between, the Father promises His Spirit to those who keep asking, the Stronger One overpowers the strong man, and the Light stands in the room. Ask, seek and knock — and let Him who made the outside clean the inside too.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

† Sources

Each teacher's section summarizes the pages below in our own words; short quotations are verbatim from them. Matthew Henry (1662–1714) completed his *Commentary* himself through the Gospels and Acts. Henry's Commentary and C.H. Spurgeon (1834–1892) are in the public domain; Guzik and Sproul are summarized — consult each author's own work.

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