

LEARNING TO PRAY LIKE JESUS

Lesson #1_ Jesus' Prayer Life

Prayer is one of those things we tend to talk a lot about, even study a lot about, in the church_ but when it comes right down to praying? Far too many of us lack follow through. Jesus, on the other hand, talked about prayer out of the overflow of what He was actually experiencing. **Hebrews 5:7** says: *During the days of Jesus' life on earth, He offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save Him from death, and He was heard because of His reverent submission.*

The word "prayer" or a form of it is used at least **25** times in connection with Jesus in the Gospel accounts. There are also many instances where the specific word may not be used, but it is obvious He was engaged in prayer. Jesus, of course, had many outstanding characteristics, but one thing that is very apparent is His devotion to prayer.

Over the next few weeks we'll lookong to Him for not only our instruction, but for an example of what can honestly be called **"a prayer life"**- which is something many of His followers lack. Even a casual read though of the Gospel accounts reveals a lot about Jesus' view of prayer. For instance, look at the insert in your bulletin and you'll find several references to Jesus' personal prayers...

(Matthew 14:23) *After He had dismissed them, He went up on a mountainside by Himself to pray. When evening came, He was there alone.* **(Matthew 26:36)** *Then Jesus went with His disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and He said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray."* **(Mark 1:35)** *Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went off to a solitary place, where He prayed.* **(Mark 6:46)** *After leaving them, He went up on a mountainside to pray.* **(Luke 5:15-16)** *Yet the news about Him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear Him and to be healed of their sicknesses.* **But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.** **(Luke 6:12)** *One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God.* **(Luke 9:18)** *Once when Jesus was praying in private and His disciples were with Him, He asked them, "Who do the crowds say that I am?"* **(John 6:15)** *Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make Him King by force, withdrew again to a mountain by Himself.*

If we gain nothing else from this sampling, we should be able to see that Jesus routinely prayed alone. And think about it. What you do when you're all by yourself says a lot about who you really are and what really matters to you. His example indicates that prayer was an integral part of His life.

Jesus saw prayer to be a **DIRECT LINK** to His Father. When He prayed, Jesus communicated with His Father one on one. He spoke to His father_ and then He opened His heart for a response. Those who know me know I'm not much for talking on the phone. If I call you, it is usually just to exchange information. It's not for conversation. That's one reason I prefer to text. Short and sweet; to the point. But, if I'm with you, talking face to face, well, I'm seldom at a loss for words. I could talk with you for hours. If need be, I can talk to you for quite awhile, as well. I'm afraid we don't see prayer as an open conversation with our Father. Jesus did. If we did, we'd likely pray more than we do.

Jesus also saw prayer to be a source of both **DIVINE WISDOM** and **STRENGTH**. In **John 5:30** Jesus said He couldn't do anything that the Father didn't enable Him to do_ and in **John 12:49-50** that He didn't say anything the Father didn't instruct Him to say. So When He was about to perform a mighty miracle such as feeding multitudes or raising a man dead for **4** days, He prefaced it with prayer. When He had to face a grueling task, He prayed fervently until He got an answer.

When He had an important decision to make, like choosing His apostles, He spent the previous night in prayer. If the Son of God did this, why would we think we can make it on our own?

For Jesus, prayer came as natural as **BREATHING**. It's not that Jesus didn't pray in the synagogue_ or before meals, or at bedtime, but He prayed much more often than that. Though I am confident that Jesus wasn't engaged in what we might call formal prayer all of the time, He paused as any of us must to put into action what we pray about_ likely meditating upon His Father's word before praying more_ but it's as if He never truly stopped praying. Paul urges us in the Thessalonian letter to pray without ceasing. Jesus is our model for that.

So, when we talk about praying like Jesus, is it that we want our prayers to be responded to like Jesus' prayers were_ or that we want to be responsive to our Father as Jesus was in prayer?

When was the last time you retired to "a mountain" to pray? I speak metaphorically, for it needn't have been an elevated place on a physical plane_ it's not about altitude_ but **solitude**. Is there nowhere that you can go to lift up your heart and hands in prayer? No solitary, secluded spot where you go_ not to catch a nap_ but to communicate with your Father in heaven? Jesus realized the value of getting away for one on one time with the Father. I have a few places where I sometimes go just to pray. They aren't always far away_ but they are away from the office, where I can have some uninterrupted time with God. One such place is a lay by on **Rt. 70**. Sometimes, on the way back from a visit in Durand, I pull over, silence my phone, and pray. It's not always for long. But, it's always meaningful.

When did you last rise up early for the sole purpose of **seeking God's face in prayer?** You may do it to go to work_ or to go fishing or play a round of golf on your day off. But, to pray? My wife does this routinely. Me, I'm not a morning person_ though I've often set my alarm to wake up for the specific purpose of praying for someone going into surgery or facing a crisis. Jesus on the other hand seemed to have an internal clock that awakened His heart to communicate with His Father. As the sun rose, so did the Son of God.

And when, if ever, have you **spent the entire night praying?** I confess that I have done that in times of crisis or extreme anxiety. On my knees, in a hospital chapel_ or walking deserted, snow covered streets at midnight. A time or two there were prayer vigils at retreats, where we spent a good part of the time praying_ but we spent quite a bit of time just visiting among ourselves. Maybe that's why Jesus chose to do most of His prayer vigils solo. He gave up physical rest for a rest in His father's presence. He found strength and refreshment in prayer.

Have you ever **struggled in prayer** so intently you worked up a sweat_ let alone prayed so hard that drops of blood seeped out of your pores? Jesus did. I've never come close to that. Jesus wrestled with surrendering His will so fervently that He showed physical signs of stress. I've prayed when I've been stressed, but haven't stressed praying enough. Maybe I'd see more victory in my life if I did.

I want to experience the power of prayer. I need to learn to pray like Jesus. It will take an investment of time and energy. And as trite as it might sound, the place to begin is likely in prayer_ asking God the Father to open our hearts to the reality of His presence and to fill us with a longing to converse with Him. May He awaken us to what we've been missing. **Close with prayer...**