

## Pray Like Jesus (Part 1)

I was out the other night praying. Pouring it all out to the Lord. Honestly, so it doesn't come across as a subtle brag (you know being seen by others so you can be praised - Jesus said something about that), it had been way too long. Too long since I'd prayed like that. It was an unusually difficult day (the details aren't important), but I needed God. You know what I mean? I needed Him. Needed to talk to Him. Not because it's therapeutic (though, it heals the soul, doesn't it?). No, because it's real. He really listens. He's a problem solver. He's a great physician, you know. It was one of those prayers when you feel so connected - so in sync with the Lord. I love it when Jesus prayed, *"Father, I thank you that you have heard Me. I knew that you always hear Me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that You sent Me"* (John 11:41-42). He prayed that right before He called Lazarus from the dead. *Don't you love that?* Such confidence in the Father. Such a closeness. Don't you want that with Him? I remembered how Jesus, after hearing about the death of John and seeing the disciples return to tell Him of their successful ministry, and after feeding the 5,000 that very long day . . . Jesus went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. He prayed for a long time that evening. As I walked and talked that night I looked at the stars and moon. Thought about how Jesus looked at those same stars and moon. Thought about how Jesus created those same start and moon. Thought about how beautiful the light is in the dark - how mankind can run from Him, but we know who made them. God all around us. It was a beautiful evening with the Lord.

Yet, I find myself always coming back to prayer because it's not always consistent or I continue to work out my struggles in prayer. I want my prayer to grow like my faith - and it does grow as my faith grows. The more I learn, the more it affects my prayer. The more I love and trust - the more my prayer changes. But, it's at this point that I feel the need to speak on something for a moment. As powerful as prayer is (and it's very powerful, brethren), it's not the most important thing (as I recently heard a brother say - and he was right). Do you know what our number one focus should be? "Evangelism!" Well, of course that's wonderful, but no. "Oh, studying God's word, because you wouldn't know anything about Him or any news to share or know what to pray!" Well, that definitely has logic behind it, but there are a lot of people who know a lot about Jesus, but something is still missing. **Our main focus is to love God and follow Jesus.** We are disciples of Christ. We are Christ followers - that's why commit ourselves to more study, evangelism, prayer, benevolence and growing in faith. Why?



Because that's what Christ did, brethren, and we want to be like Him. It's so simple, yes? You know that. Yet it's so easy to forget.

With that in mind, we want to follow Jesus' example. This isn't because His prayers are the only important ones recorded. Not at all! In fact, the actual prayers you can read about in the bible, the ones that move you, probably come from outside the gospel accounts. The Bible gives some detail about what Jesus said in prayers, but not a ton. However, we need to remember that if anyone is in the position to teach us about prayer, it would be God. Jesus was God in the flesh. You remember what Paul wrote, correct? *"For in Him the fullness of God was pleased to dwell"* (Colossians 1:19). Jesus knows a little something about prayer. Who better to teach us about prayer? What better example to follow than Jesus?

We know He prayed frequently. I don't think it would be necessary to list all the times He prayed, but just to give you an idea, I'm looking at a list of 25 different times He prays (most of them are simply stating that He prayed). I'm also looking at a list of around 10 different teachings on prayer. It's a lot. But, there's something that sticks out to me - they mostly have to do with His work. Sometimes it's Jesus praying before a meal (though we are tempted to say it's not spiritual focused, but physical, however, there is a sense in which all things are spiritual because they come from God, like the spiritual water and food mentioned in 1 Corinthians 10:3-4, because they come from God, thus spiritual), but most of the time it's tied to His work. What would be some big events in Jesus life?

- Baptism? Yep, and He prayed at it (Luke 3:21-22).
- Wilderness? It doesn't say prayer, but He's fasting for 40 days. Fasting was connected to prayer, so it's implied. What do you think He was doing for 40 days . . . playing Sudoku?
- Starting His ministry? Right again (Mark 1:35-39).
- Picking the 12 apostles? (Luke 6:12-13)
- Transfiguration? (Luke 9:28-29).
- Last night with His disciples? (John 17).
- Before He'll be crucified? (Matthew 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42; Luke 22:39-46)
- On the cross? (Luke 23:34; Matthew 27:46; John 19:30; Luke 23:46)
- His final ascension? (Luke 24:50-53)

What we notice about Jesus is that prayer comes first. Why? Brethren, I want to spend a little time talking about the power of prayer. Where is Jesus in all of this without the



Father? Let's face it - we go to God in prayer because we need help. Now, we'll talk more about our focus in prayer next week, but there's nothing wrong with asking for help. In fact, consider this passage: **1 Timothy 2:1-6**, *"First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time."*

- In this passage, Paul is putting things in priority. After an introduction to Timothy, he gets to the number one item on the list: prayer. This prayer is for all people and rulers. It brings hope that peaceful lives are led and the gospel is shared.

We need the Father's help, brethren. There is real power in prayer - there's something that God provides that we cannot - or else why pray? Think about these passages in a different light:

- **James 1:5**, "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him." Why pray if you can do it without Him? Are you saying the flesh, that your human will and effort, isn't enough? Speaking of wisdom . . .
- **James 3:17**, "But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace." You can do this without the Lord, correct? Because all of this heavenly wisdom is in you and you don't need to pray about it, right? By the way - how often could you use this wisdom in your day to day?
  - Think it would be helpful in your marriage?
  - Think it would be helpful in parenting?
  - Think it would be helpful when dealing with the world . . . who uses earthly wisdom? Anyone angry right now? Have you been praying to God before you speak, go to work, start the day off right?
  - Think a local church could use this? Let me ask you something - how much do you think we could use prayer? How often should we be praying as a group? Honest question - maybe a time to reflect - do we pray enough as a group? I love the passage in **Acts 4:23-24**, after Peter and John were released from the council, they told their friends (not brethren - I just love that subtlety there),



*"And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, 'Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, etc.'". Do we pray enough together? Or what about Peter later was in prison in Acts 12:5, "But earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church." You know what's funny - when Peter is rescued by an angel, he comes to the house of Mary, where many were gathered together and were praying. A servant girl named Rhoda comes to the door when he knocks, gets so excited that she doesn't open the gate and tells the others. Their response? Acts 12:15-16, "They said to her, 'You are out of your mind.' But she kept insisting that it was so, and they kept saying, 'It is his angel!' But Peter continued knocking, and when they opened, they saw him and were amazed."* What a hilarious scene. It's probably his angel, but not Peter! They were praying for God to help, He did, and they couldn't believe it!

- What about James 4:1-4, *"What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."*
  - Do you see what this is always saying? If you're so good to do it on your own, they why don't you have it? Either way, whether you asked God or not - you don't get it. OR, of course, you get it in ungodly ways. Either way - you did it incorrectly.

Listen, the Bible doesn't teach (as I've heard one guy say recently, "try harder, do better". It teaches, "repent and rely". I appreciated that. Don't tell someone with marital problems, "try hard, do better." Don't tell someone addicted to ungodly images, "try harder, do better." Don't encourage someone who feels they lack faith in God, "try harder, do better." Now, that's not to say that we don't pick ourselves back up and try again, but we do it, brethren, while totally relying on God and His power. Wasn't it Paul who said, "I can do all things THROUGH CHRIST WHO STRENGTHENS ME!" Isn't that the passage we like? We're not looking for people who, "try hard, do better", but rather, who lean on God through prayer who become more like Jesus by the strength of God.