



THE PRAYER CLOSET

*Transforming Lives Through Intercessory
Prayer And Fasting*

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE PRAYER CLOSET MINISTRIES, INC.

VOLUME III

APRIL, 2000

ISSUE 3

THE PRAYER LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST

When Jesus Christ lived on earth He really did pray. Now that may be an obvious fact to you. Yet, it is a truth that is taken for granted by most believers. Believers do not take seriously the fact that Christ prayed while He was on earth. As you read the gospels, it is clear that Jesus taught about prayer. In the gospels, the teaching of Christ concerning prayer is recorded for our benefit and instruction. Yet, at the same time, the truth that Jesus prayed is also recorded for our benefit and instruction.

Jesus teaches the believer how to pray not only by what He said but what He did. He shows the believer how to pray by praying. After all, the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray after they heard Jesus praying. The Word of God

says in **Luke 11:1**, "And it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, 'Lord teach us to pray, as John also taught His disciples.'" It was not His teaching on prayer that brought about this request. This request came when the disciples heard Jesus praying. With hushed and awed hearts, they heard and watched the Son of God pray. Hearing Jesus Christ pray moved them to ask Him to teach them how to pray.

This issue of *The Prayer Closet* will focus on the prayer life of Jesus Christ. There is much that we need to learn from His example of praying. His prayer life is an almost infinite subject. Much could be written about it. This issue will cover some basic issues concerning His prayer life. It is our hope and prayer that these truths will encourage and motivate you in your own personal prayer life. Our study of the prayer life of Jesus Christ will focus on two areas: *why Jesus needed to pray and the lessons that we can learn from His prayer life.*

ISSUE 3 - HIGHLIGHTS

THE PRAYER LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST

Why Did Jesus Need to Pray?

The Lessons We Can Learn From the
Prayer Life of Jesus

Praying For Revival: Dealing With
Unbelief

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NEW PRAYER PRODUCTS

Why Did Jesus Need to Pray?

You may be thinking, "How can I learn anything from Jesus' prayer life? After all, He is God." You need to understand that Jesus Christ needed to pray. Why did Jesus need to pray? There are several reasons why Jesus needed to pray. *The first reason that Jesus needed to pray is because He is human.* The Word of God teaches that Jesus

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Christ is both fully God and fully man. This is at the heart, the core, of Christianity. Most believers have no problem with the fact that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, God in human flesh. This fact is so evident in His life.

It is important though to balance the truth that Jesus is fully God **and** fully human. We cannot and must not forget that Jesus is fully human. To do this would undermine the truth of **John 1:14**, "The Word became *flesh*" (emphasis added). The Word of God reveals that Jesus truly shared our humanity (**Hebrews 2:14, 5:7-10**).

Many believers accept the humanity of Jesus on an intellectual level. Yet, we tend to forget what that really means. Too many times we view Jesus Christ as a superhuman. However, Jesus was human like you and me. He needed to pray like you and me. Through prayer, He had fellowship and communicated with the Father. His empowering from the Holy Spirit came through prayer. He depended on the Father through prayer. As a human, He needed to pray.

Jesus needed to pray because He needed time alone with the Father. This is evident from the fact that Jesus would withdraw from the crowds in order to pray. He needed and desired to spend time alone with the Father. The first time that we see Jesus withdrawing from the crowds was at Capernaum. Jesus' popularity had exploded. People were coming to Him from everywhere. The Word of God states in **Mark 1:35**, "Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed." This shows that Jesus made a deliberate attempt to get away from the crowds and the demands on Him in order to spend time with the Father.

After this, Jesus healed a man of leprosy. The news spread about the healing and people were coming from everywhere to hear Him and to be healed by Him. The Word of God states in **Luke 5:15**, "Then the report went around concerning Him all the more; and great multitudes came together to hear and to be healed by Him of their infirmities." What was Jesus' response to this? The Word of God says in **Luke 5:16**, "So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed." Jesus would separate Himself from the crowds and the demands of His ministry in order to spend time with the Father. This action characterized His entire

ministry. As a human, He wanted and needed that time alone with His Father. He was dependent on the Father. He showed this dependence by separating Himself and praying to the Father.

Jesus needed to pray because He needed to hear from God. Prayer is not a one-way conversation. Through prayer, we speak to God and God speaks to us. The same was true for Jesus. He prayed in order to hear from God. In other words, He prayed in order to receive guidance from the Father. Jesus began (**Luke 3:21**) and ended (**Luke 23:46**) His ministry on earth with prayer. In between there are more than 45 Scripture references to Jesus praying. This indicates a continual dependence on the Father for guidance and strength. Through prayer, Jesus received the guidance of the Father.

The Word of God says in **Luke 6:12**, "Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God." It is interesting that Luke uses a medical term in this verse. The medical term is "all night". This term was used to describe the all-night vigil of a doctor as he waited by the bedside of a patient. Jesus prayed intensely through the night. Why did Jesus spend all night praying with such intensity? The Word of God states in **Luke 6:13**, "And when it was day, He called His disciples to Him; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles." Jesus spent the night praying in order to receive guidance from the Father concerning His apostles. Jesus chose His apostles after receiving the Father's guidance through prayer.

On another occasion, Jesus needed to hear from the Father. Jesus spent an entire week trying to teach His disciples who He really was and what lay ahead for Him (**Matthew 16:13-28; Luke 9:18-27**). The disciples were shocked by this and even voiced their denial of what Jesus was trying to teach them. Satan even attempted to use Peter to discourage Jesus (**Matthew 16:22-23**). This was a sobering and difficult week for Jesus. In response to this difficult week, He withdrew to a mountain to pray, "And it came to pass, about eight days after these sayings, that He took Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain to pray (**Luke 9:28**)." While He was there, Jesus was transfigured (**Luke 9:29-36**). Jesus was shown the glory that lay ahead of Him after His crucifixion and resurrection. God also spoke to Him, affirming His role as the Savior

and Lord, "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him! (**Luke 9:35**)." After this difficult week, Jesus received encouragement from the Father. He received this affirmation and guidance from the Father through prayer.

Another reason that Jesus needed to pray is because He needed God's strength in temptation. Satan attempted at various points to sidetrack Jesus from the mission that the Father sent Him to do. He wanted to destroy Jesus and His mission. Satan attempted to do this in a variety of ways. While He was in the wilderness praying and fasting, Satan tempted Christ. He tempted Him to worship Him, to depend on Himself, and to forsake the mission given to Him by the Father (**Matthew 4:1-11**). Yet, Jesus had been fasting and praying. He had spent time alone with the Father in prayer. Jesus was able to resist decisively and completely each temptation of Satan. This period of fasting and prayer prepared Him to overcome an onslaught of temptation from Satan himself.

Satan also tempted Jesus in some subtle ways. One occasion is found in **John 6**. Jesus has just fed a crowd of more than 5,000 people. Because of this, the people were ready to make Him their king, "Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force and make Him king, He departed again to a mountain by Himself alone (**John 6:15**)." This must have been a powerful temptation for Christ. Here was an opportunity to help and "save" needy people apart from His death on the cross. This was an opportunity to "save" people without facing the agony of death. What enabled Jesus to overcome this temptation? The Word of God states in **Matthew 14:22-23**, "Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on a mountain by Himself to pray. And when evening had come, He was alone there." Jesus overcame this temptation to forsake His mission through prayer. Through prayer, He received strength to deal with this temptation. Jesus needed to pray in order to overcome temptation.

Jesus needed to pray in order to bring His will into submission to the Father's will. Jesus had to pray in order to yield Himself to the Father's will. It was the Father's will that He die on the Cross as a substitute for sinners. Since Jesus was

fully God, He desired perfect obedience to God's will. Yet, being fully human, He resisted death as any mentally stable person would. As His death grew nearer, the tension was very much on His mind. The Word of God says in **John 12:27-28**, "Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name. Then a voice came from heaven, saying, 'I have both glorified it and will glorify it again.'"

Jesus prayed this on Monday of Passion Week, the week that Jesus died on the cross. By Thursday evening, the struggle was back. In **Matthew 26:39**, Jesus prayed, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me." Jesus did not desire to go to the cross. He knew the suffering that He would endure. As a human, He did not desire to face this. Yet, Jesus continued to pray until His desires were in complete submission to God's will. As He continued to pray, Jesus declared, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will (**Matthew 26:39**).

By wrestling in prayer, Jesus submitted His will to the Father's will. His praying in the garden of Gethsemane enabled Him to do what God had called Him to do, no matter what the cost. By praying, Jesus received courage and strength. After His intense praying in the garden at Gethsemane, He said to His disciples, "Rise, let us be going. See, he who betrays Me is at hand (**Matthew 26:46**).

Jesus needed to pray in order to carry out the Father's will. It was the Father's will for Jesus to die on the cross. He would be arrested, unfairly tried, ridiculed, taunted, flogged, and nailed to a cross. Even after He prayed His will into submission to the Father's, He still needed to pray in order to endure all these things. How did Jesus react to all this treatment? He prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do (**Luke 23:34**).

Hanging on the cross, Jesus suffered intense physical pain. His soul was crushed due to bearing the sin of sinners. Through this, He experienced an awful loneliness. How could Jesus endure this? He prayed, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me (**Mark 15:34**)?" In response to this prayer, the Father enabled the Jesus to finish His task and to die with a cry of victory, "It is finished (**John 19:30**)." The final words of Jesus before He died were even a prayer, "Father, into Your hands I commend my

spirit (Luke 23:46).” In order to carry out His Father’s will, Jesus prayed.

Jesus prayed in order to carry out His ministry. Jesus’ ministry consisted of preaching, teaching, and healing. He carried this ministry out through prayer. Through prayer, He received empowerment to do ministry. Jesus prepared Himself to preach through prayer (Mark 1:35, 38). Through prayer, He received the power to cast demons out (Mark 9:29). The Word of God declares in Luke 5:17, “And the power of the Lord was present to heal them.” Why did Jesus have the power to heal on this day? The preceding verse answers this by stating, “So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed (Luke 5:16). By praying, Jesus asked for and received a fresh touch of power, mental poise, strength, and guidance from the Father. Our Lord required all these for His ministry and He found these through His communion with the Father. In order to carry out His ministry, Jesus needed to pray.

Jesus prayed in order to prepare for His present ministry. While on earth, Jesus prayed for others. He prayed for His disciples. He prayed for those who would believe on His name throughout time. He prayed for those who crucified Him. Jesus did pray for Himself, yet, He also interceded for others. This was in preparation for His current ministry. He is now in heaven at the right hand of the Father, interceding for His people (Hebrews 7:25; 1 Peter 3:22). He is the Great Intercessor for those who have surrendered to Him. It is His continuing purpose to pray for believers. He continually prays for His own people. Jesus prayed on earth in preparation for His heavenly ministry.

Jesus prayed in order to be an example to the believer. The believer is to be conformed to the image of Jesus (Romans 8:29). This means that our lives are to be molded according to His life and example. Jesus says to each of us, “Follow me (Matthew 9:9).” We are to follow His example. This is true even in the matter of prayer. We are to follow His example in prayer. Someone might say, “How can I follow the example of Jesus in prayer? He’s the Son of God.” Yes, He is the Son of God. Yet, He was also fully human. He needed to pray. He depended on the Father through prayer. His example is true and relevant for every believer. We are to follow the example that He has given us.

The Lessons We Can Learn From the Prayer Life of Jesus

The prayer life of Jesus presents some powerful lessons on prayer. The believer can apply these lessons to his or her prayer life. By applying these truths, one can enhance his or her relationship to God. The believer can deepen his or her effectiveness in prayer by following the example of Jesus in prayer. What lessons can we learn from the prayer life of Jesus Christ?

- (1) **No matter how busy you are, you need to find time to pray.** When I teach in prayer seminars or conferences, there will be believers who will tell me that they are too busy to pray. The fact of the matter is you are too busy **not** to pray. The example of Jesus should reveal this to you. The crowds constantly surrounded Jesus. He had many demands placed on Him. He preached, taught, and healed. He had to train the disciples. Jesus’ schedule was as hectic then as ours are now. An example of this is found in Mark 2. The Word of God states in Mark 2:32-33, “Now at evening, when the sun had set, they brought to Him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed. And the whole city was gathered at the door.” The text states that people brought the sick and demon-possessed at sundown. The crowd must have been large since the text says “the whole city was gathered at the door (Mark 2:33).” It is obvious that Jesus healed and set people free from demons well into the night. Jesus spent the majority of this night ministering to people. Did Jesus sleep in and say that He didn’t have time to pray? The Word says in Mark 2:35, “Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.” Jesus made the time to pray and fellowship with His Father. His schedule was filled with demands. He experienced pressure from all sides. Yet, at the same time, He made time to pray. Regardless of His schedule and demands, He deliberately pulled away from His schedule and spent time with His Father. If the Son of God needed to make time to pray, how much more do we need to make the time to pray. If you are