

Jesus Praying

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It is a worthy exercise to browse through each of the four Gospels, noting down occasions when the Lord Jesus either taught about or engaged in prayer. His exposition of prayer is largely confined to the Sermon on the Mount, where the Lord emphasises sincerity in private prayer ([Mat 6:5-8](#)) and gives the disciples a pattern prayer (6:9-15). There is repeated teaching on the principle of persistence in prayer, not least the call to continually ask, seek and knock (7:7-12; see also [Luk 18:1-8](#)). Finally, in an oft-neglected portion, He gives two parameters of prayer in [Mark 11:20-26](#). Prayer that is characterised by faith (towards God) and forgiveness (towards men) is able to move mountains! The idiom is, of course, hyperbole, but serves to illustrate the effectiveness of prayer to solve any problem and remove any difficulty.

However, this article is primarily concerned with the Lord's example in prayer, which beautifully illustrates and substantiates His teaching of the same. Luke records more of the prayer life of the Lord Jesus than any other Gospel – the perfect man was a dependent man. The article will focus on some of these Lukan examples. Sadly, space would fail to tell of the example of perfect prayer as recorded in John 17. Luke is also a Gospel that uses the related themes of priesthood and the temple. It begins with Zacharias burning incense (1:9) and closes with the disciples “continually in the temple, praising and blessing God” (24:53).^[1] Thus, Luke highlights the sweet fragrance of incense (prayer) ascending throughout the life of Christ.

An Example of Private Prayer (Luke 5:16)

It had been a long day of service. Not only had the Lord healed a man “full of leprosy” but great multitudes came together to hear and be healed by Him. At this point, Luke says, “And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed” – an ideal example of drawing aside from the distractions of the world and closing the door of the closet ([Mat 6:6](#)). The perfect man was seeking a change of atmosphere; from His constant contact with the needs and sorrows of sinners through the day, He sought the refreshment of soul that came from the presence of His Father. What a valuable resource for every believer. Surely we should constantly seek the

renewal of spiritual energy and cleansing of defilement the secret place affords.

An Example of Persevering Prayer (Luke 6:12)

In a further illustration of His teaching, the Lord Jesus “continued all night in prayer to God” (cp. [Luk 18:1](#)). His fervency in prayer was typical, and yet is explained by the events of the following day when He would make choice of his closest followers and give the greatest teaching they had ever heard. No doubt this all-night period of prayer was preparation for the demanding activities of the coming day. [John 17:8](#) shines a light on this private communion: “For I have given unto them [disciples] the words [rhema] which thou gavest me.” Morning by morning, the ear of this perfect Servant was awakened to receive daily communications and utterances from His Father, which He made known to His disciples the following day ([Isa 50:4](#)). The Father still delights to give His children special communication from Himself. It is one thing to know the Word of God, but quite another to be daily in touch with heaven and receiving messages to direct the activities of the day ahead.

Three Examples of Practical Prayer (Luke 9:16; 22:17,19; 24:30)

On three occasions in Luke, the Lord Jesus blessed food. First, at the feeding of the five thousand, He “looked up into [eis] heaven” and blessed the loaves ([Luk 9:16](#); cp. [Joh 17:1](#)). This reminds us of the moral suitability required to pray. The Publican “would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven” ([Luk 18:13](#)), for he knew that what was in his breast grieved God. Not so the Christ of God! He always had perfect moral suitability to pray. Though every believer is positionally fit to pray, the same may not be said of them practically. On a personal basis, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me” ([Psa 66:18](#)). Collectively, the males of the local assembly are not fit to lead God’s people in prayer if they cannot (metaphorically) “lift up holy hands” ([1Ti 2:8](#)).

Second, in the upper room the Lord took the bread and cup and gave thanks for them. “Giving of thanks” is an essential part of prayer ([1Ti 2:1](#)), flowing from a heart overwhelmed by the grace and goodness of God. No one knew better than Christ just what those symbols represented, and the suffering they would entail, and yet He thanked God!

Third, He blessed the bread in the home at Emmaus. Interestingly, the verbs “bless” and “brake” are aorist; He did them once. The verb “give” is imperfect, that is, He kept on giving! It is surely no coincidence that the exact form of these same verbs is also used by Luke to describe the miraculous feeding of five thousand (cf. 9:16). Perhaps these two disciples were recipients of His bounteous hand then, as now. No wonder their “eyes were opened, and they knew Him.”

In summary, these three examples remind us of something basic and practical – the necessity to give constant thanks to God for the food we eat. According to Paul, everything created by God has intrinsic worth and excellence. As such, no food is to be refused or thrown away (1Ti 4:4). That sounds like good biblical grounds for eating one’s greens!

An Example of Praise in Prayer (Luke 10:21)

This outpouring of praise is one of the few occasions where the Man of Sorrows is recorded as “rejoicing.” Why such exultation? He is rejoicing in the fact that the supreme and only God of the universe has seen fit to reveal Himself (in His Son) to mere “babes”! The twelve, and indeed the seventy, were simple men, many of whom came from Galilee. This divine revelation was not something that could be perceived or learned by natural ability or education. Even quantum physics belongs to the lowly realm of mere intellectualism. Consequently, God is glorified, not men, hence the rejoicing of the Saviour in the wisdom and purpose of God. Thanks be to God that every believer has gained an appreciation of the Son and the Father (see v22) – through no merit or achievement of our own; all is of God. Surely, we must praise Him every time we access the direct line of prayer to heaven.

An Example of Personal Prayer (Luke 22:31-32)

The Lord Jesus had perceived the impending attack of Satan on the disciples. His specific petition for Simon was “I have prayed for thee, that thy faith [permanently] fail not.” Every prayer of the Lord Jesus was answered, being in perfect accord with the will of God. Simon would fall temporarily, denying his Lord three times, but his faith would not permanently fail, being restored to the Lord personally on resurrection day, and publicly before the disciples in Galilee (Joh 21). How thankful we should be that Christ continues His ministry of personal intercession for His people today (Heb 7:25). He is “able to save to the uttermost,” that is, in degree (completely) and time (eternally). The primary thought is the

preservation and maintenance of every believer through the wilderness by His constant intercession on our behalf. Only eternity will reveal what we owe to Him! The Lord Jesus not only saves, but also loves “to the uttermost” ([Joh 13:1](#)). Thus, we are reminded of the onyx stones on the shoulders of the High Priest (saved to the uttermost) and the precious stones on his heart (loved to the uttermost). We are secure in the strength of His might and affection of His heart.

An Example of Prophetic Prayer (Luke 23:46)

The prayers of the Lord Jesus recorded by Luke at Calvary are either a fulfilment or quotation from Old Testament prophecy. Scripture should always inform and direct our prayers. First, He “made intercession for the transgressors” (cf. [Isa 53:12](#); [Luk 23:34](#)). Second, He quoted directly from [Psalm 31:5](#): “Into thine hand I commit my spirit.” This was the prayer every Jewish mother taught her young child to say last thing at night. Here, His work now complete, the eternal son of God is committing Himself and His cause into the loving hands of His Father. In recent hours He had been betrayed into the hands of sinners, and taken by “wicked hands.” No longer! [Psalm 31:5](#) continues, “Thou hast redeemed [delivered] me, O LORD God of truth.” The perfect tense describes an accomplished fact; the Lord Jesus is enjoying the assurance of answered prayer before actually receiving its fulfilment. Certainly His Father will deliver Him from the grave, and that for His own glory and honour ([Psa 22:21](#); [Rom 6:4](#)).