

## The Prayer Life of Jesus Our Lord

In the Holy Gospel of St. Luke, chapter 11, verse 1 reads, **“And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.”**

There is much to learn from this passage beyond the significant Lord's Prayer that follows it. For one, we learn that what sparked the unnamed disciples' curiosity to learn about prayer was the fact that he saw Jesus in prayer.

We also learn that John the Baptist taught his disciples to pray and, as a result, the disciples of Jesus were also interested in learning to pray, or at least one of them was! Is not interesting that out of all the disciples only one of them asked Jesus to teach them how to pray? It sometimes seems the church is in a similar situation today regarding prayer. We talk about prayer, we study prayer, we say our prayers, but how many of us actually seek earnestly for God to teach us to pray?

### Why did Jesus pray?

One way we can learn to pray is by looking at the prayer life of Jesus. Although the Gospels do not provide a detailed biography of Jesus Christ, they do offer captivating glimpses into His prayer life. First, however, it will be helpful to answer the question, **“Why did Jesus pray?”** This is sometimes puzzling for Christians. After all, if Jesus is God, why did Jesus need to pray?

Theologians state that there are at least three reasons why Jesus prayed. **First**, Jesus prayed as an example to his followers. This is an example we continue to learn from, as this note demonstrates. **Second**, the Incarnation consists of both divine and human natures. From His human nature, it was perfectly natural for a Jewish believer such as Jesus to pray. **Third**, the nature of the Trinity allows for communication between its members. As God the Son, Jesus could pray to God the Father.

### Jesus and Prayer.

**Jesus prayed for others.** In St. Matthew 19:13, we read, **“Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them.”**

Despite the fact that "the disciples rebuked those who brought them, Jesus said the children should not be hindered for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these children. In St. John 17:9 we read, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine." This underscores the need for intercessory prayer.

**Jesus prayed with others.** St. Luke 9:28 reads, "And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray." Jesus prayed alone, as we will read below, but He also knew the value of praying with others. Acts 1:14 underscores the importance of Christians praying with one another: "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren."

**Jesus prayed alone.** St. Luke 5:16 reads, "And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed." As much as Jesus understood the value of praying with and for others, He also understood the need to pray alone. Psalm 46:10 reads, "Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth." Sometimes it is important for us to "be still" before God, but the only way to do this, especially in our hectic culture, is to do so alone with God.

**Jesus prayed in nature.** Psalm 19:1 reads, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork." What better place to commune with our Creator than among the wonders of nature? St. Luke 6:12 says, "And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God."

He could have gone to a home, a synagogue or if He were near Jerusalem he could have gone to the temple to pray. But there were times when Jesus made the decision to pray where He was, which often happened to be in nature. We are surrounded by so much that is "manmade" that sometimes it is difficult for us to remember that this is not our world, but God's world full of wonders for us to enjoy – Psalm 24:1 "The earth is the LORD's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein."

**Jesus could pray as a sprinter or a marathon runner.** The Lord's Prayer is full of wisdom, but it is short enough to be easily memorized and serve as an example of a sprint rather than a marathon prayer. But Jesus also knew how to dedicate long periods of time to prayer. As we read in St. Luke 6:12, "And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God." We, too, need to be able to offer short prayers, as well dedicate long periods of our lives to prayer.

**Jesus prayed regularly.** This insight is gathered from a passage cited in the Holy Gospels that Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed. In the Holy Gospels the word "often" is not hidden, but makes it obvious that Jesus prayed regularly. Throughout the Holy Gospels whenever we read of Jesus and prayer, it comes up regularly and naturally. It was simply a part of His worldview, integrated into every aspect of Jesus' life. Can we say the same about prayer in our own life?

**The prayers of Jesus were heartfelt.** Jesus did not pray in a cold, distant manner, but in heartfelt supplication, demonstrating empathy and a genuine love for God. This is demonstrated clearly in the Holy Gospel of St. John right through chapter 17, where Jesus prays for Himself, His immediate disciples, as well as for all believers.

**Jesus prayed based on His knowledge of God and His truths.** The prayers of Jesus were based on God's revealed truths and, as such, were in line with a solid Biblical worldview. In St. John 4:24 Jesus said, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." He also said, "and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (St. John 8:32), underscoring the importance of truth in the life of Jesus and, in turn, our lives. Proper prayer requires us to have a truthful understanding of God and what He has revealed to us through His Word.

**Jesus taught persistence in prayer.** "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;" (St. Luke 18:1). The parable Jesus shared is not meant to depict a pestering disciple who finally bugs God enough that He chooses to respond, but about persistence in prayer and waiting on God and His timing.

**Jesus knew that not all his prayers would be answered as expected.** This is a difficult prayer lesson to learn, but the fact of the matter is that not all our prayers are answered in ways we expect. Even Jesus knew this hard lesson as he cried out to God the Father from Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-44). Three times Jesus prayed for God to allow an easier path, but Jesus knew, "And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." (St. Matthew 26:39).

**As you will.** When Jesus prayed in Gethsemane, yet not as I will, but as You will, He offered a tremendous but seemingly simple insight into prayer: **God is in charge.** As we learn from the prayer life of Jesus - and there is much to learn - we need to keep this overarching principle in mind; God is in charge.

A disciple asked Jesus, "**Lord, teach us to pray,**" (Luke 11:1) and in response our Lord Jesus taught the Lord's Prayer. However, by studying the prayer life of Jesus, we can learn not only the important truths of the Lord's Prayer, but so learn much more of the elements contained therein.

God Bless

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