

Building a Strategic Prayer Life 3

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Who provides the greatest example to us in terms of prayer?

Jesus.

a.) Jesus liked to pray in solitude early in the morning (Mark 1:35).

As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they immediately told Jesus about her. So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.

That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. The whole town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

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**. (Mk. 1:29-35)

- It was v early
- It was still dark
- It was a solitary place
- He prayed (didn't sleep)

As I read the gospels, it seems that Jesus didn't relate to the Father through his ministry. It seems like Jesus' relationship with the Father was much deeper than what is recorded. His ministry stems from His alone time with the Father. It flows out of that relationship. If we could draw a picture of an iceberg, what we see on the top of the water would be a small fraction of the total relating between Jesus and His father. Could this be said of us?



Jesus gives us this clue in Matthew 6:

"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. (Mat 6:5-6)

- How about you and I? Is the major portion of our relating to the Father done in secret, in our prayer closets?
- Is the major portion of our relationship with our Father between Him and I, and then everything else flows from there? Or do we relate to Him via ministry/what we do?

b.) Jesus often withdrew from the multitudes to spend time alone with the Father (Mt. 14:23; 6:46; Luke 5:16).

*However, 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. So He Himself **often withdrew** into the wilderness and prayed.* Luke 5:15-16

The most striking thing about Jesus' prayer life was how often he withdrew to pray. Prayer was an essential part of his daily life (Luke 5:16).

Jesus certainly modelled a passionate commitment to consistent prayer. To cultivate an intimate relationship with anyone you must regularly spend time with him or her.

(E.g. Frell's question re remaining connected & response re: constant communication and updates where we can.)

Dynamics of a relationship:

- e.g. Paul and I – I can't confine my relationship with him to a small slot each day where I speak to him and thereafter ignore him.
- We do need times of focused time with each other.
- Must be a both and situation.

How do you best spend alone time with your Father?

"I know your works, your labour, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. (Rev 2:2-4)

We can labour for his name's sake, have a thriving ministry and appearance of success, and yet Jesus can still have something against us, as in the example above.

We can't afford to be so successful and busy in our Lord's ministry that we forget the Lord of the ministry.

c.) Jesus received His instructions from His Father in prayer

As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they

immediately told Jesus about her. So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them. That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. The whole town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was. 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. **Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!" Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else--to the nearby villages--so I can preach there also. That is why I have come."** So he travelled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons. (Mar 1:29-39)

Things were really buzzing in terms of ministry/the business of the day. Really busy! Jesus was very much in demand. At this point, maybe we would consider TV or radio, I mean, the demand is just too big, right? We need to cash in on the opportunity, right?

What was Jesus' response? Why was Jesus not need driven? He got His orders from His Father.

Too many Christians think it is noble to be led by needs. Churches and Christians can end up burnt out, program-oriented, and so "ministry" oriented, that they forget to relate to the God of the ministry and hear His instructions.

Jesus was purpose-oriented and He knew what to be purposeful about because He was prayerful.

- Do we withdraw regularly enough to receive instructions from our Father?
- Do we understand His times and season and purpose in our lives?

d.) Jesus' life was filled with prayer

During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. (Heb 5:7)

*When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them. As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him. "What are you arguing with them about?" he asked. A man in the crowd answered, "Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not." "You unbelieving generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me." So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth. Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?" "From childhood," he answered. "It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us." "If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for one who believes." Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the impure spirit. "You deaf and mute spirit," he said, "I command you, come out of him and never enter him again." The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, "He's dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up. **After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, "Why couldn't we drive it out?" He replied, "This kind can come out only by prayer."***

(Mar 9:14-29)

RWP commentary:

"The addition of "and of fasting" does not appear in the two best Greek manuscripts (Aleph and B). It is clearly a late addition to help explain the failure. But it is needless and also untrue. Prayer is what the nine had failed to use. They were powerless because they were prayerless. Their self-complacency spelled defeat. Mat 17:20 has "because of your little faith" (*oligopistian*). That is true also. They had too much faith in themselves, too little in Christ. "They had trusted to the semi-magical power with which they thought themselves invested" (Swete)."

*They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. **"Stay here and keep watch."** Going a little farther, he fell to the ground **and prayed** that if possible the hour might pass from him. "Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will." **Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping.** "Simon," he said to Peter, "are you asleep? **Couldn't you keep watch for one hour?** Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." **Once more he went away and prayed** the same thing. **When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him.** Returning the third time, he said to them, **"Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners.** (Mar 14:32-41)*

e.) Jesus spent prolonged periods in prayer before making major decisions

(Lk. 6:12-19; Mk. 3:7-19; Mt. 10:2-4; 12:15-21)

The context here: Jesus had clashes with the Pharisees around the Sabbath. His disciples were picking heads of grains and Jesus was found healing on the Sabbath. Both of these things incensed the religious leaders and ultimately the Pharisees and Herodians wanted to kill Jesus. Jesus withdrew to the sea of Galilee with His disciples. Large crowds of followers came from far and wide because he was healing the sick and casting out demons. Jesus needed to make an exceptionally important decision. From the crowds following Him, he needed to select 12 to become His inner circle. Did he:

- Scrutinise applicants' CVs against His selection criteria?
- Send all the applicants for psychological tests?
- Personally interview all the promising candidates?
- Spent an entire night in prayer seeking God's will?

When we have to make an important decision, do we saturate it in a prolonged, passionate, persevering period of prayer, seeking the Father's face? Or do we

follow the steps we learned from someone else, politely asking God to bless our endeavours as a safety net? Jesus prayed a whole night before selecting the twelve he designated 'apostles'.

Humanly speaking, the 12 Jesus chose were not good choices. BUT they were God's choices. Fill in from page 97-98 SATS BIB11123.

f.) Jesus used the Word of God in warfare

*Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread." **Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone.'**" The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. If you worship me, it will all be yours." **Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'**" The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here. For it is written: "'He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" **Jesus answered, "It is said: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'**" When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time. Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. (Luk 4:1-14)*

Jesus was tempted (the Greek word tempt means test in a good or bad sense) or tested in the preparation phase of his life before his public ministry began. James informs us that God doesn't tempt, He allows people to be tested to prove or strengthen their character. "A person has not shown true obedience if he or she has never had an opportunity to disobey" (LASB). In this case, the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to prove His genuine character, whilst the devil tempted him in an effort to destroy His sinless state. In order to overcome in this place of testing, temptation and ultimately warfare, Jesus needed to have been prepared by diligent study of scriptures. His knowledge of the Word was His primary defence against the

attacks of the enemy. He could discern between correct and incorrect use of scripture. He must have spent much time studying the Word of God. He had committed many verses to memory. If the sinless, Spirit filled Son of God needed to be prepared and full of the Word, how much more do you and I?

“Knowing and obeying God's Word is an effective weapon against temptation, the only **offensive weapon provided in the Christian's "armor"** (Eph 6:17). Jesus used Scripture to counter Satan's attacks, and so should we. But to use it effectively, we must have faith in God's promises because Satan also knows Scripture and is adept at twisting it to suit his purposes. Obeying the Scriptures is more important than simply having a verse to quote, so read them daily and apply them to your life. Then your "sword" will always be sharp.” LASB commentary

*Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and **the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God**. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. (Eph 6:13-18)*

g.) Jesus' prayer life aroused the desire for prayer among the disciples (Luke 11:1).

Now 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,....”

Could we say that our personal prayer life is stirring others up to pray?

h.) Jesus included others in key times of prayer (Luke 9:28-29).

Now 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. As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening.

Corporate prayer, Tues night prayer meetings, Ignite, accountability triplets....

i.) Jesus prayed on key occasions.

1. In the context of His baptism (Luke 3:21).
2. On the mount of transfiguration (Luke 9:28).
3. Prior to his leaving the earth (John 17)
4. In the garden of Gethsemane (Mt. 26:36-46).
5. On the cross (Mt. 27:46; Luke 23:46).

Conclusion

- Jesus liked to pray in solitude early in the morning.
- Jesus often withdrew from the multitudes to spend time alone with the Father.
- Jesus received His instructions from His Father in prayer.
- Jesus' life was filled with prayer.
- Jesus spent prolonged periods in prayer before making major decisions.
- Jesus used the Word of God in warfare.
- Jesus' prayer life aroused the desire for prayer among the disciples.
- Jesus included others in key times of prayer.
- Jesus prayed on key occasions.