

Pray Like Jesus: the prayer life of Jesus

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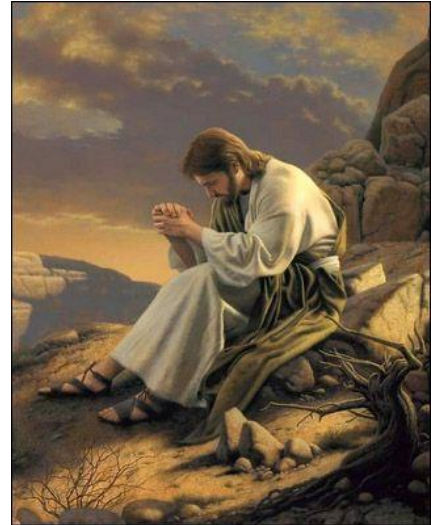
By turning continually to prayer, Jesus showed by His example that He was fully dependent on **His Father** to empower His ministry. One author has identified seven situations in which Jesus prayed:

1. Jesus prayed before He began His ministry. The first mention of Jesus praying was at the time of His baptism. Luke 3:21-22 says, *“When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: ‘You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.’”* The result was that the Father confirmed His Sonship, the Holy Spirit anointed Jesus, and people recognized the start of His public ministry.

Whenever we begin something new for God, we should spend a lot of time in prayer. When we pray, we anticipate the accomplishment of great things. It is important not to rely on ourselves, our talents or gifts to begin our ministry, but on God's power through prayer.

2. Jesus prayed to know the direction of the ministry. Mark 1:35 says, *“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.”* Jesus got up early to spend time with the Father, before beginning His day. Something we often overlook in this verse is that the previous day had been demanding: Jesus had taught in the synagogue, cast out evil spirits, healed Peter's mother-in-law and many other sick people (v. 21-34). After a very busy day, do we neglect prayer because we are tired? It is important to seek God's direction each day for fruitful ministry.

3. Jesus prayed when His ministry was successful. People often pray when things go wrong, but then when success comes it's easy to lose the sense of urgent dependence that preceded the success. The Bible describes Jesus' early fame after He had healed the leper. Jesus warned the man not to tell others, yet the news of Jesus spread everywhere. Luke 5:15 - 16 says, *‘Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.’* In success and glory, it is difficult to remain humble. Prayer helps us remember our place and keep our focus on God.



4. Jesus prayed as He was choosing the 12 apostles. Jesus prayed for a whole night before He made the decision about who would be His ministry partners. It is written that *'One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles (Luke 6:12-13).'* Jesus spent the whole night in prayer before choosing His apostles, whose ministry would continue after Jesus' ascension and in spite of increasing persecution. Some of the apostles chosen by Jesus became the authors of the New Testament. Others reached the edge of their known world with the Gospel. As you choose your leadership teams, it is important to bathe those decisions in prayer. It is important not to choose leaders based on appearance or your personal preferences. God knows the heart of each potential leader.

5. Jesus prayed before He performed a miracle. Jesus prayed before He fed the 5,000 (Matt. 14:19, Mark 6:41, John 6:11). All three evangelists tell us that before this miracle there were only 5 loaves and 2 fish (Matt. 14:17, Mark 6:38, John 6:9). Jesus knew He would receive what He needed from the Father and told the people to sit down in groups of 50 and 100. Yet He prayed anyway. What did Jesus do after this miracle? Jesus went up the mountain to pray again. Jesus prayed when He was in need and after He received what He needed.

Jesus also prayed when He raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11:41). He commanded the stone to be removed and then prayed for the people so that they would realize from whom resurrection came. Do we only pray for something attainable, or do we also pray for the impossible, for miracles?

6. Jesus prayed in suffering. One of Jesus' famous prayers was in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:39-44), in the mental anguish over the physical and spiritual suffering that was coming. He had to bear all the sin of the world, from Adam to the end of time. He experienced incredible loneliness. His disciples did not understand and fell asleep. Jesus submitted to God's will through prayer.

Christ prayed for His enemies on the cross. He prayed for those who had just nailed His hands and feet to rough, wooden beams (Luke 23:34). Jesus prayed right up to the moment of His death.

When we suffer, do we turn to God in prayer? Jesus said to *pray for those who mistreat you and persecute you (Matthew 5:44)*. Are we praying for our enemies?

7. Jesus continues to pray in Heaven. What is Jesus doing in Heaven right now? He is in Heaven praying to God the Father for us. Hebrews 7:25 says, *'Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to*

intercede for them. Christ fulfills the role of priest (intercessor) for us: *'Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess... (Hebrews 4:14).'* We depend on our Eternal Priest and His prayers for us.

There were many other situations when Jesus prayed: during His temptation. (Luke 4:1-13), when the people were going to proclaim Him king (John 6:15). He prayed for children, (Matthew 19:13) and He prayed for Peter (Luke 22:32).

If Jesus needed to pray so much, we need it even more. We pray when we start a new ministry or choose a direction for our ministry. We pray when we succeed and when we choose a ministry team. We pray when we need a miracle, after we've received a miracle, and when we suffer. In prayer, we turn to the One who is still praying for us. In short, *'pray unceasingly.'*

Information borrowed from Sense and Nonsense about Prayer, chapter 15, "The Prayer Life of Jesus," by Lehman Strauss.