
THE PRAYERS OF JESUS

What's the first thing that comes to your mind when you think about the prayers of Jesus? Exactly — the Lord's Prayer! 'Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name...' It's the most repeated prayer in all of human history, with the possible exception of, 'Lord, save me!'

Prayer is one of those things that almost everyone has tried, but almost no one fully understands. That's why our next five readings will be so helpful; they give us a picture of the greatest 'pray-er' the world has ever known. The disciples recognised that there was something special about the way Jesus prayed. After observing him, one of the disciples spoke up for people throughout the ages when he said, 'Lord, teach us to pray...' (Luke 11:1). If you want to learn how to pray, watch someone who knows how to do it. And you'll find no better teacher than Jesus.

What we learn when we examine the prayers of Jesus is that he prayed in all kinds of situations and in all kinds of ways. Of course, he prayed the famous model prayer we call the Lord's Prayer, which forms a memorable outline for anyone who wants good topics for prayer (Luke 11:1–13). He prayed spontaneous prayers when good things happened in his ministry (Luke 10:1–24). He prayed long formal prayers when he had far-reaching issues on his mind (John 17). And he prayed short intense prayers when he was under great pressure (Mark 14:32–42).

But as we examine these wonderful prayers, we may want to ask ourselves an important question: why did Jesus pray? After all, he was the Son of God; he had all the power of heaven at his disposal and could do anything he wanted. The answer to that question takes us to the heart of what prayer is all about. Jesus prayed because his relationship with his heavenly Father was the most important thing to him. That's why he spent so much time talking to God, listening to God and simply spending time in God's presence.

Perhaps the greatest lesson we can learn is that Jesus didn't pray just at set times or on special occasions; he prayed whenever he could (Mark 1:29–39). There's a sense in which Jesus was constantly praying; his mind and heart were always focused on his heavenly Father — and that's the essence of prayer. As you're about to discover, prayer was essential for Jesus. And, if that's so, it's even more essential for us.

Date:

The prayers of Jesus

PRAY Father, in spite of all the distractions, my heart's desire is to deepen my relationship with you.

READ Mark 1:29–39

REFLECT

Have you ever observed someone who is praying, silently and intensely, particularly someone who's known God for a while? You can't hear anything, but you can feel that something important is happening. That's the opportunity we have in this passage; we're watching the world's greatest 'prayer warrior' in action and in so doing we gain unique insights into the prayer life of Jesus.

He prayed whatever. Jesus must have been exhausted (1:32–34) and out of his normal routine; he was a guest in someone else's home (1:29–31). Those are two things that often derail my prayer life.

He prayed early. Jesus got up early to pray, 'while it was still dark'. Prayer was the first thing on his mind for the day. What do you first think about when you get out of bed?

He prayed without distraction. Jesus went to a 'solitary place' to pray. Effective prayer often means leaving behind the distractions of life — though Jesus is always ready to answer our prayer from the midst of frantic activity too! Jesus prayed in spite of the well-meaning pressure from his disciples (1:37). We'll always feel the pressure to get busy, but without prayer it's difficult to make a difference for God.

As we read the Gospels we find other references to Jesus' pattern of prayer (Luke 6:12; Matthew 14:23; 26:36). If you sometimes feel guilty because you can't pray for long, try praying more often throughout the day. You may find yourself feeling less guilty and more excited about your dialogue with God. And that's what prayer is all about. Because Jesus' mind and heart were always focused on doing his Father's will, he was always praying — sometimes privately, sometimes formally and sometimes in the middle of the action. Too often we have to make time for prayer in the midst of our busy lives. For Jesus, interacting with his heavenly Father was the central task of his entire life. He made time for everything else.

APPLY How could you make prayer less of an activity and more of a lifestyle?

PRAY Experiment with a different approach to talking to Jesus today. For example, even if you are alone, pray aloud. Or try a different posture, or go outside and look at the sky as you pray, or take a 'prayer walk', or...