

CONNECT 101 – Five Gospel Fruits

Lesson 4 – Jesus and Prayer

Questions to Consider:

1. What is prayer and how have we complicated it?
2. How might we make prayer intentional in our own lives?
3. How might we make prayer intentional together as a community?

Read Luke 4:40-44

Theme: Like Jesus, we should enjoy the fruit of prayer produced by the Jesus Seed.

Introduction:

Most Christians assume they are not praying enough. The perceived problem is probably in the specific area of intercessory prayer, praying for others. Others could be co-workers, fellow congregants, the persecuted church, our political figures, or missionaries and other Christian ministries. You might not mentioned “everyone and their brother,” but this does not mean you are not praying. I work from the premise that you are praying enough and without ceasing. You simply do not realize that what you are doing is prayer.

The Bible speaks of prayer in the same manner we speak of breathing. It assumes His people pray. Luke pictures Jesus in this manner. If prayer is fundamentally communication and our relationship with God is a genuine relationship, then we can assume communication or prayer is happening. Prayer is very much like breathing. There are times when you might have to learn how to breathe properly because of poor habits or ill health. However, if you are living, you are breathing. The Bible works from the premise that you are praying. In light of your state of prayer, it offers us explanation as to why we pray.

Like many of the fruits produced by the Jesus Seed, we have made something that is to be an enjoyment into a duty and discipline. Rather than normal, it has become necessary. What is to be a lollipop has become a paddle.

Attending Church, reading/hearing the Scriptures, and praying are all fruits produced by the Jesus Seed for His people to enjoy. Each, in their own way, help His people taste and see that He is good. Let us note a word of caution with any descriptive activity. Perhaps such a label needs to accompany all “spiritual” activities. **When considering this area it is important not to become rigid.** The letter of the law will kill prayer. When prayer is no longer enjoyable, then you need to reassess your perspective toward prayer.

So as we explore JESUS and His relationship to PRAYER, let us learn for our enjoyment.

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Outline:

Luke does not treat Jesus praying as some unusual anomaly. Jesus praying is no more special or spectacular than Jesus eating, Jesus sleeping, or Jesus teaching. Luke records His prayer life. Let us consider the text. There are five observations we can make concerning JESUS and PRAYER.

I. Sometimes Jesus prayed alone (Luke 4:42; 5:16).

- When day came, **Jesus left and went to a secluded place**; and the crowds were searching for Him, and came to Him and tried to keep Him from going away from them. (Luke 4:42)
- But **Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray**. (Luke 5:16)

Jesus prayed alone. However, His life was so thoroughly busy that He sought seclusion in order to pray alone.

This wilderness/desert is where John the Baptist lived (Luke 1:80; 3:2, 4) and ministered (Luke 7:24). It is this same wilderness the Spirit drove Jesus into (Luke 4:1) and to which Jesus found personal solitude (Luke 4:42; 5:16) and could be found with His disciples (Luke 9:10). The wilderness is a desolate place (Luke 8:29). The word also occurs for something that is desolate (Luke 13:35). The wilderness was a place capable of holding the vast multitudes gathering around Jesus (Luke 9:12) and where sheep grazed (Luke 15:4).

It is good to have a place where one might be alone with their thoughts. Yet, not only did Jesus pray in an isolated place, He also prayed in the context of a busy life.

II. Jesus prayed in the context of a busy life (Luke 4:42, 43; 5:15, 16).

- ⁴² When day came, **Jesus left and went to a secluded place**; and **the crowds were searching for Him**, and came to Him and tried to keep Him from going away from them. ⁴³ But He said to them, “I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose.” (Luke 4:42, 43)
- ¹⁵ But the news about Him was spreading even farther, and large crowds were gathering to hear Him and to be healed of their sicknesses. ¹⁶ But **Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray**. (Luke 5:15, 16)

It is impossible to comprehend how intrusive the crowds were in the life of Jesus. Nevertheless, He never appears ruffled by their presence. In the midst of His busyness, He would slip away to the wilderness and pray. What a staggering act. As we will note, He often prayed with others present, but he also sought solitude through seclusion.

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What we need to do is see how prayer happens in the context of a busy life. Prayer is seeing your story in His *Story*. Occasionally, we separate ourselves from the commotion of life. However, most prayer happens in distraction and busyness. In the midst of our busyness, we turn our attention toward God. The author of Hebrews refers to this as “looking to Jesus” (Heb. 12:1, 2).

III. Jesus prayed before important events (Luke 6:12, 13; 22:41).

It is of interest to see how Luke often positions Jesus praying before pivotal moments such as His selection of the twelve, His transfiguration on Mt. Hermon, and in the Garden of Gethsemane prior to Calvary.

A. His selection of the twelve (Luke 6:12, 13).

- **It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God.** (Luke 6:12)

My take away from this is He spent His sleeping hours, when awake, praying, singing, meditating, and resting. I do not work from the premise that He was fully awake through the entire night. If such is the case, it is the exception and not the rule.

It would be the same idea of you not able to sleep because of anxiousness brought on by an important or concerning event the next day.

B. His transfiguration on Mt. Tabor/Hermon (Luke 9:28-37).

- ²⁸ Some eight days after these sayings, He took along Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. ²⁹ And while He was praying, the appearance of His face became different, and His clothing became white and gleaming. (Luke 9:28, 29)

In light of Luke 9:27, He separated Himself with Peter, John, and James for revealing His glory to them. It was not prayer that brought the revelation, but praying prepared them for the revelation. Jesus coupled the two events together making them one.

C. His submission to the Father's will (Luke 22:41-44).

- ⁴¹ **And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and began to pray, . . .** ⁴⁴ **And being in agony He was praying very fervently;** and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground. (Luke 22:41, 44)

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The prayer of Gethsemane reflected the weight of what was about to unfold. Many of us are aware of such praying. We do not choose to stay up all night and spend a sleepless night praying. We do not choose to agonize over something through prayer. The event is the occasion for praying all night or in agony. This is the kind of prayer King Darius offered when agonizing over Daniel's circumstances in the Lion's Den (Dan. 6:17, 18). It is the same type of situation we find Queen Esther under the threat of national annihilation (Esther 4:15-17). Do you understand the difference? Something weighs on you so heavily that you are overwhelmed. Your only recourse is to pray all night or in agony.

I am of the opinion that Luke records events to note what is normal, not abnormal. These "snapshots" show us what Jesus did as a way of life. As we noted earlier, Jesus sought solitude through seclusion, but He also prayed with others and while in the company of others.

IV. Sometimes Jesus prayed with others present (Luke 3:21; 9:18, 28; 11:1ff).

- Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized, and **while He was praying**, heaven was opened, (Luke 3:21)
- **And it happened that while He was praying alone**, the disciples were with Him, and He questioned them, saying, "Who do the people say that I am?" (Luke 9:18)
- ²⁸ Some eight days after these sayings, **He took along Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray.** ²⁹ And **while He was praying**, the appearance of His face became different, and His clothing became white and gleaming. (Luke 9:28, 29)
- **It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place**, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples." (Luke 11:1)

Praying with other people can be of equal joy as when one prays alone. Not only did Jesus pray publically, but the Temple is also marked as a place of prayer (Luke 1:10; 19:46).

- And **the whole multitude of the people were in prayer outside** at the hour of the incense offering. (Luke 1:10)
- saying to them, "It is written, 'AND MY HOUSE SHALL BE A HOUSE OF PRAYER,' but you have made it a ROBBERS' DEN." (Luke 19:46)

Prayer is a part of the believer's life. Again, prayer to God is like breathing to living, it should just happen. Not only did Jesus pray, but He also taught on prayer.

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V. Jesus taught on “how” to pray (Luke 11:1-13; 18:1-8).

In Luke’s Gospel, four characteristics are noted. Again, our tendency is to make these benchmarks for effective prayer. This is to over diagnose. These are the simple qualities of biblical praying. They are not things we work to do; they just happen.

A. Submission characterizes biblical prayer (Luke 11:1-13).

- ¹ **It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place**, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, “Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples.” ² And He said to them, “**When you pray**, say: ‘Father, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come.’” (Luke 11:1, 2)

The essence of biblical prayer is recognizing one’s place before God. It is praying the Jesus prayer, “If possible, let this cup pass before me. Nevertheless, not my will but your will be done.”

- saying, “Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done.” (Luke 22:42)

The extended passage in Luke 11:1-13 speaks of God’s gracious behavior toward us as a loving Father. When we recognize who He is and what He does, our submission to Him is easy and light.

B. Perseverance characterizes biblical prayer (Luke 18:1-8).

- Now He was telling them a parable **to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart**, (Luke 18:1)

Zacharias and Elizabeth are examples of people who persevered in prayer (Luke 1:13). Our repetition or persistency does not bind or obligate God. God delights in our desire to trust Him in our asking. He desires for us to ask.

- But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zacharias, **for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John.**” (Luke 1:13)

C. Humility characterizes biblical prayer (Luke 18:1-8).

- ¹⁰ “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood and **was praying this to himself:** ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.’ ¹³ But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, ‘**God, be merciful to me, the sinner!**’” (Luke 18:10-13)

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Biblical prayer prays the sinners' prayer, "God, be merciful to me, the sinner." God always answers the Jesus prayer and the sinners' prayer. A final area brought out by Luke as to our Lord's instruction occurs in Luke 6:28.

D. Intercession characterizes biblical prayer (Luke 6:28).

- bless those who curse you, **pray for those who mistreat you.** (Luke 6:28)
- and **lead us not into temptation.** (Luke 11:4)
- "But keep on the alert at all times, **praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place,** and to stand before the Son of Man." (Luke 21:36)
- ⁴⁰ When He arrived at the place, He said to them, "**Pray that you may not enter into temptation.**" . . . ⁴⁶ and said to them, "Why are you sleeping? **Get up and pray that you may not enter into temptation.**" (Luke 22:40, 46)

We always come from a position of need. Our natural inclination toward those who mistreat us is one of revenge and justice. Prayer enables us to act toward them in a manner that is gospel-centered and not self-centered.

In light of His betrayal, Jesus invites His disciples to pray they have strength to escape all the trials about to befall them. There is no reason as to why such intercession cannot be ours.

Where does this leave us as to Jesus and prayer?

Shepherding the Sheep: (What is the NEXT STEP?)

1. Learn to accept prayer for what it is, living your story in light of His.
2. Make prayer something enjoyed, not just endured.
3. When praying/living, do so with submission and humility. See yourself for who you are in light of who He is.
4. Finally, pray for your enemies and that you stand fast in the midst of temptations and trials.

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