

# THE CHRIST-CENTERED LIFE

## Learning to Pray from Jesus

Matthew 6:9-13

INTRODUCTION: We do not have to be scholars to know that Jesus Himself was a man of prayer. As we walk through the gospels we find Jesus

- Praying all night
- Rising early in the morning to pray
- Praying with such intensity that blood poured from His brow like sweat
- Praying for those that loved Him and for those that hated Him
- Praying in the difficult times and in the victorious times

Do I need to say more on this point? Would you agree with me that Jesus was a man of fervent and frequent prayer?

Have you ever thought through the significance of that? We know that Jesus was Himself God in the flesh.

- When Jesus put on humanity,
- He did not lay aside His deity.
- He was the God-man, fully man but remaining fully God.
- That not only is the testimony of Scripture but has been Christianity's understanding of Scripture since its earliest years.

So, when Jesus prayed, it was the Son of God praying to the Father.

That leads me to think and to say, **if Jesus needed to pray, how much more do I need to pray?**

So I want to ask the question that many of us have asked sometime or another:

### **DOES PRAYER REALLY MAKE A DIFFERENCE?**

- We know that God is sovereign.
- He is in total control.

- His will shall be done!
- So, does prayer really matter?
  - Does prayer ever change what is going to happen anyway?
  - Does prayer just align our will with God's will?
  - Does prayer actually influence what God is going to do?

### DOES PRAYER REALLY MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Let me show you in the Word of God. First we will go to Ex. 33.

- In Exodus 32, we are told of the people of Israel bowing down to an idol of a golden calf and saying that this idol delivered them from slavery in Egypt.
- Moses is angry.
- God is angry.

Exodus 33:1–3 NKJV 1 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Depart and go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt, to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, ‘To your descendants I will give it.’ 2 And I will send My Angel before you, ...; for **I will not go up in your midst**, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people.”

Moses and the people mourned!

- It was YHWH who led them out of Egypt.
- It was YHWH who had provided water and food.
- It was YHWH who had destroyed the Egyptian army pursuing them.

And now YHWH says He will not go with them any longer.

The Lord tells Moses to lead Israel away from Mt. Sinai to the Promised Land, and that He will send an angel with them, but He Himself will not go!

So Moses prays! Do you hear this? Moses prays!

Exodus 33:15–16 NKJV 15 Then he said to Him, “**If Your Presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here.** 16 For how then will it be known that Your people and I have found grace in Your sight, except You go with us? ...”

Here is mortal man pleading with the Sovereign God of the universe to change His mind concerning something He has just declared He was going to do!

Do you know how God responded? Let's read the next verse.

**Exodus 33:17 NKJV** So the LORD said to Moses, **"I will also do this thing that you have spoken; for you have found grace in My sight, and I know you by name."**

### **DOES PRAYER REALLY MAKE A DIFFERENCE?**

- **God changed His mind when Moses prayed.**

Now let me show you an example of a different type. I want to show you a time when God did not do what He Himself wanted to do, because no one would pray for it.

- God had warned Judah of impending judgment because of their iniquity.
- But God had withheld that judgment for many years from Judah after it had already fallen on Israel.
- In the days of Ezekiel, God declared that He would have held the judgment back even longer if there had been a person to stand in the gap, a person to intercede for Judah with God. But there was no one. Therefore God said,

**Ezek. 22:30-31 NKJV** 30 **So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me** on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; **but I found no one.** 31 **Therefore I have poured out My indignation on them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath; and I have recompensed their deeds on their own heads,"** says the Lord GOD.

- This is an awesome revelation. God was willing to withhold, at least for a season, the judgment due the nation of Judah if there had been a person to stand in the gap and pray in intercession with God! But no one would do it. Therefore God did not do what He was willing to do, because no one would pray!
- Get this! God imposed a limit upon His own action. He did not do what He desired because there was no man to cooperate, no man to enter into a partnership with God by standing in the gap!

### **DOES PRAYER REALLY MAKE A DIFFERENCE?**

- **God changed His mind when Moses prayed.**
- **Concerning Judah, God did not do what it was His will to do, because no one would pray.**

Is that not an awesome but scary revelation of truth?

Would you like to know why that is true?

- Why does the all-wise Almighty God

- Whose thoughts are higher than our thoughts
- And whose ways are higher than our ways
- Why does He ever let His decisions of what to do or not do be influenced by mere people like us?

The answer is in Genesis. Have I told you lately that the beginning of nearly every doctrine in the Bible can be found in Genesis?

In the beginning, I mean the very beginning as far as mankind is concerned, God established a partnership.

**Genesis 1:26 NKJV** Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

### **God is the Creator and Owner of the earth.**

God appointed mankind to be the manager of His creation. God gave mankind dominion over all the earth.

He retained His sovereignty over all things, but God chose to share His authority with mankind, allowing man to rule over the earth.

God remained the owner. **Man became the manager.** God joined man in partnership.

What does that have to do with prayer?

- Consider this example: A man owns many businesses and possesses a fortune.
  - By signing his name to one of the company checks he can draw upon his funds kept by a bank.
  - One day he voluntarily signs a card at the bank which authorizes the bank to require two signatures on the checks of one of his companies, his own signature and that of the business manager.
  - Now what is done within the company requires the activity of both the owner and the manager.
  - The manager cannot spend on his own because he does not own the funds.
  - But neither does the owner spend on his own for he has delegated the authority to cosign the checks to his manager.
  - For the company to spend money, both signatures are required.

- Do you know an equivalent term for business manager? Steward!

1 Cor. 4:1 NKJV Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

God is the owner. **Man is the manager, God's steward.**

**Prayer is the check requiring two signatures!**

See if you do not understand better these Scriptures in light of this concept:

John 14:13-14 NKJV 13 And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.

John 15:7 NKJV If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

John 16:23-24 NKJV 23 "And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. 24 Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.

The reason Judah was not spared in Ezekiel's time was that God could not find someone to cosign.

James 4:3 tells us that sometimes the reason that our prayers are not answered is that God will not cosign some of our requests.

- **This means that effective prayer requires two things:**
  - **That the request be the will of God – God cosigns**
  - **That the request be made by people through prayer – Man cosigns**

**Andrew Murray**, that 19<sup>th</sup> century prophet of God from South Africa whose books on prayer are still sought and read today **said, "God's will needs prayer as its indispensable condition."**

That is why even Jesus was a man of prayer.

That is why Jesus taught that we ought always to pray and never lose heart, never give up.

And that is why Jesus said,

Matthew 6:9–13 NKJV 9 In this manner, therefore, pray:

Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.

10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

11 Give us this day our daily bread.

12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

13 And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

<p><b>Begin in reverent praise.</b>  <b>Hallowed means holy, revered.</b>  <b>Praise is best expressed when accompanied by thanksgiving.</b></p>	<p>Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.</p>
<p><b>Pray with Kingdom mindedness.</b></p>	<p>Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.</p>
<p><b>Pray for your needs.</b>  <b>Jesus said, “Ask, seek, knock!”</b>  <b>Let the needs of others become your needs and pray for them.</b></p>	<p>Give us this day our daily bread.</p>
<p><b>Always include repentance and confession.</b>  <b>Seek forgiveness after granting forgiveness.</b></p>	<p>And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.</p>
<p><b>Pray for your spiritual life and not just your physical and emotional needs and desires.</b></p>	<p>And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.</p>
<p><b>Conclude with trust in God as the owner, the Sovereign in charge!</b></p>	<p>For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.</p>

Do these truths about prayer make you want to pray? They impact me that way.

I invite you, as a steward of God, one of His appointed managers of the earth, to take a few minutes to pray.

Your prayers make a difference.