**More Like the Master**

In His Prayers

Lesson 18

*““And in the morning, a great while before day, he rose up and went out, and departed into a desert place, and there prayed” (Mark 1:35)*

**Prayer to God**

Prayer is the sacred right and privilege of every faithful Christian to communicate with God in times of joy or times of sorrow. Our Father speaks to us through his word, the Bible, and we speak to our Father in prayer. We long for open and instant communication today. We want technology to serve us better so that we can communicate easier and faster with our cell phones, tablets, Internet, etc. We want to communicate efficiently both locally and internationally. How much more should we want to communicate with our heavenly Father? Prayer offers us the grand opportunity to give praise, to be thankful, to ask our petitions, to pray for others, and to confess our wrongs. Prayer gives us great strength and confidence to make it through the day.

Jesus demonstrated throughout his life the importance of prayer at all times. He preached about prayer and he practiced prayer. When the Jews had profaned the temple with their business practices, he reminded them: *“It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer: but ye make it a den of robbers”* (Matthew 21:13; see also Luke 19:46). In this lesson we will study how that we can be “More Like the Master” in prayer.

**Jesus and His Prayers**

Jesus preached prayer. Jesus taught others about the importance of prayer. He taught his disciples in the Sermon on the Mount how to pray: *“After this manner therefore pray…”* (Matthew 6:9-15). Luke records: *“And he spake a parable unto them to the end that they ought always to pray, and not to faint”* (Luke 18:1). What were some of the lessons that Jesus taught concerning prayer?

***He taught for whom to pray.*** Jesus taught his disciples to pray for certain people. They were to pray for their enemies (Matthew 5:44; Luke 6:28). They should pray for the children (Matthew 19:13). They should pray for one another (Luke 22:32; John 17).

***He taught how to pray.*** Jesus taught his disciples about the proper attitude in prayer. They were not to pray to be seen of men (Matthew 6:5-6; see also 23:14; Mark 12:40; Luke 20:47), nor were they to pray using vain repetitions (Matthew 6:7-9). They were to pray respectfully and submissively saying, *“Hallowed be Thy name … thy will be done”* (Matthew 6:9-15; Luke 11:1-4; Jesus’ prayer here can be summed up in five short requests: rule us, give us, forgive us, lead us, and deliver us). Jesus’ disciples were to pray with a forgiving attitude (Matthew 6:14-15). They were to pray with thanksgiving (Matthew 11:25; John 11:41). They were to pray believing and trusting that they would receive what they prayed for (Matthew 21:22; Mark 11:24). They were to pray with humility and not self-righteousness (Luke 18:9-14). They were to pray being watchful and alert (Matthew 26:41; Mark 14:38).

***He taught what to pray.*** Jesus taught his disciples some things that they could include in their prayers. They could pray to God for divine blessings and for help (Matthew 6:9-15). They could pray for the work of evangelism (Matthew 9:38; Luke 10:2). They could pray for God’s providential help during difficult times (Matthew 24:20; Mark 13:18, 33). They were to pray for forgiveness and with a forgiving attitude (Mark 11:25).

***He taught when to pray.*** Jesus taught his disciples about important occasions when to pray. They should pray during challenges (Matthew 17:21; Mark 9:29). They were to pray constantly, day and night, and with perseverance (Luke 18:1-8).

Jesus practiced prayer. Jesus not only preached about prayer, he practiced prayer. Jesus made a regular habit of communicating with his Father in prayer. He spent much time in prayer from the beginning of his ministry at his baptism (Luke 3:21) to the end of his ministry on the cross (Luke 23:34). What were some of the practices of Jesus in his prayer life?

***He prayed at the beginning of the day.*** Mark writes: *“And in the morning, a great while before day, he rose up and went out, and departed into a desert place, and there prayed”* (1:35). Even though Jesus was busy, he wanted to begin his day with prayer and be alone in talking to his Father. He wanted to start the day right in prayer to God.

***He prayed alone and apart from others.*** Jesus’ ministry was hectic at time, but he always made time for private prayer. He sought out places of quiet solitude for prayer. He treasured quiet times for prayer. Luke writes: *“But he withdrew himself in the deserts, and prayed”* (Luke 5:16). Jesus wanted private time alone to focus on talking to his Father. Matthew records a prayer of Jesus after he fed the 5,000: *“And after he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into the mountain apart to pray: and when even was come, he was there alone”* (Matthew 14:23; see also Mark 6:45-46). This particular prayer was offered after the multitudes had come to take him by force and make him king (John 6:15). Their actions may have prompted Jesus to enter into prayer about the matter. This prayer was also offered at the close of the day. Jesus began (Mark 1:35) and ended (Matthew 14:23) his day in prayer. On another occasion, Jesus was *“praying apart”* (praying alone) and he asked his disciples *“Who do the multitudes say that I am?”* (Luke 9:18).

***He prayed before important decisions and actions.*** Luke writes: *“And it came to pass in these days, that he went out into the mountain to pray; and he continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called his disciples; and he chose from them twelve, whom also he named apostles”* (Luke 6:12-13). Jesus prayed prior to choosing to the twelve apostles (Matthew 10:2-4; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16). He also prayed at Lazarus’ tomb (John 11:41) and before going to the cross (John 12:27).

***He prayed before a meal.*** Jesus taught his disciples to pray, *“Give us this day our daily bread…”* (Matthew 6:10). When Jesus fed the 5,000, he commanded the multitudes to sit and he took the five loaves and two fishes *“and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake…”* (Matthew 14:19; Mark 6:41; Luke 9:16). John records it this way: *“and having given thanks, he distributed to them that were set down…”* (John 6:11). Jesus prayed similarly before feeding the 4,000 (Matthew 15:36; Mark 8:6-7). Jesus also prayed for the unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine (Matthew 26:26-27).

***He prayed to teach others.*** Jesus taught the importance of prayer by setting the right example before his disciples. For example, he took Peter, James, and John into a high mountain to pray (Luke 9:28). Luke records that Jesus was transfigured *“as he was praying”* (Luke 9:29). Peter, James, and John would have seen Jesus pray and maybe even heard him. On another occasion, Luke records: *“And it came to pass, as he was praying in a certain place, that when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, even as John also taught his disciples”* (11:1) … *“And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Father, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come”* (11:2). Jesus’ own practice of prayer led his disciples to ask him how to pray. Jesus’ prayers taught others to pray.

***He prayed for others.*** Jesus prayed for his apostles because he knew he would be leaving them. He prayed that they would receive the Comforter – Holy Spirit (John 14:16; 16:26). In John 17, Jesus prayed for himself (verses 1-5), for his apostles (verses 9-19), and for us (verses 20-23). Jesus prayed for Peter, in particular, that his faith would not fail (Luke 22:32). While Jesus was hanging on the cross, he even prayed for his enemies saying, *“Father, forgive them for they know not what they do”* (Luke 23:34). He told his disciples to pray for their enemies (Matthew 5:44) and he practiced this himself. Jesus’ prayer was answered, but not until later when his enemies were forgiven on the day of Pentecost after they repented and were baptized (Acts 2:36-41; 3:17-19).

***He prayed before going to the cross.*** Jesus prayed when his soul was troubled about the cross (John 12:27). He prayed on the night of his betrayal and before he faced the cross of suffering (Mark 14:32-39; Luke 22:41-46). Matthew records: *“Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto his disciples, Sit ye here, while I go yonder and pray”* (25:36) … *“And he went forward a little, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt”* (26:39) … *“Again a second time he went away, and prayed, saying, My Father, if this cannot pass away, except I drink it, thy will be done”* (26:42) … *“And he left them again, and went away, and prayed a third time, saying again the same words”* (26:44). Luke records this about Jesus: *“And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground”* (Luke 22:44). Jesus prayed with great emotion and feeling on this occasion. He offered up *“prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears”* (Hebrews 5:7).

**The Christian and Prayer**

New Testament Christians followed the example of Jesus and made a habit of praying to God. Local churches gathered together for prayer (Acts 2:42; 3:1; 4:31; 6:4-6; 8:15; 12:5,12; 13:3; 14:23) and individual Christians prayed (Acts 8:22-24; 9:40; 10:9; 11:5; 16:25; 20:36; 21:5; 22:17; 28:8). We need to follow the example of Jesus and make a good habit of praying to God.

We need to pray regularly. Christians need to make a habit of praying regularly. We do not need to pray just for a meal, or on a special occasion, but at all times. Both Jesus and Paul (Romans 1:9) made a regular habit of prayer. From morning to night, we can pray like Jesus all throughout the day. We should continue *“steadfastly in prayer”* (Romans 12:12) and *“pray without ceasing”* (1 Thessalonians 5:17). We should pray *“night and day”* (1 Timothy 5:5). We should pray *“fervently”* over and over again (James 5:17-18).

We need to pray for others. Christians need to pray for others, good and bad. We need to follow the teaching and example of Jesus and pray for others, even our enemies (Matthew 5:44). We should also pray for our brethren (Romans 15:30; Ephesians 1:16; Philippians 1:9; Colossians 1:3,9; 4:12; 1 Thessalonians 1:2; 3;10; 5:25; 2 Thessalonians 1:11; 3:1; Philemon 4,22; Hebrews 13:18; 3 John 2), for our spouse (1 Corinthians 7:5; 1 Peter 3:7), for gospel preachers (Colossians 4:2-3), and for all men including our leaders (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

We need to pray for our blessings. Christians have so much to be thankful for that they can pray often for their blessings from God. Just as Jesus prayed before a meal and for other blessings, we should thank God in prayer. We should pray for our food (1 Timothy 4:5). We should pray for forgiveness (Matthew 6:14-15). A person is forgiven, not at the very moment we pray, *“Father forgive them…”,* but when they comply with the conditions of forgiveness (Luke 17:1-4; Acts 2:38-42; 8:22; James 5:14-16).

We need to pray at moments of crisis. Christians need to pray to God for help during challenging times and moments of crisis. Just like Jesus prayed before making important decisions and before going to the cross, we should pray to God for help. We should pray for help against the devil (Ephesians 6:18) and pray for suffering, sickness and sin (James 5:13-18). We should pray when we are persecuted like first century Christians did (Revelation 5:8; 8:3-4). In everything we go through, we can make our requests known to God in prayer (Philippians 4:6).

We need to pray with the right heart. Christians need to pray in the right manner and with the right heart as Jesus taught his disciples. We need to pray with a holy life (1 Timothy 2:8) and not with selfish or carnal motives (James 4:1-3). We need to pray with *“godly fear”* as Jesus did and we will be heard like he was heard (Hebrews 5:7). We need to be *“righteous”* in prayer (1 Peter 3:12; see Psalm 66:18 and Proverbs 15:29) and *“sober unto prayer”* (1 Peter 4:7). We will be granted what we ask of God, when we ask from an obedient heart (1 John 3:22; 5:14-15).

**More Like the Master in His Prayers**

Jesus preached about prayer and he practiced prayer. He led a very busy life during his ministry, but he always took time to communicate directly with his Father (Mark 1:21-39; see v. 35). He was never too busy or too tired to pray for himself and for others. Prayer was a habit – a way of life for Jesus, not just something done in a case of emergency. We must learn from Jesus to take time in our busy lives to pray. Let us all be “More Like the Master” in our prayers.

**Questions**

1. What is prayer and what part did prayer have in the life of Jesus?

2. What did Jesus teach about our conduct toward our enemies (Matthew 5:44)?

3. What did Jesus teach about one’s attitude in prayer?

4. What are some things Jesus taught his disciples to pray for?

5. What did Jesus teach concerning when to pray?

6. When and where did Jesus pray?

7. What were some important occasions in which Jesus prayed to his Father?

8. Who were some people Jesus prayed for?

9. How did Jesus’ prayer life cause his disciples to ask him about prayer?

10. What does the New Testament teach concerning when a Christian should pray?

11. Who are some people Christians should pray for?

12. What are some blessings Christians can pray for?

13. What are some moments of crisis that can be faced with prayer?

14. What kind of heart is necessary for proper prayer?

15. What can we do in our busy lives to be more like the Master in prayer?