

Spend time with the Father

「 Introduction 」

[Question] Did Jesus need time to pray?

Jesus enjoyed praying outside of village in a secluded place before sunrise. Why did Jesus need to pray in the morning uninterrupted in a quiet place? What is prayer that even Jesus needed to pray? Whenever Jesus talked about His relationship with the heavenly Father He became like the most dependent child. “The Son can do nothing of his own accord” (John 5:19). “I can do nothing on my own” (John 5:30). “That I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me” (John 8:28). The incarnate Son was the most God-dependent person in human history. When Jesus tells us to believe He doesn’t mean that we should somehow create our own spiritual energy. It means that we too do not have what it takes to live according to God’s will. Once you realize that like Jesus you cannot live life on your own then prayer naturally becomes a must.

[Answer] Jesus’s prayer life teaches us the essence of prayer, which is relationship.

When Jesus prayed He did not do it to fulfill a duty but to draw near to the Father. Jesus set the boundaries based on His relationship with the Father. Therefore, He did not try to find Himself outside of God. For any relationship to grow you must invest time, so that intimacy may grow and there may be mutual understanding. Intimacy cannot be manufactured. You can only provide the environment for it to grow. You need some time set apart and uninterrupted. Efficiency and multi-tasking can kill intimacy. If Jesus needed to leave people and noises behind to pray, then so must we.

[Sharing] Is there a time in your daily life when you are free from the distractions of this world and can remain quietly before God?

「 Going Deeper 」

(1) Start slowly like a baby learning to walk.

If you want to spend time with God, then start slowly like a baby learning to walk. Even if you enjoyed praying 30 minutes in the past, do not set that as a standard but start slowly. Initially, even 5 minutes are good. But in those 5 minutes, make it a habit to pray out loud. Jesus prayed out loud too. We know the High Priestly Prayer in John 17 because the disciples heard Him pray out loud. Likewise, we know what Jesus prayed on Gethsemane because the disciples heard His outpouring prayer before the Father. Prayer is neither randomly repeating words nor simply meditating in the head. Let us slowly learn prayer from Jesus’s own examples.

(2) Helplessness makes us pray.

No one (myself included) likes to feel helpless. Many of us would rather try to find a way out or seek someone who can hear us out. But one reason why we do not pray is because we are not helpless. The thoughts of being able to do ministry, have a healthy family, and not fail in this world by our own power stop us from praying. Jesus desires that we come to Him empty-handed and as weary and burdened as we are. He does not seek someone who has already taken care of everything. Ole Halleby defined prayer as ‘bringing our helplessness to Jesus.’ We see in the Gospels that helpless people came out to seek Jesus. The Samaritan woman lacked water, the sick lacked health, the crowd was without bread, the blind without sight, and Lazarus did not have life. They accepted Jesus and followed Him because they were weak. We may hate to be helpless, but helplessness leads us to prayer.

[Sharing] In which part of your life do you feel helpless? Let's share with other members.

(3) 'Poor in the spirit' is needed rather than training.

Prayer is not about training or learning. Prayer is when the only thing I could do in the face of overwhelming situations is to cry out to the heavenly Father. After many of these instances, I often find myself praying without thinking about it.

Many of us get tired to the point we don't even know what the problem is; the only clear thing is that something is off. That's why we seek "Father, Abba Father" and ask for help. What we need is not training for prayer but a poor spirit. When we are poor in the spirit the Holy Spirit finds room to minister in our hearts and begin new works in us.

(4) Anxiety is where prayer begins.

Instead of fighting anxiety, we can use it as a steppingstone to direct our hearts to God. Rather than suppressing it, managing it, or overriding it with something good, we can bring our anxieties to God. Then we can find ourselves going deeper into prayer without knowing. Anxiety is an invitation to prayer. As we stop trying to control our lives and instead use our anxiety and problems as reasons to pray, we finally encounter God who has been preparing for us many unimaginable things.

「Application」

(1) What the Bible uniquely says about prayer is that prayer itself is the answer. What does it mean that "prayer itself is the answer"?

(2) Learning to walk like a baby, helplessness, poor in the spirit, anxiety. Which of these felt most relevant to you and why?

(3) Spend some time to bring your anxiety, helplessness, and poor spirit before God. Then think about how you could set apart your space and time to take small steps in prayer and share with others.

(4) Share your specific prayer requests for the month and spend some time praying for each other.