



reflecting Jesus

BETA

private prayer
brings power **17**

?

did you know...

“...even Christ during His life on earth asked His Father daily for fresh supplies of needed grace; and from this communion with God He went out to strengthen and bless others. Look at the Son of God bowed in prayer to His Father! Though He is the Son of God, He strengthens His faith by prayer, and by communion with heaven gains for Himself power to resist evil and to minister to the needs of men.”

photo: sxc chriswalk



the facts of his story

Where did Jesus go to be alone, for how long, and why?

1. Luke 4:1-2 _____
2. Matthew 14:13 _____
3. Matthew 14:22-23 _____
4. Mark 1:35 _____
5. Mark 6:30-32 _____
6. Luke 6:12-13 _____

It has been said...
***“If Jesus prayed so much—and he was the Son of God
—can we afford to pray any less?”***

What do you think?



thinking it through

1. We can talk to God during the day. But as we see with Jesus, he spent time regularly praying in private. Why do you think this was?

2. Why do you think it would be important for you to spend lots of time in private prayer?



habits for reflecting the heart of Jesus ~ private prayer with God

In his book, *Power through Prayer*, E M Bounds writes the following:

"The men who have most fully illustrated Christ in their character, and have most powerfully affected the world for him, have been men who spent so much time with God as to make it a notable feature of their lives. Charles Simeon devoted the hours from four till eight in the morning to God. Mr. Wesley spent two hours daily in prayer. He began at four in the morning. Of him, one who knew him well wrote: "He thought prayer to be more his business than anything else, and I have seen him come out of his closet with a serenity of face next to shining." John Fletcher stained the walls of his room by the breath of his prayers. Sometimes he would pray all night; always, frequently, and with great earnestness. His whole life was a life of prayer. "I would not rise from my seat," he said, "without lifting my heart to God." His greeting to a friend was always: "Do I meet you praying?" Luther said: "If I fail to spend two hours in prayer each morning, the devil gets the victory through the day. I have so much business I cannot get on without spending three hours daily in prayer." He had a motto: "He that has prayed well has studied well."

These people really believed that there was great power in their lives because of prayer. And this power is also available to us. God loves it when we ask him for the gifts he has promised us, for these gifts bring his supernatural power into our lives.

Here's a question: when you pray, what do you normally ask God for? There are all sorts of things we can ask for, but they all fit in two main groups.

The first group of prayers are physical requests. Most of our requests are for things like this. For example,

1. That we will have a good day at school or work

2. That we will have good weather
3. That God will heal a friend's bad back

It is good to pray about physical things, but there is something even more important.

The second, and most important group of prayers, are spiritual requests. Spiritual requests are directly related to the work of the Holy Spirit in us. For spiritual growth, these prayers bring power into our lives, and into the lives of others. Such requests would include:

1. A stronger trust in God's promise to guide me (Proverbs 3:5-6)
2. Patience (Colossians 3:12)
3. Love towards those who are difficult to love (John 13:34-35)
4. Self-control not gossip about others (2 Corinthians 12:20)

Did you know that every request you make to God for such things, the answer will always be "YES!"? He will never say no, because these requests are about reflecting his character.

Sometimes, it may not appear that he is answering yes at all. But as we know that there is nothing more important to God than for us to reflect the character of Jesus, we can be certain that he is at work to reveal himself through us.

using your habit

1. Make a two columns in your Journal. Label the first column, Prayers for Physical Things. Label the second column, Prayers for Spiritual Things.
2. Now go back over the last week and write in the appropriate column the things you can remember praying for.
3. Do you have a longer list for physical or for spiritual requests?
4. Now think about the next week. What spiritual requests could you make to God, both for yourself and for people you know?

When you pray, always think about the two groups of requests — requests for physical things,

and requests for spiritual things. Make sure you have at least as many requests for the spiritual things, because these are what will really make a difference to us — for eternity!

To see the spiritual requests Paul made for people, you can read his prayers in Ephesians 1:15-23, Ephesians 3:14-21, Philippians 1:1-11, Colossians 1:3-14, and 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13.



putting the pieces together

In “the facts of his story we saw how often Jesus goes away by himself to pray. 1) He prayed for 40 days as preparation to his ministry where he was also tempted by Satan. 2) After hearing that John the Baptist was killed, he went to be alone. 3 & 5) He also goes to be alone after spending a lot of time with the crowds, 4) at the beginning of the day, 5) and before choosing the 12 disciples who he also commissioned as apostles.

This was really important to give him spiritual wisdom and power for his ministry. He could not accomplish his ministry without so much time alone in prayer with his Father.

In “thinking it through” you were challenged to think about your own private prayer time. This may not be a strong point for all of us, but there really is something special that happens in us through the Holy Spirit when we have plenty of time to pray alone.

In “habits for reflecting the heart of Jesus” took time to examine our own prayers—to see if they reflect the spiritual priorities that God is hoping we will have for our own lives. It is when we pray such prayers during our time with God that God’s power, through his Holy Spirit comes into our lives.



my time with God

In your devotional time this week, we will look at some prayers that brought power into people’s lives. Take one passage each day and make a list of the spiritual things that are being prayed for. Then use this list and pray for these things for yourself and for those you know.

1. Ephesians 1:15-23
2. Ephesians 3:14-21
3. Philippians 1:1-11
4. Colossians 1:3-14
5. 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13
6. John 17

What was it like to pray for these things?



pass it on!

Could you explain to someone why it is important to have time to pray alone?



extra help

1. Steps to Christ, The Privilege of Prayer
2. Celebration of Discipline, Prayer (chap 3), by Richard Foster
3. Power through Prayer chapter 7, E M Bounds

Power Through Prayer

E M Bounds

Chapter 7 Much Time Should Be Given to Prayer

The great masters and teachers in Christian doctrine have always found in prayer their highest source of illumination. Not to go beyond the limits of the English Church, it is recorded of Bishop Andrews that he spent five hours daily on his knees. The greatest practical resolves that have enriched and beautified human life in Christian times have been arrived at in prayer.
-- Canon Liddon

WHILE many private prayers, in the nature of things, must be short; while public prayers, as a rule, ought to be short and condensed; while there is ample room for and value put on ejaculatory prayer -- yet in our private communions with God time is a feature essential to its value. Much time spent with God is the secret of all successful praying. Prayer which is felt as a mighty force is the mediate or immediate product of much time spent with God. Our short prayers owe their point and efficiency to the long ones that have preceded them. The short prevailing prayer cannot be prayed by one who has not prevailed with God in a mightier struggle of long continuance. Jacob's victory of faith could not have been gained without that all-night wrestling. God's acquaintance is not made by pop calls. God does not bestow his gifts on the casual or hasty comers and goers. Much with God alone is the secret of knowing him and of influence with him. He yields to the persistency of a faith that knows him. He bestows his richest gifts upon those who declare their desire for and appreciation of those gifts by the constancy as well as earnestness of their importunity. Christ, who in this as well as other things is our Example, spent many whole nights in prayer. His custom

was to pray much. He had his habitual place to pray. Many long seasons of praying make up his history and character. Paul prayed day and night. It took time from very important interests for Daniel to pray three times a day. David's morning, noon, and night praying were doubtless on many occasions very protracted. While we have no specific account of the time these Bible saints spent in prayer, yet the indications are that they consumed much time in prayer, and on some occasions long seasons of praying was their custom.

We would not have any think that the value of their prayers is to be measured by the clock, but our purpose is to impress on our minds the necessity of being much alone with God; and that if this feature has not been produced by our faith, then our faith is of a feeble and surface type.

The men who have most fully illustrated Christ in their character, and have most powerfully affected the world for him, have been men who spent so much time with God as to make it a notable feature of their lives. Charles Simeon devoted the hours from four till eight in the morning to God. Mr. Wesley spent two hours daily in prayer. He began at four in the morning. Of him, one who knew him well wrote: "He thought prayer to be more his business than anything else, and I have seen him come out of his closet with a serenity of face next to shining." John Fletcher stained the walls of his room by the breath of his prayers. Sometimes he would pray all night; always, frequently, and with great earnestness. His whole life was a life of prayer. "I would not rise from my seat,"

he said, "without lifting my heart to God." His greeting to a friend was always: "Do I meet you praying?" Luther said: "If I fail to spend two hours in prayer each morning, the devil gets the victory through the day. I have so much business I cannot get on without spending three hours daily in prayer." He had a motto: "He that has prayed well has studied well."

Archbishop Leighton was so much alone with God that he seemed to be in a perpetual meditation. "Prayer and praise were his business and his pleasure," says his biographer. Bishop Ken was so much with God that his soul was said to be God-enamored. He was with God before the clock struck three every morning. Bishop Asbury said: "I propose to rise at four o'clock as often as I can and spend two hours in prayer and meditation." Samuel Rutherford, the fragrance of whose piety is still rich, rose at three in the morning to meet God in prayer. Joseph Alleine arose at four o'clock for his business of praying till eight. If he heard other tradesmen plying their business before he was up, he would exclaim: "O how this shames me! Doth not my Master deserve more than theirs?" He who has learned this trade well draws at will, on sight, and with acceptance of heaven's unfailling bank.

One of the holiest and among the most gifted of Scotch preachers says: "I ought to spend the best hours in communion with God. It is my noblest and most fruitful employment, and is not to be thrust into a corner. The morning hours, from six to eight, are the most uninterrupted and should be thus employed. After tea is my best hour, and that should

be solemnly dedicated to God. I ought not to give up the good old habit of prayer before going to bed; but guard must be kept against sleep. When I awake in the night, I ought to rise and pray. A little time after breakfast might be given to intercession." This was the praying plan of Robert McChesney. The memorable Methodist band in their praying shame us. "From four to five in the morning, private prayer; from five to six in the evening, private prayer."

John Welch, the holy and wonderful Scotch preacher, thought the day ill spent if he did not spend eight or ten hours in prayer. He kept a plaid that he might wrap himself when he arose to pray at night. His wife would complain when she found him lying on the ground weeping. He would reply: "O woman, I have the souls of three thousand to answer for, and I know not how it is with many of them!"