

Your Prayer Life

- When crisis hits, is your first response to pray or do you first react to the crisis?
- Are your prayers different when others are present versus when you're alone?
- How often do you pray alone and with no distraction?

Two Assumptions in Prayer (Matt 7:7-11)

1. God is good
2. God is able to grant our requests

Two Conditions of Prayer

1. Faith
2. Submission

Jesus' Prayer Life

Notice Jesus prayed ...

- During his inauguration into ministry (Lk 3:21)
- Before he made an important decision (Lk. 6:12-13)
- When God's sovereign plan is about to be revealed (Jn. 17:1)
- When others are listening (Jn. 11:41-43; recall also Mt. 6:5)
- During his greatest need (Mt. 26:36-44; Heb. 5:7)
- Knowing his life was about to end he turned to prayer, alone with the Father (Mt 26:39). Note his deep anguish drove him to prayer, not despair or anger
- In total submission to the Father (Mt 26:42)
- For victory of spirit over the flesh (Mt 26:40-41). Prayer is often the best weapon to defeat the evil one who uses the flesh as his battleground (see Eph. 6:18)
- Repeatedly (Mt 26:44)

Read the following and reflect on how often Jesus avoided human interaction when praying.

- Mk 1:35, "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed."
- Lk 5:16, "But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed."
- Lk 6:12, "Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God."
- Mt. 14:23, "After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone."

Why Solitude in Prayer?

- Solitude is the temporary practice of spatial and relational distance that could potentially distract us from being open and transparent with God.

What is the Value of Solitude in Prayer?

- In solitude we're not merely alone with ourselves; we're alone with God

- In solitude we learn that we do not need others as much as we think and solitude teaches others they do not need us as much as they think
- In solitude we practice reliance upon God for our deepest relational needs
- In solitude we have a chance to face our fears and uncertainties, which are often eclipsed when we're around others

Solitude is **1) liberating**, freeing us from all distraction so our prayers are focused, **2) engaging**, forcing us to withdraw from the frenetic activity of life and confront our self and God, and **2) renewing**, allowing us to confess the sin within and emerge forgiven.

Now What?

- Where is your place of solitude for prayer?
- Do you find it awkward to pray in solitude or around others?
- When you get angry or frustrated, do you immediately turn to prayer?
- Is an attitude of total submission built into your every prayer? Really?
- Do you craft your prayers carefully when praying publicly as Jesus did?

In sum, Jesus prayed privately, publicly, earnestly, repeatedly, submissively, carefully, and confidently. How does your prayer life match up?

Next week: The Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13)