

“Prayer”
Selected passages from Luke

3/7/10

9 & 10:45 am

Series “*Beyond Compare*”

INTRODUCTION

In Luke 5:15-16 we read, **“the news about [Jesus] spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear Him and to be healed of their sicknesses. 16 But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.”**

OPEN to John 5:19 (**PAGE** 1654)

I. Jesus Was Dependent Upon His Father

Many times in the Gospels we see Jesus praying. Sometimes He’s alone, sometimes He is with others.

Jesus prayed ...

At His baptism,

Before selecting the 12 apostles,

Before Peter’s Great Confession,

Before the Transfiguration,

Before one of the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray,

Jesus prayed...

After a crowd was about to make Him King,

After the disciples returned from a successful mission,

At the Last Supper,

Before His betrayal in the Garden of Gethsemane,

While hanging on the cross, and

Just before He died.

To say that Jesus prayed is one way of saying He depended upon His Father. Jesus' dependence was expressed by talking to His Father and then listening for the Father's answers.

READ John 5:19-20a “**Jesus gave them this answer: ‘I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by Himself; He can do only what He sees His Father doing, because whatever the Father does [is doing] the Son also does [is doing].’**
20a **For the Father loves the Son and shows [is showing] Him all He does [is doing].’”**

Jesus is seeking His Father and listening to Him and joining Him in what He is doing.

READ John 12:49-50 “**For I did not speak of My own accord, but the Father Who sent Me commanded Me what to say and how to say it.**
50 **I know that His command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say [I am saying] is just what the Father has told Me to say [to be saying].’”**

Jesus listened to His Father. He was dependent upon Him to know what to say and even how to say it!

II. God the Father Responded to Jesus

As I looked through the Gospel of Luke, looking just at Jesus' prayer life, I saw not only how connected prayer was to everything major that happened, but also how often the Father responded to Jesus' prayers.

He responded in different ways: in the silence of Jesus' heart and mind, as well as out loud when others were standing around and heard it! Once He even sent an angel to strengthen Jesus.

Jesus expressed His dependence upon His Father in prayer, and the Father responded. That's a mutual relationship, and emphasizes how important it is – if we're depending upon the Father – to not only pray, but to listen for His response.

Both parts, praying and listening, express dependence.

I'd like to show you a sketch on DVD to help make this point. You might relate to this.

SHOW DVD “*Coffee With Jesus.*”

Can you relate? I can.

As we look at how Jesus turns to His Father in prayer, we see how He also relies on the Father for His answers. And we see Him answer in various ways:

One way God answers is through ...

A. Giving Affirmation (Luke 3:21-22)

OPEN to Luke 3:21 (**PAGE** 1594)

READ Luke 3:21-22 “**When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as He was praying, Heaven was opened 22 and the Holy Spirit descended on Him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from Heaven: ‘You are My Son, Whom I love; with You I am well pleased.’”**

There are times in prayer that the Lord brings affirmation, “*Yes, you’re right where I want you to be.*” He confirms that we are following Him.

ILLUSTRATION

This week someone told me the story of someone who called in on the Christian radio station, K-LOVE.

An elementary school teacher was feeling very distant from God, very discouraged, and wondering how He felt about her.

She was out supervising the students while they were at recess, and she was pouring out her heart to God.

She prayed, “God, would you please show me how much You love me? I’m desperate.”

Within a few minutes of praying that prayer, a little boy ran up to her, looked her in the eyes, and said, “*My bride!*” and then ran away!

As she cried out to her Father in hope and dependence, God affirmed His love for her.

Another way God answers is by ...

B. Giving Direction (Luke 6:12-16)

TURN to Luke 6:12

READ Luke 6:12-16 “One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God.

13 When morning came, He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also designated apostles:

14 Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew,

15 Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot,

16 Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.”

Jesus wanted and was relying on His Father’s direction because the men He selected were the ones who would spread the Kingdom of God around the world. *It was a huge decision, so He depended upon His Father for clear direction.*

But, even with the whole night in prayer and the clarity with which the Father lead him, I found myself wondering if Jesus ever wondered if He heard the Father clearly:

a. Peter on the mount of transfiguration:

“It’s so wonderful to be here! Let us put up three tents! One for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah!”

You wonder if Jesus felt he had to apologize to Moses and Elijah for picking Peter.

b. James and John wanting to call down fire from Heaven to destroy a village.

c. All of the disciples’ slowness to grasp spiritual truth; and at the time of His greatest need, they fell asleep on Him, and ended up deserting Him.

d. Judas, who betrayed Him.

Have you sought the Lord regarding an important decision, and then wondered if you heard Him correctly?

You looked to His Word, prayed, sought godly counsel,

you were teachable and open-handed through it all, everything lined up, and you acted ...

... but later everything started coming unglued?

Just because things don’t go smoothly doesn’t mean you

haven't heard from the Father or that you didn't hear right!

Jesus didn't make a mistake in selecting any of the 12!

Sometimes things can be going hard in your marriage, and you wonder, "*Did I really hear from God on this?*"

Sometimes you take a job that looks perfect, and then things start going sour with the boss or other employees, and you find yourself wondering, "*God, is this really what You said?*"

ILLUSTRATION

"A young man felt the Lord's call to become a chaplain in the military and immediately began to prepare. After training, he was assigned to an air wing of almost 400 men who seemed to have no desire for spiritual things at all. After many efforts that failed, the young chaplain felt discouraged; like an absolute failure.

"One morning he took his despair with him into the forest and fell on his knees in prayer by an old stump. He poured out his heart to God and asked what he might do. God seemed to say, '*Go to the PX where the men are and I will show you what to do.*' So he went.

"The PX was filled with men, smoke and the smell of stale beer. Across the milling crowd, the chaplain spied a young pilot in a corner. In his hand was a letter. On his face was a look of despair. '*Go and sit down by that man,*' he heard God say. And he obeyed.

"He sat down and said nothing. Eventually, the letter was handed to him. The young pilot's wife wanted a divorce. She had met another man; and was tired of waiting for her husband to return home.

"Then the chaplain began telling of his own grief. He told about the small attendance, his own despair, how he went to the old stump to pray, and how God told him to come to the PX and look for someone who might need him.

"When he finished, there were tears in the pilot's eyes. '*I guess that is the way I feel, too, only I feel like a failure as a man and as a husband. Why don't we go out to the old stump together? Possibly if we pray together we will both find out what to do.*' Together they went and knelt in the forest. The pilot got direction on how to treat his wife and the man who stole her love. When they were finished, the chaplain asked the pilot to come by his office the next morning.

"He showed up with two friends; both looking for answers to their own personal pain. Two mornings later there were eight. By week's end, so many tried to crowd into the tiny office that they had to find a larger room. Three weeks later, 300 men attended a

communion service. Before long, the air wing became famous all over Europe for the dynamic Christian quality and commitment of its men.

From one man's pain that drove him to prayer to 300 men serving the Lord."

Sometimes it's our pain that the Lord uses to drive us to greater dependence upon Him and to work the kind of miracles that come only as we throw ourselves upon Him in complete dependence.

Remember, if you have sought the Lord in His Word, and prayer, even sought godly counsel, and been teachable and open-handed through it all, don't assume just because things get hard that you missed His will; seek Him all the more!

Another way God answers is by ...

C. Giving Strength (Luke 22:40-44)

TURN to Luke 22:40-43

READ Luke 22:40-43 **"On reaching the place, He said to [His disciples], 'Pray that you will not fall into temptation.'**
41 He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, *knelt down and prayed,*
42 'Father, if You are willing, take this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done.'
43 *An angel from Heaven appeared to Him and strengthened Him.*"

Jesus knew what He was facing, and He struggled in prayer, struggled with following through. He looked to the Father for strength to obey.

God has promised that in our times of deepest need, He will do whatever it takes to strengthen us and help us. He has promised that He will not let us be tempted beyond what we are able to endure. But, we must look to Him.

ILLUSTRATION

"A new pastor was asked by a woman in the church to visit her father in the hospital who was dying of cancer.

When the pastor arrived in his room, he saw an empty chair placed next to the man's bed. During the course of their conversation, the pastor asked the dying man why the chair was situated so closely to his bed.

The man was somewhat embarrassed by the pastor's question, but after some hesitation, he explained that it was there to help him pray. He said that he had always struggled with

prayer; he felt he wasn't very good at it. He struggled to remember that God was actually with Him and that He was always listening.

So one day he placed a chair in front of himself and pretended that Jesus was physically sitting in that chair. He found that it transformed his prayer life! In fact, it worked so well that the man got to the point that he routinely prayed for a couple hours every day.

The young pastor was deeply moved by the man's story and returned to the church with a new appreciation for the intimacy of prayer.

Two days later, the daughter called to say that her father had died. She added that when the nurse entered his room, she found him lying with his head on the chair that he kept beside his bed."

(Adapted from "The One Jesus Loves," by Brennan Manning, Discipleship Journal, July & August, 1994)

He died as he had learned to live – dependent upon His Father in Heaven.

CONCLUSION

Prayer is one of the greatest indicators of our dependence upon God.

Prayer is cultivated just like communication in any other relationship: investing time in conversation, asking clarifying questions, getting to know the person's character, behaviors; the sound of their voice. That's how trust grows.

Determine a quiet time, a private place, possibly a prayer partner and start the conversation. Maybe it begins with this prayer:

"Father, teach me to live a life of dependence. In Jesus' name, Amen."