

# Holding Fast to Prayer

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# Introduction

The prayers Jesus prayed give us insight into His nature, His heart, and His mission on earth. The prayers of Jesus also inform and encourage us in our own prayer lives. Far more important than where He prayed, when He prayed, and in what position He prayed is the fact that He prayed. The theme of His prayers is instructive for all of us.

# PRAYER IN INTEGRAL

Prayer was an integral part of Jesus' time on earth, and He prayed regularly: "Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed" ([Luke 5:16](#)). If the Son incarnate found it necessary to commune with the Father frequently, how much more do we need to do so? Jesus faced persecution, trials, heartache, and physical suffering. Without regular and continual access to the throne of God, He would surely have found those events unbearable. In the same way, Christians must never neglect to "approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" ([Hebrews 4:16](#)).

<sup>16</sup> So He Himself *often*  
withdrew into the  
wilderness and prayed.

Luke 5:16.

<sup>16</sup> Let us therefore come  
boldly to the throne of  
grace, that we may obtain  
mercy and find grace to  
help in time of need.

Hebrews 4:16.

# THE MODEL PRAYER

What is often called “The Lord’s Prayer” is actually a teaching tool of Christ as part of His Sermon on the Mount ([Matthew 6:9–13](#)). In this model prayer, Jesus teaches us to approach God as “our Father”; to hallow God’s name; to pray for God’s will; and to ask for daily provision, forgiveness, and spiritual protection.

# The Model Prayer

<sup>9</sup> In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. <sup>10</sup> Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as *it is* in heaven. <sup>11</sup> Give us this day our daily bread. <sup>12</sup> And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors. <sup>13</sup> And do not lead us into temptation But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Matthew 6:9–13.

# Prayer is appropriate at important events.

In addition to His regular times of prayer, Jesus prayed at some important events in His life: He prayed at His baptism ([Luke 3:21–22](#)); before feeding the 5,000 ([Luke 9:16](#)) and the 4,000 ([Matthew 15:36](#)); and at the moment of His transfiguration ([Luke 9:29](#)). Before Jesus chose His twelve disciples, He “spent the night praying to God” on a mountainside ([Luke 6:12](#)).

- <sup>21</sup> When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. <sup>22</sup> And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, “You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.” **Luke 3:21–22.**
- <sup>16</sup> Then He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke *them*, and gave *them* to the disciples to set before the multitude. **Luke 9:16.**
- <sup>36</sup> And He took the seven loaves and the fish and gave thanks, broke *them* and gave *them* to His disciples; and the disciples *gave* to the multitude. **Matthew 15:36.**



○<sup>29</sup> As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe *became white and glistening* [Luke 9:29](#).

○<sup>12</sup> Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. [Luke 6:12](#).

# Prayer is appropriate at important events.

Jesus prayed at the return of the 72 disciples: “At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, ‘I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do’” ([Luke 10:21](#)).

# Luke 10:21

○<sup>21</sup> In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, “I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.

Jesus prayed at Lazarus' tomb. As they rolled away the stone from His friend's tomb, "Jesus looked up and said, 'Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me'" ([John 11:41-42](#)). This is a good example of prayer prayed in the hearing of others for the sake of the hearers.

# John 11:41-42

- <sup>41</sup> Then they took away the stone *from the place* where the dead man was lying. And Jesus lifted up *His* eyes and said, “Father, I thank You that You have heard Me.  
<sup>42</sup> And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said *this*, that they may believe that You sent Me.”

In Jerusalem the week of His arrest, Jesus predicted His soon-to-come death. As He spoke of His coming sacrifice, Jesus prayed a very short prayer: “Father, glorify your name!” ([John 12:28](#)). In response to Jesus’ prayer, a voice from heaven said, “I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.” Spending a last few minutes with His disciples on the night of His arrest, Jesus prayed an extended prayer known today as His “high priestly prayer” ([John 17](#)) on behalf of His own, those given to Him by the Father (verse 6).

<sup>28</sup> Father, glorify Your name.”  
Then a voice came from  
heaven, *saying*, “I have both  
glorified *it* and will glorify *it*  
again.”

Jn 12:28.

<sup>6</sup> “I have manifested Your name  
to the men whom You have  
given Me out of the world. They  
were Yours, You gave them to  
Me, and they have kept Your  
word.

Jn 17:6.

In this prayer, Jesus is the Intercessor for His children (cf. [Hebrews 7:25](#)). He prays “not . . . for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours” ([verse 9](#)). He prays that they would have His joy ([verse 13](#)) and that God would keep them from the evil one ([verse 15](#)). He prays for His own to be sanctified by the truth, which is the Word of God ([verse 17](#)), and to be unified in that truth ([verses 21–23](#)). In the [John 17](#) prayer, Jesus looks to the future and includes all those who would ever believe in Him ([verse 20](#)).



- <sup>25</sup> Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. [Heb 7:25](#).
- <sup>9</sup> “I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. [John 17:9](#).
- <sup>13</sup> But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves. [John 17:13](#).
- <sup>15</sup> I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. [John 17:15](#).

- <sup>17</sup> Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. [John 17:17](#).
- <sup>21</sup> that they all may be one, as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. <sup>22</sup> And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: <sup>23</sup> I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. [John 17:21–23](#).
- <sup>20</sup> “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; [John 17:20](#).

Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane just before His arrest (Matthew 26:36–46). He had asked His disciples to pray with Him, but they fell asleep instead. Jesus' agonized prayer in the garden is a model of submission and sacrifice: "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will" (verse 39). Three times Jesus prayed this.

# Matthew 26:36-46

- <sup>36</sup> Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, “Sit here while I go and pray over there.” <sup>37</sup> And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. <sup>38</sup> Then He said to them, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me.”
- <sup>39</sup> He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You *will*.”
- <sup>40</sup> Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “What! Could you not watch with Me one hour? <sup>41</sup> Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak.”
- <sup>42</sup> Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, “O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done.” <sup>43</sup> And He came and found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy.
- <sup>44</sup> So He left them, went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. <sup>45</sup> Then He came to His disciples and said to them, “Are *you* still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. <sup>46</sup> Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand.”

Jesus even prayed from the cross, in the midst of His agony. His first prayer echoes [Psalm 22:1](#) and expresses His deep distress: “About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, ‘*Eli, Eli, lemasabachthani?*’ (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”) ([Matthew 27:46](#)). Jesus also prayed for the forgiveness of those who were torturing Him to death: “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” ([Luke 23:34](#)). In His final breath, Jesus continued to express His faith in God: “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit” ([Luke 23:46](#)).

- <sup>1</sup> My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? *Why are You so far from helping Me, And from the words of My groaning?* [Psalm 22:1](#).
- <sup>46</sup> And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” that is, “*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*” [Matthew 27:46](#).
- <sup>34</sup> Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.” And they divided His garments and cast lots. [Luke 23:33–34](#).
- <sup>46</sup> And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, “Father, *‘into Your hands I commit My spirit.’*” Having said this, He breathed His last. [Luke 23:46](#).

Several themes are apparent in Jesus' prayers. One is the giving of thanks to the Father. Praise was a regular part of Jesus' prayers. Another theme is His communion with the Father; His relationship with His heavenly Father naturally resulted in His desire to spend time communicating with Him. The third theme in Jesus' prayers is His submission to the Father. Our Lord's prayers were always in accordance with God's will.

Just as Jesus gave thanks, we should in all things pray with thanksgiving ([Philippians 4:6–7](#)). As God's adopted children, we should naturally desire to talk to God ([Ephesians 3:12](#)). And in everything we should seek the Lord's will above our own. Jesus prayed in a variety of settings, public and private. He prayed in times of joy and times of sorrow. He prayed for Himself, and He prayed for others. He prayed to express thanks, to petition for needs, and to commune with His Father. Jesus set the example of how we should trust God, submit to God, and seek fellowship with God.



- <sup>6</sup> Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; <sup>7</sup> and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. *Philippians 4:6–7.*
- <sup>12</sup> in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him. *Ephesians 3:12.*

To this day, Jesus continues to pray for His own from His exalted position in heaven at the right hand of God. Scripture says He makes intercession for those who belong to Him ([Hebrews 7:25](#); [Romans 8:34](#); [1 John 2:1](#)). It is significant that, at Jesus' ascension, He was taken away from His disciples into heaven "while he was blessing them" ([Luke 24:51](#)). That blessing has never stopped. Jesus will continue to bless those who come to God through faith in Christ until He comes again.

- <sup>25</sup> Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. [Hebrews 7:25](#).
- <sup>34</sup> Who *is* he who condemns? *It is* Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. [Romans 8:34](#).
- My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. [1 John 2:1](#).
- <sup>51</sup> Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven. [Luke 24:51](#).