

This One Thing:
The Example of Jesus
Luke 5:16 and Others

August 27, 2017

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Text Introduction: We are in the middle of a prayer challenge. We are calling our challenge “This One Thing.” This is not only guiding our times together on Sunday morning as we examine the Scriptures about prayer, but we are also challenging one another about our discipline and habits of prayer. I have asked us to take three action steps in addition to coming each week this Fall to Sunday School and Worship.

1. This One Thing—Each week we will have a church-wide specific prayer objective. This week our central prayer objective is praying for an increase in the number of evangelistic conversions and baptisms. So Pray. Pray, every time you pray, for this one thing.
2. Prayer Revival—October 8-11—This is a specific set of days given to prayer. Unlike most revivals where a guest revivalist (evangelist) is enlisted to lead us, we are inviting guest prayer leaders to lead us in prayer. I am asking that you prioritize these dates on your calendar. Protect these dates. Be here those days. Let’s have a prayer revival.
3. A Personal Prayer Commitment—We are unveiling week by week, personal prayer activities. One will capture your attention and you will commit to this being your personal prayer activity. Some are listed in today’s bulletin.

We are going to look this morning at the prayer life of Jesus. I want to give you just one here at the beginning and then we will present actually all of the examples that we have in the Gospels. I want to start with Luke 5:16. Notice what we read here.

Text: But the news about Him spread even more, and large crowds would come together to hear Him and to be healed of their sicknesses. Yet He often withdrew to deserted places and prayed.

Introduction: Luke gives us a summary statement here. This is not any particular day. This is a day that happened over and over again in the three years of Jesus’ active earthly ministry.

Last week, we examined Luke 11. There we get the disciples asking Jesus to teach them to pray. We said that the question was prompted by an observation. They observed Jesus praying.

What did the disciples observe? My usual preaching ministry is based upon examining a single passage of Scripture, but occasionally we find help in surveying a larger body of material. Today is one of those days. I want us to see examples of the prayer life of Jesus. It will take a moment, but I want to take you through every example of Jesus praying in the Gospels.

Surveying the Prayer Life of Jesus:

1. Matthew 14:23 (Mark 6:46)—Jesus prays alone after a day of ministry which includes the Feeding of the 5,000.

After dismissing the crowds, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. When evening came, He was there alone. (Matthew 14:23)

2. Matthew 27:46 (Mark 15:34)—From the cross, Jesus cried out, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “*Elí, Elí, lemá sabachtháni?*” that is, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Matthew 27:46)

3. Luke 3:21—At his baptism, at the beginning of his ministry, as He was praying, Heaven opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him and the audible voice of God was heard.

When all the people were baptized, Jesus also was baptized. As He was praying, heaven opened, (Luke 3:21)

4. Luke 5:16—Here is a summary statement about the practice of Jesus in prayer even as people came to Him with sickness (v. 15). The significance is that He withdrew to deserted places and prayed.

Yet He often withdrew to deserted places and prayed.(Luke 5:16)

5. Luke 6:12—Jesus spends the whole night in prayer before selecting the disciples

During those days He went out to the mountain to pray and spent all night in prayer to God. (Luke 6:12)

6. Luke 9:18—He is praying in private and His disciples were with Him. Here is the occasion when Jesus asked the disciples “Who do people say that I am?”

While He was praying in private and His disciples were with Him, He asked them, “Who do the crowds say that I am?” (Luke 9:18)

7. Luke 9:28—Jesus took others (Peter, James, and John) on a mountain to pray. While praying they encounter the glory of God.

About eight days after these words, He took along Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain to pray. (Luke 9:28)

8. Luke 9:29—They are on the mountain praying.

As He was praying, the appearance of His face changed, and His clothes became dazzling white. (Luke 9:29)

9. Luke 11:1—Jesus is in a certain place praying.

He was praying in a certain place, and when He finished, one of His disciples said to Him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John also taught his disciples.”(Luke 11:1)

10. Luke 22:32—The indication is that Jesus is praying for the faith of Simon Peter.

But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And you, when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.” (Luke 22:32)

11. Luke 22:44—This is that compelling scene of Jesus being in the Garden (as is usual according to verse 39) and His prayer is so fervent that His sweat is like big drops of blood.

Being in anguish, He prayed more fervently, and His sweat became like drops of blood falling to the ground. (Luke 22:44)

12. Luke 23:34—Here, Jesus is on the cross, asking the Father to forgive those who were crucifying Him.

Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing.” And they divided His clothes and cast lots. (Luke 23:34)

13. Luke 23:46—These are the last words of Jesus. He voiced that prayer of committing Himself into the Father’s hands.

And Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Father, into Your hands I entrust My spirit.” Saying this, He breathed His last. (Luke 23:46)

14. John 17—This is the longest recorded prayer that we have. There is much ground to cover here so let me just mention one thing. Among other things, this is a prayer for unity.

May they be one as We are one. (John 17:22)

Now, so what? What do we learn from all of this, and what application should we make to our lives?

Specific Principles from the Prayer Life of Jesus: What do we learn from the prayer life of Jesus? What can we apply to our own prayer life as we meditate on the example of Jesus?

1. **First, we see the priority of prayer in the life of Jesus.**

The discipline in Jesus’ prayer life stands out in several respects.

- A **certain place**

- “A certain place” (11:1)—This phrase lends itself to the idea that Jesus had a “certain place” to pray.
- “to the wilderness” (5:16)—Another special place
- “to the mountain” (6:12 and 9:28)—Perhaps another special place
- In the Garden—Luke tells us that this was “usual.”

- A **consistent practice**

- “often slip away to pray” (5:16)—In the context, many demands are being made upon Jesus. However, He knew of the importance to slip away and pray.

Sometimes we think we are too busy to pray. We buy into the lie that we are too busy to pray. In the midst of the many demands, Jesus slipped away often to pray. I am reminded of the quote so often attributed to the reformer, Martin Luther. Luther is to have said, “I have so much to do today, I shall have to spend the first three hours in prayer.”

- A **concrete pattern**
 - “Lord, teach us to pray.” (11:1)—The question from the disciples implies that they had been eyewitnesses to Jesus on a number of occasions. They wanted to pray like Jesus prayed. The teaching that follows serves as a model for praying—not words to necessarily be mimicked, but a pattern that serves as a model.
- A **continuing process**
 - Luke 22:44, 23:34, and 23:46 show us the continuing prayer life of Jesus. Paul said that we are to pray unceasingly. Jesus modeled this for us. He did not have to be on the mountain or in His certain place of praying. It did not have to be His scheduled time to pray. He called on the Father throughout the day.

So What?: Prayer, like any other good habit, is a process of discipline. How are you doing right now in the discipline of prayer? If you are unhappy about your habit of prayer, maybe you need for the present time to establish some structure into your life that will encourage you to develop this discipline. Follow Jesus’ model. Set aside a place and a time to pray. Commit to praying at that time and place every day. Perhaps you need to ask some people to pray with you. Notice in these examples in Luke that sometimes Jesus prayed alone while other times He asked the disciples to join Him. Maybe you need a model of praying. Develop a model that works well for you. Once we build discipline into our prayer time, we will begin to commune with God in such a way that we have this ongoing conversation with Him throughout our day.

2. **Second, we see the purpose of prayer in the life of Jesus.**

That is, for what and for whom did Jesus pray? If we have learned “how” he prayed by the discipline (priority) in His life, then we can learn “why” we pray by examining the things that Jesus prayed.

Jesus prayed . . .

- For refreshment (5:16)
- In times of momentous decision (Luke 6:12)—Jesus spent the whole night in prayer before He would select the disciples.
- In times of distress—In garden and on the cross
- For the faith of the disciples (Luke 22:32)
- For the unity of the disciples (John 17)

So What?: Again, seeing how Jesus prayed can show us the kind of things that we ought to be praying for. Notice that Jesus had balance in His life concerning praying for Himself and praying for others. We need this same balance.

Concluding Thought: Perhaps, someone will raise the question, “If Jesus was God, why did He even need to pray? Why did He need to seek the will of God? Why did He need to pray for strength?” Sometimes, I have thought that Jesus prayed so as to model for us, and perhaps that is part of the reason. However, if He prayed only to give us an example, why do we have so many references to Him alone in prayer? Perhaps there is more.

Prayer is the key to unleashing human participation in the works of God.

And

Prayer is the key to unleashing Divine participation in the works of humanity.

Many years ago, in the end of the 19th century, there was a great revival under the ministry of Lyman Beecher, the father of Harriet Beecher Stowe, the abolitionist and author of Uncle Tom’s Cabin. Beecher saw a great visitation of God. Since there was no organized prayer effort leading up to the revival, Beecher believed it to be a spontaneous move of God, and certainly that would have made great sense.

However, after the revival meeting was over, Beecher visited with a bedridden man on the outskirts of town. The man inquired about the revival. Beecher was obviously delighted to tell him of the numbers of people responding to Christ. The man began to tell Beecher that for days he had prayed. He prayed for the unsaved. He started at one end of town and prayed for each household until he came to the other end of town. He prayed, by name, from one end of town to the other twice in the immediate days leading up to the revival meeting. When Beecher’s visit was over, he knew from whence the revival came. It was born in Heaven by God who desires to bring people unto Himself, but it had also been born in the heart of a bedridden man on the outskirts of town. (David Butts, *Forgotten Power: A Simple Theology for a Praying Church*, p. 21)

We might not understand everything theologically that is happening around the prayer life and example of Jesus. But this one thing we must conclude...

If Jesus prayed, how much more do we need to pray?