

Learning from the Master

by Jim Johns

Part 3

Lessons from the Prayer Life of Jesus

This article is the third and last in a series on the Prayer Life of Jesus. In the first article, we examined the elements of His earthly prayer life as described in Hebrews 5:7-10; in the second, we learned from the Gospel of Luke that it was in prayer that Jesus discovered the will of the Father. Now we turn to an illustration of His obedience to the Father when, in prayer, Jesus learned how to react to the pressures of the crowd that followed Him.

Jesus' disciples frequently were caught up in the reactions of the crowd to the miracles and teaching of the Master. The crowd wanted to crown their hero as their king. He was their hero. He could have had enormous political power on the strength of the willingness of the crowd to follow and respond to Him.

But Jesus could ignore the praises of the crowd, sticking to the mission to which the Father had called Him. Many a Christian leader has lost his effectiveness by responding to the crowd rather than to the guidance of the Spirit.

How did Jesus stay on course?

In Prayer He Made the Necessary Adjustments in His Life to Be Able to Hear from the Father and to Follow the Father's Direction.

In Mark 1:35-39, Jesus -- having just chosen His first four disciples -- goes to the synagogue, teaches and casts out a demon. Then He goes to Peter's house and heals Peter's mother-in-law of her illness, and by evening the whole town is at the front door. He again heals many and drives out demons. Then...

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. Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you."

Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else -- to the nearby villages -- so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons. (Luke 1:35-39 NIV)

Notice that He gets up early in the morning -- to do what? *To pray*, in a solitary place. His disciples go and find Him, to tell Him everybody's looking for Him. He has a following. He should capitalize on His miracles and the crowd's attention. ***You can be famous, Jesus!***

What does He say? "Let us go somewhere else -- to the nearby villages -- so I can preach there also. *That is why I have come.*"

How did He know what to do that day? He prayed that morning. Very early.

Throughout His life, He got up early and prayed. On some occasions He stayed up all night and prayed. He was constantly and consistently in prayer to the heavenly Father. And He came up from the place of prayer knowing what to do.

What shall we do?

Having heard what the Father wanted, Jesus refused to be swayed by what the crowd wanted. He came to do the will of the Father; nothing else mattered.

How ready are we to turn away from other people's agenda for us? Is it more important to know what will make us popular, or to know what the Father has in mind for us? God speaks today, and He's ready to give us a word for our day every day, if we are ready to listen.

The Prayer Life Touches Everything

Our prayer life will have more to do with the rest of our life than any other single thing in our life! In Hebrews 5, we learned that it was after Jesus learned obedience that the Father could make Him exactly what the Father was looking for -- and Jesus was able to save a whole world because He became what the Father wanted Him to be.

That process must be the same with us. In prayer we can learn what God wants us to be and to do. Prayer is not designed to get Him to do what we want. In full communion with Him through prayer, we can become something He can use.

Here's the point: God has to tell somebody what He wants -- but He needs somebody who wants to hear, who can hear, and who is listening. Is it time for you to listen? To be quiet and hear from the heavenly Father what He wants from you in this critical hour?

The Prayer Life of Jesus is Our Example

- In prayer Jesus exhibited passion and compassion, reverent submission, obedience, and victory;
- In prayer Jesus learned the Father's will;
- The major decisions of Jesus' life were made after extended seasons of prayer;
- In prayer Jesus made the necessary adjustments in His life to be able to hear from the Father and to follow the Father's direction.

Is your prayer life following the Savior's example? Is it completely submitted to Him? Are you as concerned about how God sees you as about the opinions and reactions of others?

Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6) That is true in the life of prayer, as it is in the life of faith. He is our way. Learn from Him, and follow Him -- in prayer -- into the presence of the Father. There, the great Intercessor, the living Christ, is ready to lift your prayers as sweet-smelling incense to the One Who made you for fellowship with Himself.