

3 Ways We Learn to Pray From Jesus

Jesus, as a rabbi, chose disciples into whom He would pour His life—not just teach them information, but disclose His heart. These disciples observed Him in every setting. They had backstage passes to His most intimate moments. They were welcomed into His private dealings. Jesus' disciples—with all this up close access—made a connection between His life of prayer and His life of power, and they asked Him to teach them to pray.

It was customary for a rabbi to teach his disciples to pray. It was expected. It was part of the curriculum. They had many formalized prayers that were said in certain settings at certain times of day, but each rabbi would teach a more personal form of the standard prayers to his disciples. Notice how Jesus' disciples included in their request that He teach them to pray, "... just as John taught his disciples" (Luke 11:1). It was a rabbi's job to teach his disciples to pray like he prayed. They taught index prayers, or bullet point prayers, exactly like the form of Jesus' model prayer. These rabbi-taught prayers got to the heart of what the rabbi believed significant, and they encapsulated the topics he felt to be essential. How a rabbi taught his disciples to pray said much about the heart of the rabbi.

Knowing that, it catches my attention that Jesus' disciples had to ask Him to teach them to pray. Why wasn't that lesson number one? Given what a central role prayer played in Jesus' life, why wasn't prayer the primary lesson? Why wasn't prayer the first thing He poured into them?

Could it be that He wanted them to be hungry to know how to pray? He wanted them to have seen the effect of prayer and to have observed prayer's role in His life and ministry, so that

when they asked Him to teach them to pray, they were not asking just for the sake of being informed, or increasing their knowledge, or advancing their standing as disciples. He wanted to teach them to pray when the desire to pray like their rabbi had grown in them to become a thirst that had to be quenched. He wanted them to have developed an insatiable appetite for prayer.

By being with Him long enough and through many and varied situations, they had opportunity to observe a direct correlation between prayer and power; a direct link from the time spent alone with the Father to the unflappable peace that carried Him; the nexus of prayer and the joy that was the hallmark of His life. (See John 15:11.)

By the time they asked Him specifically to teach them to pray, they were primed exactly as Jesus wanted them to be. They couldn't wait any longer. They couldn't be patient until their rabbi got around to teaching them to pray. It became a burning desire that could not be held in. It was more than wanting to know how to say good prayers. They wanted to know how to live with prayer as the fulcrum of their lives. It was the kind of living that flowed from praying that they longed to experience. Like their rabbi.

If Jesus was willing and eager to teach His disciples to pray like He prays while He was in His earthly ministry, then He is equally eager to teach us to pray right now. In fact, He can teach us from inside better than He could teach the disciples who could hear Him with physical ears and see Him with physical eyes. The Spirit of Truth, whose job it is to teach us all things, lives in us with direct access to our minds and hearts. (John 14:26; 16:13) Jesus, through His Spirit in us, will joyfully teach us to pray. Just ask.

The Prayer Teacher

When you want to learn something, you want to learn from the

best. If you can learn from the master, the one who instigated and established the discipline, you want to understand all the better. Who knows the ins and outs of any skill better than the one who first established it? You and I have the great privilege of learning from the Master Pray-er, the One who instigated prayer from the beginning, and designed it so that it works as He means for it to work. He knows the intricacies and the potential roadblocks. He established prayer and pioneered prayer. He wants to be our Rabbi and to teach us everything He knows about prayer.

Not only does He know all about prayer, but He knows all about us. He knows every detail about each one of us. He knows how we learn, and what our bent is, and what it will take to teach any one of us exactly what we need to know to live the abundant life He promised. He knows what lies behind that has colored our perceptions of prayer and of Him, and He knows what lies ahead that will challenge our faith past its current boundaries. He is the perfect teacher. Fully versed in His subject and fully aware of His student.

He loves His subject matter. Have you ever had a teacher who just loved the material they were teaching? Jesus loves prayer. When He teaches you to pray, He will be teaching you His own heart. His love for prayer will be infectious. He will creatively design modules for your learning that will engage you fully and will be designed with just your learning style and personality and experience in mind. He'll be your private tutor, while also bringing you into prayer experiences in community of believers.

Learning Prayer

You have access to the perfect Teacher in Rabbi Jesus. What will it take to be the best student-disciple-you can be so that you can learn all that He wants to impart?

First, believe. Believe Him. Believe that He is available to

you and loves you and longs for you to experience all of Him that you possibly can.

Remember that He said, "Everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you" (John 15:15). He will continue to make the Father known. He will keep teaching you. He always has more to disclose to you and it delights Him to continue showing you more and more of the Father.

The more we know the Father, the more we love the Son. The more we love the Son, the more His presence in us is made real to us. This is the very core of a praying life—the flow of love between your heart and His.

First, believe Him. Second, yield to Him. Let Him run the show. Trust that He knows how to accomplish in you and for you exactly what He has in mind, and that He has in mind only your good. Your advancement. Your peace.

You can only yield to one you trust. Otherwise, you have to be ready to take the reins yourself in case things go off course. You have to be watching for a wrong move. You have to be careful and protective of your own course in case someone tries to head you in the wrong direction. Can you fully yield to Him, knowing that Jesus loves you beyond reason, with an obsessive love that hovers over you and manages even the smallest moments of your life?

First, believe. Second, yield. Third, follow. The call to prayer is not a command, but an invitation. He is calling you to a journey. He is calling you to follow Him (Mark 1:17). The call is active and risky. The great surprise in a praying life is that you find your little life swept up into the great purposes of God. Prayer is not passive or sedentary. It will catch you up in the current of His activity, and you will never be the same. Risky becomes safe when it is in response to the leading of Jesus.

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