

Priority of Prayer – Part 1

Mark 1:35

I. Intro

- A. **ASK:** Do you feel there is a lack of spiritual power in Christianity today?
- B. **ASK:** What do you feel is the major reason for the lack of power?
- C. Quote from Steve Gaines in book “Pray Like It Matters”: *God’s cause does not suffer through lack of divine ability, but by reason of the lack of prayer-ability in man*
- D. **ASK:** If God has a plan, does not praying stop that plan from being fulfilled? No – **ASK:** What good does prayer do then?
- E. **Question:** Think about how much of a priority is prayer in your life?
- F. Look at Jesus’ example, priority praying had in His life
- G. In Mark 1, the start of Jesus’ earthly ministry:
 - i. Baptism and temptation in wilderness
 - ii. Calling His first disciples
 - iii. Healing; Casting out demons (even doing all this on Sabbath)
 - a) **v. 23:** ... *man in the synagogue*
 - b) **READ v. 27, 28**
 - c) **v. 29 – 31:** Ministry is not an 8 – 5 job; and, as followers of Christ we’re all ministers
 - d) **READ v. 32 – 34a;** the beginning of Jesus’ ministry and look how busy, could easily become very overwhelming
- H. Verse to focus on: **READ Mark 1:35**
- I. **Question:** What does Jesus’ example tell us about priority prayer to have in our lives?

II. When to Pray

- A. **ASK:** What is the best time of day to spend in focused prayer? When do you think Jesus spent most time in focused prayer? When He made the time and Jesus was always finding ways to “make” the time
- B. The problem with many believers, we don’t do well find ways to “make” time to spend in focused, fervent prayer
- C. Realize, the Lord’s example of prayer in Matt. 6 was “start off your day” prayer? The phrase – *Give us this day our daily bread*

III. Times to Pray

- A. Special prayer events – retreats, conferences, prayer services
 - i. Jesus took time off from normal activities to commune with His Father; everyone needs time off, breaks – ALL need to take more time

away from normal busyness, stress of daily life to specifically commune with the Lord

ii. Luke 5:16 (NIV)

¹⁶ But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

iii. **ASK:** Why is it important to have alone times of prayer? Easiest for many people; **Illustration:** Youth example of “cue the floor”

B. Decision-making – especially major decisions

i. Example of Jesus in: **READ Luke 6:1 – 13**

ii. **Question:** What kind of difference would it make in our lives if we prayed like Jesus did before decisions in our careers, in the workplace, place of residence, big financial decisions, decisions regarding our families?

iii. **Question:** What kind of difference would it make in our church if we prayed like Jesus did before hiring staff, choosing deacons, Sunday School/Awana/VBS teachers, starting or stopping ministry programs?

iv. **ASK:** Show of hands, how many think Jesus ever found Himself too busy to pray? How many of us have ever felt we were too busy to pray? What do we do about those times?

v. The busier Jesus’ life became, the more He prayed; most people (including believers) tend to do the opposite

C. During times of temptation

i. **IMPORTANT:** Don’t wait to pray when we’re in the middle of fighting temptation, we pray before temptation comes

ii. Again, the Lord’s example of prayer in Matt. 6 – *Lead us not into temptation but [when we are currently being tempted] deliver us from evil*

iii. Jesus didn’t just face temptation once at the start of His ministry – He, just like us, faced temptation daily

D. During suffering

i. In the final six hours of His life, Jesus prayed

ii. In the Gospels, we read of seven sayings of Jesus while He hung on the cross – three of those sayings were prayers; prayed for others, prayed for lost people, prayed scripture

iii. **ASK:** What were Jesus’ final words on the cross? Luke 23:46 (NIV)

⁴⁶ Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last.

iv. Psalm 31:5 (NIV)

⁵ Into your hands I commit my spirit; ...

- v. **Don't need to let our prayers be focused too much on us, our needs, our struggles, our desires; **ASK**: How much were Jesus' prayers focused on Himself?**
- vi. **Our main focus in prayer must be on the Lord, but we certainly need to give attention to others, especially the unsaved, and those should even be before our own needs**

IV. Attitude in Prayer

- A. **Jesus words in prayer the night before He died, was the day He raised Lazarus from the dead: John 11:41 (NIV)**

⁴¹ So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me."

- B. **Our attitude whenever we pray should always be one of thanksgiving; Philippians 4:6 (NIV)**

⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

- C. **Greatest examples of Jesus expressing gratitude to God in prayer was after His resurrection was at home of two of His disciples in town called Emmaus - Luke 24:30-31 (NIV)**

³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them.

³¹ Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, ... **After praying for the meal and giving thanks that the two disciples eyes were opened and the finally saw Jesus for who He was**

V. Jesus Praying for Us

- A. **READ Hebrews 7:23 – 27**

VI. Close

- A. **ASK**: Anyone have suggestions for practical steps we can take individually, and as a church, to make prayer a greater priority?
- B. **Next week**: Second part of making prayer a priority looking at the early Christian church