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“Pray Like Jesus”

[John 14:12-14](#)

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Everyone has probably prayed at some point in their lives—either out of desperation or celebration. But fewer actually practice prayer as a spiritual discipline. A “spiritual discipline” is a habit, practice, or experience designed to develop, grow, and strengthen one’s relationship with the Lord. Bible study, periodic fasting, attending church would all be examples of “spiritual disciplines,” and so is PRAYER. Prayer is communing and connecting with God. It can be audible, or from the heart; in public, or in private; while standing or sitting; with open eyes or closed eyes. God just wants to hear our hearts—not with lofty, lengthy prayers, but with sincerity.

1. [John 14:12-14](#) – *“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.”*
2. These verses are a continuation of the Upper Room Discourse
 - a. Jesus and His disciples were in an unknown home in Jerusalem
 - b. It was Jesus’ final Passover with His disciples before His crucifixion
 - c. Jesus shared private, intimate, final things with His disciples
 - d. We need to take these things to heart as Jesus was speaking to us as much as He was His disciples
3. Spiritual disciplines
 - a. Most people have prayed at some point in their lives, but fewer pray as a matter of spiritual discipline
 - b. Spiritual disciplines are habits, practices, and experiences that are designed to develop, grow, and strengthen one’s spirit—to build the “muscles” of one’s character as a follower of Christ
 - i. Bible reading and study
 - ii. Fasting

- iii. Attending church
 - iv. Prayer
 - c. Disciplines are things we do because we need to, not necessarily because we want to
- 4. Prayer is communing and connecting with God
 - a. Can be talking or listening
 - b. Can be audible or inaudible
 - c. Can be requests for self or intercession for others
 - d. There is no designated prayer position
 - e. The only wrong way is not to pray at all
 - f. [Colossians 4:2](#) - *"Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful."* (1984 NIV)
 - g. [1 Thessalonians 5:17](#) - *"Pray without ceasing."*
 - i. The command to "pray without ceasing" is not implying that our prayers should be lofty and long, but rather that we should have a constant attitude of prayer
- 5. What did Jesus mean when He said, *"If you ask anything in My name, I will do it,"*?
 - a. [Luke 9:54-55](#) - *"And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, 'Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?' But He turned and rebuked them, and said, 'You do not know what manner of spirit you are of.'"*
 - i. In this instance Jesus did **not** do what James and John asked
 - b. We find the answer earlier in [John 14:13](#): *"that the Father may be glorified in the Son."*
 - c. For God to answer our prayers as we might like, there are specific criteria
- 6. Our requests must be glorifying to God
 - a. He will only do for us what adds to His glory
 - b. [Isaiah 42:8](#) - *"I am the LORD, that is My name; And My glory I will not give to another, Nor My praise to carved images."*
 - c. [Acts 12:21-23](#) - *"So on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them. And the people kept shouting, 'The voice of a god and not of a man!' Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died."*
- 7. Our requests must be in accordance with His will
 - a. [1 John 5:14](#) - *"Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us."*
 - b. We should **defer** to God's will; we should not **declare** God's will

- i. Jesus exemplified this when He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane prior to His crucifixion
 - 1. [Luke 22:42](#) – *“...Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.”*
 - c. [Matthew 6:9-10](#) – *“In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”*
 - d. Some things we can pray because we know they are in alignment with God’s will
 - i. [2 Peter 3:9](#) – *“The Lord is ... not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”*
 - e. It is okay to make our preferences known to God, but if we do not know if our requests are in accordance with God’s will, we should not definitively declare them as God’s will
 - f. If we rest in the character and nature of God, we will not want to settle for anything less than what God has for us—His will is always better than what we may want in the moment
 - g. E. Stanley Jones said, “Prayer is surrender—surrender to the will of God and cooperation with that will. If I throw out a boathook from the boat and catch hold of the shore and pull, do I pull the shore to me, or do I pull myself to the shore? Prayer is not pulling God to my will, but the aligning of my will to the will of God.”ⁱ
- 8. Our requests must be asked with right motives
 - a. [James 4:2b-3](#) – *“Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.”*
 - b. The 1984 NIV states, *“...you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives...”*
 - c. If you are living and acting like the world, do not ask God to answer your prayers so you can continue to live and act like the world, expecting God to bless a lifestyle you should have left
 - d. [James 5:16b](#) – *“The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.”*
 - i. It’s the righteous (in Christ) person who prays with right motives who will receive what they ask of God
- 9. God just wants to hear your heart
 - a. Jesus advised against showy, lengthy prayers
 - b. [Matthew 6:5-8](#) – *“And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you*

have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.”

- c. Oswald Chambers said, “We tend to use prayer as a last resort, but God wants it to be our first line of defense. We pray when there’s nothing else we can do, but God wants us to pray before we do anything at all.”ⁱⁱ
- d. [Romans 12:12](#) – “*Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.*” (1984 NIV)
- e. A Civil War Soldier’s Prayer:

I asked God for strength, that I might achieve,
I was made weak, that I might learn humbly to obey.

I asked for health, that I might do great things,
I was given infirmity, that I might do better things.

I asked for riches, that I might be happy,
I was given poverty, that I might be wise.

I asked for power, that I might have the praise of men,
I was given weakness, that I might feel the need of God.

I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life,
I was given life, that I might enjoy all things.

I got nothing that I asked for, but everything I had hoped for.
Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered.

I am, among all men, most richly blessed.ⁱⁱⁱ

Discussion Questions

1. Read [John 14:12-14](#) to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. What is the definition of a spiritual discipline? (See #3b above)
3. Which spiritual disciplines do you regularly practice? (See #3bi-#3biv above)
4. What is prayer? What does prayer look like for you? (See #4 above)
5. What did Jesus mean when He said, “*If you ask anything in My name, I will do it,*”? Will God do anything we ask if we ask in His name? (See #5 above)

6. Read [Isaiah 42:8](#) and [Acts 12:21-23](#). What is the first criteria Pastor Gary described for God to answer our prayers? (See #6 above)
7. What does [1 John 5:14](#) tell us about how God answers our requests? What does this look like practically? (See #7 above)
8. Read [James 4:2b-3](#). How can we ensure that we are praying with the right motives? (See #8 above)
9. Read [Matthew 6:5-8](#). How do we know if our prayers are pleasing to God?
10. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James Version (NKJV)

ⁱ [Missionary E. Stanley Jones – Prayer Is ... - Shared by Bobby Scobey - Sermon Illustrations - SermonCentral.com](#)

ⁱⁱ [Quote by Oswald Chambers: “We tend to use prayer as a last resort, but God...” \(goodreads.com\)](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ [A Civil War Soldier’s Prayer: Praying for the Wrong Things | W. Mark Whitlock \(wmarkwhitlock.com\)](#)