

Prayer in Luke's Gospel: The Example of Jesus

Background

Luke's gospel contains more teaching on prayer than any other gospel, including three parables that are unique (the parable of the friend at midnight; the parable of the unjust judge; and the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector). Luke also contains more examples of prayer than any other gospel. In particular, he highlights the importance of prayer in the life of our Saviour

Points to ponder

What were the major turning points in Jesus' earthly ministry? His baptism and his commissioning by his Father? His selection of twelve disciples? Peter's confession that he was the Christ? His transfiguration? His arrest? His crucifixion? At each one of these moments, Jesus prays.

For example:

"When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, 'You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.'" (Luke chapter 3, verses 21-22)

"Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles." (Luke chapter 6, verses 12-13)

Now it came to pass, about eight days after these sayings, that He took Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain to pray. As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening... And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!" (Luke chapter 9, verses 28-36)

Prayer brings blessing, guidance and strength from God the Father.

It is therefore not surprising that Jesus taught his disciples that they should always pray and not give up (Luke chapter 18, verse 1).

Prayer in Luke's Gospel

Jesus prays regularly

5v16 Jesus regularly withdraws into the wilderness to pray

Jesus prays at critical moments

3v21 Jesus prays before the beginning of his ministry

6v12 Jesus prays before choosing the twelve

9v18 Jesus prays before Peter's confession

9v28-29 Jesus prays before his transfiguration

10v21-22 Jesus rejoices at the return of the seventy

22v32 Jesus prays for the disciples before his arrest

22v42 Jesus prays for himself before his arrest

23v46 Jesus prays before his death

Jesus teaches about prayer

6v28 Pray for your enemies

10v2 Pray for more labourers

11v1-4 A model prayer

11v5-13 Pray boldly

18v1-8 Pray with persistence

18v9-14 Pray with humility

21v36 Watch and pray

Positive and negative examples

1v8-13 Zechariah prays in the temple, along with many others

2v29-32 Simeon prays in the temple

2v36-38 Anna prays night and day in the temple

5v33-35 John's disciples fast and pray

20v45-47 The Pharisees are criticised for pretence in prayer

22v40, 46 The disciples fail to watch and pray in Gethsemane

24v53 The disciples are continually in prayer at the temple

19v45-48 The temple in particular is seen as the place for prayer