

# Praying Like Jesus

LUKE 5:16

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We are a fairly small group, but I would imagine that many of us have daily routines that are ever somewhat similar. We wake up. Most of us have this in common. We get ready for the day. Perhaps we make coffee and have something to eat. We do whatever it is we do for the day - we go to work, we go to school, we get things done at home, we run errands. Toward the end of the day, we might eat dinner, we catch up on doing some things at home, we go to bed, we sleep for a while, and then we repeat that process day after day. Hopefully, at some point in our daily routine we have carved out some time for our own spiritual health.

As I think about my own daily routine through the years, I see some room for improvement. Many of us have some kind of a schedule for reading through the Bible (or at least parts of the Bible). We have studied this a time or two over the past few months. We've looked at those schedules for reading through the New Testament in a year. We looked at that chart for reading through the gospel accounts in forty days. And those are some good tools for hearing from God. God speaks to us through his word, the Bible. If you don't have those schedules, I would invite you to send a message to the church email address on the front of the bulletin, and I would be glad to send you those files.

But as we think about our own spiritual health, and as we think about hearing from God through His word, the other part of that is us speaking to God through prayer. And for many of us, prayer is more of a challenge. Most of us don't have a schedule for prayer like we might have for reading through the Bible. I know we have just recently studied some of what Jesus cried out to his Father on the cross, a few months before that we looked at Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. But this morning I'd like for us to look at Jesus' regular prayer life, and the lesson comes from a single verse that comes at the end of a seemingly unrelated paragraph. The passage is found in Luke 5 (p. 1604).

Hopefully, most of you have a handout by now. We have several teachers in the congregation, and you regularly remind me that we all learn in different ways. I hear you! Some of us learn better when we write things down, so we have a handout this morning! And we will get to it in a little bit, but in addition to filling in the blanks as we go along, those shaded rectangles are for some practical ideas as to how we might apply this lesson very practically in our own lives. These are the "So what?" boxes. The blanks are for the main points, and the boxes are for any ideas you might be able to use in improving your own prayer life.

Many of us struggle to pray consistently, on a regular and daily basis. Jesus, though, is our perfect example, and it is always good to learn more about Jesus. This morning, then, I want us to look together at Luke 5:12-16, focusing in on Jesus' prayer life at the very end of this paragraph. If you will, please look with me at Luke 5:12-16,

***<sup>12</sup> While He was in one of the cities, behold, there was a man covered with leprosy; and when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and implored Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean."<sup>13</sup> And He stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." And immediately the leprosy left him.<sup>14</sup> And He ordered him to tell no one, "But go and show yourself to the priest and make an offering for your cleansing, just as Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."<sup>15</sup> But the news about Him was spreading even farther, and large crowds were gathering to hear Him and to be healed of their sicknesses.<sup>16</sup> But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray.***

Again, in the first part of this passage, we have one of the many healings as Jesus reaches out and touches this man and heals him of leprosy. But the passage I want us to look at this morning comes in verse 16, ***"But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray."*** One author has suggested that this is one of those passages where the curtain is pulled back a bit, and we have this brief little glimpse behind the scenes in Jesus' daily life. It is an incredibly short and very simple statement, it comes across almost as an afterthought, but it tells us so much about Jesus and what was truly important in his daily life, ***"But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray."***

Before we look at this verse in detail, we need to be clear as to what it actually says. There are some variations in the translations. So, I used a tool we talked about a while back, [www.blueletterbible.org](http://www.blueletterbible.org). There are many ways of doing this, but blueletterbible is one of those tools that make it incredibly easy to compare many translations of a single verse, all on one screen at the same time. I typed in "Luke 5:16," out in the left hand margin I clicked on "BIBLES," and this verse then appeared in close to twenty English translations, as well as in Spanish, Latin, and in the original Greek. I picked a few of the more popular translations to use as examples up here, to try to highlight some of the differences. And I would make a few observations here. First of all, when you look at the Greek at the bottom, you will notice that the word ***"often"*** is not in the original text. However, it is implied by the tense of the verb at the beginning of the sentence. And so the idea is: Jesus "was doing" this thing. It wasn't a one-time action, but it was something that he did on a regular basis. But notice, please, how these three translations handle this. In the NASB, the ***"often"*** is in italics, and when we look back at the "Principles of Translation" at the beginning of the NASB translation, they tell us that when words are not in the text but are implied either by grammar or context, they put those words in italics. And we like that! If a word is not there but is required grammatically for the sentence to make sense, we want to know about it! And that is what they have done with the word ***"often."*** Notice that the ESV doesn't use the word ***"often,"*** but they communicate the idea grammatically - this is something Jesus ***"would"*** do - this was his habit, this is something he did regularly. We then notice the NIV, another very popular translation. They go ahead and use the word ***"often,"*** but it is not in italics. So, the word is implied, and they put it there, but they don't tell us what they did. Again, "often" is implied, but as you can see from the interlinear at the bottom, that word is not actually there. And to me, that is a problem. It is a rather minor problem, but it is something of a concern.

The other thing I find interesting in comparing the translations is how they handle the word ***"wilderness."*** And again, this isn't a huge deal, but the word is apparently plural. The NASB has it as singular, but the NIV and ESV correctly translate it as ***"lonely places"*** or ***"desolate places."*** Again, this isn't really critical, but it is interesting to me.

NASB	But Jesus Himself would <i>often</i> slip away to the wilderness and pray.
NIV	But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.
ESV	But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray.
GREEK	αὐτὸς δὲ ἦν ὑποχωρῶν ἐν ταῖς ἐρήμοις καὶ προσευχόμενος
INTERLINEAR	HE YET WAS RETREATING IN THE WILDERNESSES AND PRAYING

With that, let us then go through this passage piece by piece, and let us try to learn something from Jesus' prayer life. We want to be praying like Jesus. So, what can we learn from his example?

- I. **And we go back to the beginning of the verse, as we find that Jesus was CONSISTENT in his prayer life. He prayed "OFTEN."**

This is something Jesus did regularly. He went off to pray after the healing of this man who had leprosy, but this was something Jesus did all the time. This was a habit. Often, we hear the word "habit," and we think of a BAD habit. I looked up "examples of bad habits" online this week, and they listed things like swearing, and biting your nails, and picking your nose, and smoking, and drinking soda, and eating fast food all the time, being late to appointments, chewing with your mouth open, and on and on and on. But we have good habits as well. And one good habit Jesus had was praying. Jesus prayed often. Jesus prayed regularly. Jesus prayed consistently.

We think about Jesus' life, and the fact that we only have a record of parts of about 30 days out of 33 years, and prayer is mentioned over and over again. He prayed at his baptism (Luke 3:21). He prayed all night long on that night before he chose the apostles (Luke 6:12). He prayed from the shore as the disciples struggled in the boat during that storm on the Sea of Galilee (Mark 6:46). He prayed in the upper room on the night he was betrayed (John 17). Right after dinner he prayed for several hours in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:41). As we've studied over the past few weeks, Jesus prayed several times from the cross (Psalm 22). And even after the resurrection, he prayed before eating with those disciples he met on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:30).

And as we are reminded here in Luke 5, this was something Jesus did "*often*." And the context explains that Jesus is incredibly busy. Probably one of biggest reasons why we don't pray as often as we should is that we are busy, or at least we think we are. But have we ever known anyone to ever be more busy than Jesus? Jesus heals this man of leprosy, and then looking back at verse 15, the text says, "***But the news about Him was spreading even farther, and large crowds were gathering to hear Him and to be healed of their sicknesses.***" Have we ever been in a situation like that, where we have been surrounded by mobs of hundreds, if not thousands, of people, day after day? I've never been in that situation. But can we imagine interacting with and speaking to groups like that day after day? In my mind, that's the level of busy we might imagine in a presidential campaign of some kind - traveling from town to town for months on end, and every time the car door or elevator opens, there are hundreds of people to deal with. That's what Jesus is facing here. But in his busyness, Jesus maintains his habit of prayer. It's so easy, though, for us to get distracted, to put the busyness of life ahead of what is truly important.

So, how do we make prayer a habit? How do we make prayer a priority? In practical terms, in terms of our shaded box, how do we pray often, like Jesus did? I would suggest that we make an appointment. Don't we make appointments to go to the dentist and doctor? Don't we put a note on the calendar when we need to pick our kids up from something? Don't we schedule meetings on our calendar? Most of us now have alarms on our phones. We have calendars that can send us reminders. Use that technology to set a time each day, a time set aside for prayer. We make time for what is important to us. My wife is important to me, we are important to each other (I'm pretty sure that's a two-way street), so we set aside one night every week for "date night." If at all possible, we go somewhere and do something together - dinner, maybe a movie, bowling, or something - to maintain that relationship, we need to cut through the busyness to carve out some time for what both of us truly value. And this is something we don't do with the kids! This is us! Thankfully, they are okay without us at this point. Years ago, we would pay them, "If we get home and nobody is crying, both of you get \$5." It was much cheaper than hiring a babysitter! But we have continued to schedule this once every week, because we are important to each other. But God is also important! And if we can schedule time with a spouse, then can't we also schedule time with God?

I would encourage you, then, to take out your phone, think of a time when you are usually alone or can take a break of some kind, and set an alarm for PRAYER. I hope it's okay to admit this publicly, my family knows, and I've mentioned it to one of my fellow elders, but the day she left for basic training, I set an alarm on my phone at noon every day, "Pray for Rachel." A lot of time I'm at home, I might be in a meeting, I might be driving, on Sunday I'm usually here, but at noon every day that screen pops up as a reminder to pray for one of our young women who is away at basic training. I'm not sure what might work for you in terms of making sure we pray. That's what works for me. Something else might work for you. So, in practical terms: Set an alarm. Make it different every day if you'd like to do it that way. On Monday, pray for our elders. On Tuesday, pray for our deacons. On Wednesday, pray for the teens. On Thursday, pray for the elderly, and so on. Or maybe use an app of some kind. A few years ago, I remember playing around with something I think was called the "Echo" prayer app. You could make a prayer list, it would send you reminders, and you could even check things off as those prayers were answered. But somehow we need to cut through the busyness to pray "**often**," just as Jesus did. If we don't make a point of this, there are a million other activities that will sneak in to take away that time we need to be spending with God. So, first of all, let's at least try scheduling prayer so that we can pray "**often**," like the Lord did. Schedule a notification to pray for the preacher. Set a time in your Google calendar every day to pray for your family, your spouse, the church, any number of things. But somehow we need make sure that we pray "**often**," like Jesus did.

**II. As we get back to Luke 5:16, the verse continues by pointing out that Jesus SLIPPED AWAY for the purpose of prayer.**

Obviously, this is very closely related to what we've learned up to this point, but the emphasis here is that Jesus often prayed ALONE, that he had to get away by himself for a bit. Yes, there were many times that Jesus prayed with other people. There were times that he led prayers. But he was also in the habit of praying by himself. And remember, he is surrounded here by huge crowds of people who had some critical needs. These were people who needed to be healed. But Jesus "**slipped away**." You might remember that two of the translations I referred to earlier have Jesus "withdrawing" from the crowds. The Greek interlinear had Jesus "**retreating**." And so the idea is: Jesus physically moved from one place to another to get away from the crowds - not just for a vacation, not to go fishing, not just to relax a bit, but he got away for the purpose of prayer.

So the question is: How do we **“slip away”** today? How do we make sure that we have some alone time with God? Well, what are we distracted by? Once we answer that, it seems that we might have some idea how to do what Jesus did in this passage! Personally, I am not distracted by men full of leprosy coming to me to be healed. Perhaps, though, we are distracted by the phone. Maybe our prayer life is interrupted by the TV, or Netflix, or YouTube, or any number of online distractions. Maybe it’s homework or work-work. We’re all being constantly pulled in so many directions. Somehow, Jesus pulled himself away from those things. But similar to our first point: Jesus did not wait until the crowds were gone, he didn’t wait until debated every Pharisee, he didn’t wait until every blind man was healed, but in the middle of it, the Lord God on earth had to make a decision to get away from it all! Of all the people in the history of the world who could have justified being constantly busy, Jesus is the one! All of us think our lives are important (and they are), but Jesus so much more so, and he got away from it all. Regularly.

So what? How do we apply this practically? What might we actually do to follow Jesus’ example here? What do we put in our box? Well, obviously, we might also need to **“slip away.”** That is, perhaps we might also get away from whatever it is that is distracting us. Focus might be the key word here. When that alarm goes off, we pause what we are doing. Turn off the radio. Turn off the TV. Put the phone down. And it does not need to be a long time. It might be just a few seconds. Maybe a minute or two.

One thing that might help us focus is to pray in a different position physically than we are right at that moment - especially as we are praying privately. We might choose to kneel, or stand, or maybe fall down on our faces before the Lord - all of these are ways that God’s people have prayed in the Bible. And what that change of position might do is to focus our attention on what we are doing.

Years ago, I started getting calls from younger ministers around the state, asking for advice on how to handle certain situations. But, I wasn’t sure where some of these places were. So, I put a map of Wisconsin on the wall in my office for that reason. As they called, I could see where they were on the map. But what I found over time was that it served as a valuable tool for prayer. I could look at that map and pray for the church in Spencer, Wisconsin, and for the church in Green Bay, and for the church in Wausau, and so on. I think of it now as something of a “prayer map.”

As I was researching the idea of focus in our prayers, I ran across one author who suggested putting ourselves in the place of various Bible characters, and I thought that was interesting. For example, we’ve just read a passage about this man with leprosy being healed. And so the idea is: To help focus our thoughts on prayer, we might pray as if we are the man who has been healed of leprosy. A bit of role-playing in our prayers, I suppose. I might imagine that I am Noah, or Sarah, or Hannah, or Daniel, or Peter, and then I pray as if I were one of those characters. What might they have prayed for? What were they feeling about God at the time? That would involve reading a passage and then praying along with it. But the emphasis here is on “slipping away,” whatever it takes, we focus, we get away from whatever it is that might distract us or keep us from praying as we should, and we sharpen our thoughts. To pray like Jesus, we **“slip away.”**

### III. **As we go back to Luke 5:16, there is another part of this as we find that Jesus withdrew to the WILDERNESS.**

So, he slipped away, but he slipped away to a particular place, to the **“wilderness.”** Or, to the **“wildernesses,”** or **“deserted places,”** as some of those other translations put it. And this was common for Jesus. He did this **“often.”** We have a similar passage over in Matthew 14:23, where Matthew says that, **“After He had sent the crowds away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there**

*alone.*" So, Jesus went to the mountains. He went to the wilderness. He moved himself from one place to another. And the other place was quiet. The other place was away from the crowds, away from distractions. You might remember how Jesus refers to something like this in the Sermon on the Mount, where in Matthew 6:6 he says, **"But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you."** Some translations might refer to going into your **"closet,"** a prayer closet, a special place to get away from the distractions around us. Perhaps this is the First Century equivalent of turning the cell phone off! Personally, I like the idea of heading out to the wilderness! In my box, I might write, "Actual Wilderness"! I've mentioned before the idea of going on a walk for an hour or so and thanking God for various blessings. I was surprised at first, but you can go on a long walk before you run out of things to be thankful for. So, I might put something about a "thankfulness walk" in the "So what?" blank. This time of year, we might go snowshoeing, and use that as a time away from distractions that we can use for the purpose of prayer.

Or what about an actual prayer closet? Perhaps a special chair somewhere in the house? Somewhere where we might keep a Bible, and a pen, and paper, for keeping track of what we are praying about. Or maybe an actual chapel! Some of you have done some hiking out at Indian Lake County Park out west of Waunakee. Back in the 1800's, there was a diphtheria epidemic, and one man made a vow to God that if God would spare the lives of his family, he would build a chapel out there. And he did. He used an ox cart to haul several tons of stone up to the top of the hill out there. He literally built himself a prayer closet. And it is still there, more than 160 years later. So, build a chapel! Or, go to a chapel of some kind. Most major airports and large hospitals have some kind of chapel. I've been to many, and they are almost always empty. We obviously don't need to be in a place like that to pray, but when we see those chapels, we might use that as one more excuse to find a quiet place to pray. Or maybe we can pray while driving. Instead of listening to the radio, or whatever, we drive in silence one day a week, and we use that time to pray. Decide to make Tuesday's commute in silence (without the radio on), for the purpose of prayer. We use the car as our **"wilderness."**

#### **IV. As we come to the end of Luke 5:16, we come to what is more than obvious, and that is: Jesus PRAYED.**

We don't know what he prayed for on this occasion, but he prayed. Sometimes he prayed for his followers (for their faith, for their unity). Sometimes he prayed during a transition, during some kind of spiritual challenge (at his baptism, when he started his ministry, in the garden before his death). We might pray for some of the same reasons. Some of you pray through the church bulletin or through the church directory. We pray for our daily bread. But the important thing is that we pray. If we need help or practical encouragement, I might suggest the ACTS method. ACTS is an acrostic that stands for Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplications. If you struggle with praying the same thing all the time, try ACTS as a guide. Adoration refers to praise. We praise God for who He is. Confession is obviously when we confess our sins to God, when we ask for forgiveness. God already knows everything we've done. He already knows if we have a bad attitude about somebody, or whatever. We might as well confess it so we can move through it. He knows us better than we know ourselves. Are you having trouble with a Christian brother or sister? Pray for that person. Ask God to bless them. Ask God to soften your heart toward them. Confessing our trouble has a way of changing us. Thanksgiving is when we give thanks for what God has done for us. And Supplication is when we ask for something - for ourselves, but also for others. We might want to make a list, a list of people we need to be praying for. A list of friends who might need to hear the gospel. We can pray for authorities (as Josh read for us earlier). Those are all supplications. So, A.C.T.S..

And I would add: Our prayers do not need to be long in order to be good or in order to be heard. The sample prayer Jesus gave us in Matthew 6 takes about 30 seconds. In that prayer, he praised God as being holy, he prayed for God's kingdom (the church), he prayed for God's will to be done, he prayed for daily bread, and he taught us to pray for forgiveness, and he taught us to pray that we might escape temptation. That's pretty simple, isn't it? So let's use the prayer in Matthew 6 as a pattern. We can pray for strength in facing Satan's temptations. We can pray that we might find the way of escape. And speaking of short prayers, we might think of the story Jesus told about the Pharisee and the Tax Collector in Luke 18. If you remember, the tax collector's prayer was short and simple, "God, be merciful to me, the sinner." You can't get much shorter than that. The point is: Jesus prayed, so we should as well.

### **Conclusion:**

How's our prayer life going? How are we doing spiritually? Are any of us praying too much? I don't know whether that is possible! Most of us can probably learn from Jesus here. Jesus would often slip away into the wilderness and pray. Let's do what Jesus did. Let's make a commitment this morning to bring some structure and consistency into your prayer life - let's do it regularly, let's get away, let's go somewhere, and let's pray like He prayed.

As we come to the end, I want us to imagine what it must have been like to have been that man healed of leprosy. For some time, he had most likely been quarantined. He probably felt as if nobody was listening. But one day Jesus comes along, the man calls out for help, and Jesus listens and heals him immediately. What an awesome feeling, to finally be heard. Today, God also listens to our prayers. He also forgives if we will turn to him in faith. We turn away from sin, and we obey his command to be immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins. At that point, we are born again and added to God's family, the church. If you have any questions, please get in touch. If you are ready to become a Christian right now, let us know as we sing this next song. Let's stand and sing...

To comment on this lesson: [foullakeschurch@gmail.com](mailto:foullakeschurch@gmail.com)