

# Growing in the Life of Prayer

---

## Key Points from Jesus' Teaching on Prayer

Jesus taught us all we need to know about building a life of prayer as He worked with His disciples. He didn't teach them everything at once, but He presented principles of prayer step by step as they were ready.

### Key points from the Sermon on the Mount

"But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen." [Matthew 6:6] Jesus underscored the importance of a consistent quiet time as the essential beginning point of our prayer lives.

The truth is, until we are serious about giving the Lord our undivided time and attention every day, we will not be able to grow in our prayer lives or to mature in the experience of a personal relationship with Him. Nor will we see the rewards of a maturing, consistent prayer life that "asks, seeks and knocks" [Matthew 7:7-8]-- or experience the joy of receiving the "much more" that Jesus assures us our Father wants to give in answer to our prayers [Matthew 7:9-11].

We don't have to pray for a long period of time, for Jesus goes on to say, "And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words." [Matthew 6:7-8] We need to be thoughtful in our prayers, concise and to the point. Jesus even gave us a pattern to follow in our prayers the Lord's Prayer, Matthew 6:9-13.

### Boldness and persistence, one year later.

A year later Jesus' disciples asked Him, "Lord, teach us to pray." He expanded His teaching to include the parable of the "friend at midnight" [Luke 11:5-8] teaching persistence in prayer, and the "widow and the judge" [Luke 18:2-5], combining persistence with boldness.

How are we to know when to persist and be bold, and when God has said enough? The same way Paul knew to stop asking for the thorn to be removed [2 Corinthians 12:8, 9] and Daniel knew to continue praying for 21 days [Daniel 10:12-13]. They had the spiritual discernment that comes from a close relationship with the Lord. That grows as we follow through with Jesus' first teaching on prayer: having a consistent time with the Lord in which we offer thoughtful prayers.

### In His final hours with His disciples

In his final days and hours with His disciples, Jesus taught them no less than eight times that they could have "whatever they ask" in prayer; the apostle John underscored this teaching with two additional promises in 1 John.

These promises have conditions which must be met, and they are not for casual Christians. They were given to Jesus' twelve disciples, those to whom He entrusted the keys to the kingdom, those who understood they were to "deny self, take up their cross and follow Him." [Matthew 16:24]

These promises were to enable Jesus' disciples to call down the power of heaven, and they are there for us *if* and *when* we ask as those who

- have hearts that do not condemn us [1 John 3:21]
- live obedient and pleasing to the Lord [1 John 3:22]
- abide in the true Vine [John 15:7]
- with His words abiding in us [John 15:7]
- have faith that will move mountains [Matthew 22:21-22]
- offering prayers in Jesus' name [John 14:14]
- that will glorify the Father [John 14:13]
- according to His will [1 John 5:14-15]
- advancing His kingdom on earth [John 14:12]
- bear lasting fruit [John 15:16]

What enables us to live and pray to meet these conditions to having "whatever we ask"? The first thing Jesus taught us about prayer--spending time alone with the Lord, coming to know Him in a personal way. As He becomes increasingly real to us, through His enabling power we grow into people who can become powerful and effective pray-ers.

Jesus taught us how.