

Ten Characteristics of How Jesus Prayed

Nathan Rages | illbehonest.com

The Gospel of John chapter 17. Last Sunday, we finished our studies in the extended teaching that the Lord Jesus gave right before He went to the cross. John 13-16 is this long teaching. We finally worked our way through that over the course of nearly a year, I guess. And last Sunday, we finished that. But after Jesus finished giving this great sermon, He then followed that up with a great prayer. And that's what we have in chapter 17. This prayer of the Lord Jesus. And then the first verse of chapter 17 ties these things together. It says, "Jesus spoke these things and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He says..." So He finishes talking and then goes right to prayer.

And this is always appropriate, isn't it? To follow the teaching with prayer. It's appropriate to follow a sermon, to follow a Bible study, to follow your personal devotion time in the Bible by praying. You know, after we've talked about God for a while, it sure makes sense to talk directly to the Lord and just commit the whole thing back to Him in response.

And so Jesus' prayer here makes up the entire 17th chapter of John's Gospel. This chapter, without any question, is one of the most special, most glorious chapters in the whole Bible. I mean, it's like you need to take your shoes off when you study John 17 because you're treading on holy ground here as we look at this prayer.

It's by far the longest prayer of Jesus that's recorded in the Bible. We have lots of prayers of Jesus, but most of them are just a few lines. But here we have 26 verses of Jesus' prayer. I think it's longer than all of the other prayers put together. I didn't try to add it up. But it's a major thing.

And of course, the timing of the prayer makes it special, right? This is the prayer Jesus prays right before He gets arrested and goes to the cross. This gives us a snapshot of things that were on His heart right as He anticipated His crucifixion. That's what He begins with, isn't it, in v. 1, "Father, the hour has come..." He knew. He knew that He was now at the climax of His life's work. He knew He as the Lamb was about to be crucified for our sins.

My goal for today's message is not to analyze these verses for the doctrine that is in them. There's a lot of theology packed into these 26 verses. And we'll deal with that later, Lord willing. Today, what I want to do is look at this prayer as a prayer. Look at it from the standpoint of this is how the Lord Jesus prayed. This is the best example we have of Jesus' own prayer life; how He prayed to God. And as we think about His example of prayer, then that example ought to instruct us in how we pray. I mean, Jesus is supposed to be our example in everything. Surely, His prayer life ought to be an example for us in our prayer life. In Luke 11, it tells the story of one occasion when Jesus was out praying, and the disciples were there and they were listening to Jesus pray. Now when Jesus gets done praying, one of the disciples says, "Lord, would You teach us to pray?" Would You teach us to pray? It's like they've been listening to Him pray just thinking: the way I pray isn't the way Jesus prays. I want to pray like Jesus prays, right? And they're asking for instruction and help in that. Well, that's the attitude we should have as we come to John 17. Lord, teach us to pray like You did. I want to pray more like You. I know You did it right.

And so before we do anything else, let's just read this whole prayer in chapter 17. It's going to take about four minutes. And I encourage you as we read to do the best you can to keep your mind engaged in the words here. These are familiar words to a lot of us. You can zone out and think about other things. Really think here. How is Jesus praying? What are some characteristics of Jesus' prayer that are really interesting and notable? Because that's what we'll be talking about this morning. You're welcome to stand up if that's comfortable for you as we read the 17th chapter of John.

"Jesus spoke these words and lifting up His eyes to heaven, and He said, 'Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son that the Son may glorify You, even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life. This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom You have sent. I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do. Now Father, glorify Me together with Yourself with the glory which I had with You before the world was. I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world. They were Yours, and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your Word. Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You. For the words which You gave Me, I have given to them, and they have received them and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believe that You sent Me. I ask on their behalf. I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. And all things that are Mine are Yours and Yours are Mine, and I have been glorified in them. I am no longer in the world, and yet they themselves are in the world, and I have come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name; the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are. While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me, and I guarded them, and not one of them perished but the son of perdition so the Scripture would be fulfilled.

But now, I come to You and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves. I have given them Your Word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world even as I am not of the world. I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth. Your Word is truth. As you sent Me into the world, I have also sent them into the world. For their sake, I sanctify Myself that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth. I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word, that they may all be one, even as You Father are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. The glory which You have given Me, I have given to them, that they may be one just as We are one. I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me and loved them even as You have loved Me. Father, I desire that they also whom You have given Me be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You, and these have known that You sent Me. And I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them and I in them.'" And we'll stop there. You may be seated.

Our outline today is pretty simple. I want to briefly, briefly, briefly point out ten things. Ten characteristics in Jesus' prayer. And then, apply each of these briefly to ourselves. Ten things. We can do it.

Jesus Prayed with His Eyes Open

The first thing to notice about this prayer is that Jesus prayed with His eyes open. Verse 1. It says, "And lifting His eyes to heaven, He said..." Jesus just looked up into the dark night sky and started talking to God. That's how He prayed. And I don't point this out to be trivial, but to remind us that in the Bible there's a lot of different postures for prayer. I mean, there's some people that pray sitting down. Other people pray standing up. Other people pray with their arms in the air. Other people pray lying prone on the ground. Nehemiah prayed while he was serving wine to the king. Now the way I do most of my praying, I guess, is with my eyes closed and my head bowed, and often on my knees. But you know, there's no Bible verse that says that's the only right way to pray, is there? In fact, there's nobody in the Bible that closes their eyes when they pray - at least where the verse says that.

I was just finishing the biography of D.E. Hoste, which I'll make available for you all to borrow if you like. He was the second director of the China Inland Mission. And at one point as a young man, as a young missionary, he was trying to pray a lot. And he was having trouble because his mind would just wander when he tries to pray. So he asked Hudson Taylor, the wiser, older missionary. He says what do I do about this? And he's expecting to get some really spiritual answer back about this problem. Hudson Taylor says why don't you try praying as you take a walk? And just talk to God as though the Lord was just right there walking along with you? And he said he started doing that and that helped him so much he did it the rest of his life. And he ended up being a mighty man of prayer. The point I'm making is that we should feel freedom; we should have variety in what we do with our bodies as we pray to God. Don't be stuck in a rut. Don't just always be doing it the same way. No. Sometimes pray with your eyes open. Sometimes look into Heaven like Jesus did. Sometimes take a walk. Whatever. It can be a help in our own prayer life.

Jesus Prayed with Others

Second thing to see in Jesus' prayer is that He prayed with others. He prayed with others. There were 11 other guys there with Him as He prayed. These disciples were listening in. And Jesus did this often in His ministry. You know, just a little after this in the Garden of Gethsemane, He takes Peter and James and John along with Him, and He says to them, you guys watch and pray along with Me while I pray over here. Earlier in His ministry, He took the same three guys on what became the Mount of Transfiguration. They're going to have a prayer meeting up there. And in the middle of the prayer meeting all kinds of glorious things happened. I did a study a little while back through the book of Acts just looking for all the references to prayer meetings in the book of Acts, and there were like 10 or 12 examples of either scheduled prayer meetings or just impromptu times where Christians are praying together in the book of Acts.

This was something else in that D.E. Hoste book that he talked about. He says he really tried to pray a lot as director of the mission. He tried to pray for all the missionaries like every

day and stuff. And he found that he prayed considerably better when he had somebody else in the room with him. And so he would grab somebody - maybe his wife or another missionary or somebody that was just staying at his house and it's like, hey, could you come and pray with me for awhile this morning? He liked to pray with someone. It helped to have somebody there. And it sure does help us, doesn't it. So this is a practice we can follow too to not just pray alone, which of course is good, but to pray with others at times. I mean corporately as a church we have a prayer meeting on Thursday nights that I think is really important. I mean, in my rank, it would be second to the Sunday meeting we have right now in importance. My preference would be that if you needed to skip other stuff, you'd skip the Bible study and the social things and even the evangelism sometimes in order to make the prayer meeting a priority for us.

But then there's other opportunities where you can just pray with one or two Christians, you know? You pray with your family. You can pray with somebody that's just visiting your house that's a Christian. Say, hey, could we pray a little before you leave? I noticed on Sunday after our meal over here, there was a table full of guys that looked like they were praying. And that was great to see! You know, just impromptu prayer among the brothers. You can be the one that suggests this. See? You can be the one that says, hey, before we get started on this, do you think we ought to just pray about it? You can be the one that suggests, hey, before you go, could we just have a word of prayer together? That's how Jesus did it. He prayed with others.

Jesus Prayed to the Father

Third thing that you see in this prayer is that Jesus prayed to the Father. The Father. That's the first word of the prayer, isn't it? Father. Glorify Your Son that Your Son may glorify You. The Father-Son thing, from the very first line. Then, He mentions the Father again in verse 5 and again in verse 11 and again in verse 21 and again in verse 24 and again in verse 25. You didn't know it was in there that often, but He keeps referring to the Father. This was a big deal in the mind of Jesus. He was the Son and He's praying to the Father. Christ had a confidence and a delight in this Father to Son relationship that He enjoyed there. And it's fascinating to think about this, isn't it, because God the Father and God the Son have existed from eternity past. They've always been the Father and the Son. And so here you have the incarnate Son of God; you have Christ the God-man in His humanity, and He's still praying to the Father; still reaching out to the Father like this.

What's really amazing though is that Jesus taught us to pray the same way. He taught us to pray to the Father, just like He did. I mean, there in Matthew 6, probably the clearest instructions on prayer Jesus ever gives us is there in the Sermon on the Mount. There in Matthew 6, Jesus says, "shut your door. Pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will repay you. And your Father knows what you need before you ask Him." And then, "pray then in this way: Our Father, who art in Heaven..." We get to address the living God in the same terms that the Lord Jesus used as our Father. It's a wonderful thing. We've received that Spirit of adoption that we talked about a couple of Tuesday nights back there from Romans 8 - the Spirit of adoption as sons, by which we cry out, "Abba, Father." When the Holy Spirit comes into you as a brand new Christian, there's this welling up within you - this cry that God is my Father - my Abba, Father. I have this relationship with the living God. You can't help

but cry out to Him. It's so natural. It's so instinctive for these little children that we have to try to talk to their parents, right? Early on, it's "da, da, da, da..." "ma, ma, ma, ma..." And then, after a while, they're just kind of jabbering all kinds of sounds and then they start to learn some actual words. And then they start to put the words together a little bit. And then figure out if they put the right words together, they can get the stuff they want, you know how that works.

Children want to talk to their parents. There's that desire for that connection and that relationship. And that's really the essence of our prayer life. Brothers and sisters, prayer is not this exercise you do in order to get the stuff you want. But prayer is an expression of a relationship between a child and the Father. We keep reaching out to the Lord. We keep reaching out to the Father, again and again, just reassuring ourselves of the relationship with Him; Reassuring ourselves of His love. And that wanting to maintain that felt sense of the closeness and nearness of God. This is always a great test of how well we're doing spiritually; of where we're really at. How good is your relationship with God? Your prayer life will often tell the story of how you're doing. Many, many professing Christians hardly ever pray. They hardly ever feel any desire for that connection with God. Maybe it's because there isn't one. There isn't really a relationship with the Lord. But our prayer life will often tell how is my heart toward the God that I claim to love.

Now we don't pray to the Father exclusively, of course. It's biblical to pray to Jesus. We just talked about that a few months ago I think. And it's fine to pray to the Holy Spirit also, but I would say this. I'm not a fan of the practice of praying, "Dear God..." "Dear God this..." "Dear God that..." And so on... To me, praying to the Father is so much of a richer concept than saying, "dear God." That's not wrong to talk that way, but think about it. God is God over everybody and everything. God is God over every creature. God's God over every person, every animal, every insect, but He's only Father to a small number of people, right? The Lord Jesus Christ and all the Christians. They're the only ones that can call Him Father like that. And so when I go to pray, I want to be reminded of that. That I'm in that club. I'm one of those that's a child of God. I can call Him my Father - not just my God, but He's my Father. Well, that's how Jesus prayed and how He encouraged us to pray.

Jesus Prayed with Reverence

A fourth thing in this prayer we see is that He prayed with reverence. He prayed with reverence. And really the whole prayer, it just has a tone of honor and respectfulness toward God. But we especially, I think, see the reverence come out in two phrases that Jesus uses. In verse 11, there's the phrase, "Holy Father," and verse 25, the phrase, "O righteous Father." He specifically mentions the holiness and righteousness of God as He addresses the Father. Now, He could have said, "O loving Father" or "O gracious Father" or "O powerful Father," "O wise Father." Instead, it's "holy Father." It's God's holiness that comes out. Why do you think so? Well, holiness is about being set apart. Holiness is about being above and beyond; being transcendent, above the creation, above all that is sinful, all that is defiled, all that is cursed. God is above; set apart in His majesty. Think of that place in Revelation 4 that describes sort of the throne room of Heaven. And it describes the four living creatures. And what are they saying night and day and night and day? What are they saying? We just sang it this morning. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty. It's His holiness. Well, think. Those angels had never

sinned. You know, in that sense, they are very holy too. They're more holy than any of us. And yet, they're there in the presence of God. And they can't help themselves. They keep worshiping His holiness. They realize the holiness God has is a whole different level; a whole different kind than the holiness they have even as perfect angels in Heaven.

This also fits with the model prayer Jesus gave us there in Matthew 6. He says, "Pray then in this way: Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name." Yes, He's our Father as we talked about a minute ago, but He's our Father in Heaven. We're to remember He's the Father in the majestic glory of Heaven right now. We're to picture the throne room of Heaven however you picture that. And also "hallowed be Thy name." I mean, hallowed just means may Your name be honored as holy. That's how we pray. That's how we approach prayer. Hebrews 12:28 says that we offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe for our God is a consuming fire. He says we come to Him with our worship, with our thanksgiving, with our praise. How? With reverence and awe because of Who He is: a consuming fire. I think the fire analogy points to holiness also. It's the fire that consumes sin. And so here's Christ, Who is in no way less holy than the Father. And yet when He prays to the Father, He uses this terminology. Holy Father. O righteous Father. Think of it. Christ who had the greatest possible familiarity with the Father, and He addresses Him with this kind of reverence. How much more should we? We who are a mess. We who have sinned against God again and again. We that have a hard time going a day, maybe not even an hour without sinning. How much more should we approach consuming fire of God with reverence, with respect, with care, with honor? He's the holy, holy, holy God to whom we pray. You're going into the throne room to do serious, glorious business with God. Remember His majesty. Remember His set-apart-ness.

Jesus Prayed with Simple Language

A fifth thing about this prayer is that Jesus prayed with simple language. Simple language. When we read through the prayer earlier, did you notice a lot of long, technical words? Not too much of that. It's just the opposite. I think the vocabulary and the sentence structure of the prayer is simpler than Jesus' teaching we've been studying for the last month. There's a lot of complicated stuff in the teaching, but the words He uses in the prayer are mostly simple words. The language has an unadorned beauty about it. There's no high, soaring rhetoric here. There's no poetic imagery here. It's just very ordinary words.

So my conclusion is that fancy language in our prayers just doesn't matter to God. It doesn't impress Him. It doesn't increase your chances of Him answering your prayer if it's real fancy. No. God just wants to hear you. Just talk to Him like you normally talk in the words you feel most comfortable using. There are some very godly saints - especially those of an older generation - and for them, the way they express reverence in prayer is by talking in King James English. Maybe you've been around that before. Lots of "thee's" and "thou's" and stuff. And I appreciate their godliness. I appreciate the heart behind it, but I think that's a mistake. Because we see just the opposite in Jesus' prayer. His prayer was simple. It's a mistake to think that archaic language or flowery language is somehow better for prayer than just our normal everyday words. Remember, we're children coming to the Father. When my kids talk to me, I want them to be respectful of their dad, sure. But it's not like they're going to a job interview or in front of a judge or giving testimony in front of congress or something, right? I love them for who

they are. I just want them to be themselves. Just say what's on your mind in the way you're used to saying it. And God views us the same way as our Father in Heaven. He loves you as you are in Christ. And He wants you to just use the words that most clearly express your heart to Him. I'm comforted by that.

Jesus Prayed in an Orderly Way

A sixth thing we see in this prayer is that Jesus prayed in an orderly way. An orderly way. There's an obvious structure to this prayer. It's not just a list of random thoughts just kind of thrown out one after another. But Jesus went into this with a plan - how He was going to pray. There's a logical progression that runs through it. The circles kind of expand as you go along. He starts out just praying for Himself in the immediate context of the cross. That's the first five verses. Then the next section, v. 6-19, He's praying for His disciples there. That's the second circle. And then at the end, v. 20-26, He prays for the entire church for all time. So that's another circle. And the prayer naturally builds to this wonderful climax of the unity and love of the Father and the Son and the saints, by the time you get to v. 26. You get the same thing from the model prayer there in Matthew 6, don't you? "Our Father, which art in Heaven; hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation..." Jesus is giving us an outline for our prayers. Step by step. Here's a way to approach it. There's order. There's structure there.

I suspect, however, that there are many Christians - I don't know what you'd think about this. But I think there are many Christians who would say, well, I think it's more spiritual; I think it's more of a being led by the Spirit kind of experience if I don't have any plan when I pray. And I just sort of talk about whatever comes into my mind in the moment. And I think that is fine for shorter praying. I mean, I think that's natural. It's like, well, Lord, I'm dealing with this thing right here. Lord, protect me. Lord, help me with this next task. Lord, give me wisdom with these crazy kids today. Lord, help me in this thing I'm worried about right now. We cry out to God. It's right to pray about what's just right on our mind. But for your longer time in prayer during the day, I think it's really good to have some kind of plan; some kind of structure - what you normally pray about; what you think God would have you pray about.

For me, it's been helpful to have a prayer list that I've kept for a number of years. I don't actually pray through the prayer list every day - maybe every second or third day I'll actually go through the list, but what I find is that if I don't look at the list for a long time, I start forgetting all kinds of stuff. So here's all these things that I think I should be praying for, that are good to pray for, and the list helps me stay on track. It gives structure. It gives a plan to my praying. I think of it this way: Back when I was in the business world, I would never go into a business meeting without an agenda; without a plan; without some notes of: here's how I want this meeting to go. Here's what I want to get out of these clients today, right? So, why would I treat my daily meeting with the Lord of Glory as something less worthy of some diligence and planning? You want to try to get the most out of it. There's order in Jesus' prayer.

Jesus Prayed as One with Much Experience Praying

A seventh thing is that Jesus prayed as one with much experience praying. He prayed as one who had prayed a lot. There's a smoothness, a comfortable confidence in this prayer that comes from one who has spent His whole life praying. Scattered through the New Testament, there are about 25 references to Jesus' personal prayer life during His time on earth. Twenty-five. It's different examples of His prayers, different descriptions of how He prayed. Why is there so much? Why is there so much about His personal prayer life? It must be that God wants us to get the point that prayer was a big deal to the Lord Jesus Christ. He prayed a lot. It was a top priority for Him. He prayed sometimes for hours, didn't He? After He feeds the 5,000. I'd just want to go home and watch the game if it was me. Like, whoa, I've had my big day. What does Jesus do? He goes up on the mountain and He prays till late at night. And then He walks on the water. The night before Jesus chose the disciples, it says He prayed all night to God before He chose the twelve.

There was consistency also in Jesus' prayer habits. In Luke 5:16 it says, "He Himself would often slip away into the wilderness and pray." That word "often" is important. It wasn't just something He did occasionally, but it was His practice. It's like He was crushed by all this ministry; all these people coming after Him needing things. He says I've still got to pray. I've got to get out here early in the morning. I've got to get alone with the Father. And He did it often.

He prayed with passion, didn't He? We see that in the Garden of Gethsemane a little later sweating drops of blood. Hebrews 5 describes it as that Christ offered up prayers and petitions or supplications with loud crying and tears. It wasn't just a mechanical thing. There was passion behind His prayers.

Now you would think Jesus of all people would have the least need to pray so much, right? I mean, He's the Son of God incarnate. He knows God intimately already. He has no sin to worry about to trip Him up. He's so busy with this important ministry. I mean, surely, we could excuse Jesus if He didn't think He needed to pray very much. You'd say, yeah, I understand. You don't need to pray. But instead, we see just the opposite - that the Lord Jesus seems to pray more than anybody else in the Bible. Prayer was a massive part of His life and ministry. The only way to get better at playing piano is to play the piano, right? The only way to get better at tennis or watercolor or carpentry or anything else is to do it, to spend time with it. Now, we need a little instruction along the way. You're getting some instruction today about prayer. But most of the way we get better at praying is just by praying, by just doing it; spending time on it. We can't learn to pray well without praying a lot. That's what I conclude. That's the only way our prayers can sound like Jesus, if we pray a lot like Jesus prayed a lot and gain the experience that our Lord had.

Jesus Prayed with a Confident Faith in God

An eighth thing about His prayer is He prayed with a confident faith in God. A confident faith. Jesus is not one here who is trying to sound like He believes God. He's one that just believes God. His faith is confident. It is calm. It is sincere. It is real. It pervades every word. It's just so matter-of-fact as He talks here. This sense that everything is under control; that God is doing everything just as He said He would. The very first line: "Father, the hour has come..." so glorify Your Son. There's just a confident faith in each line. And then like v. 4, "I glorified You on the earth..." so now Father, glorify Me. An expectation that of course God will do these things.

And then He continues on praying for the disciples, describing their situation. Here are all their needs. Here is what I desire You to do for them, Father. There's never a sense that Christ is trying to twist God's arm and make God do stuff God doesn't want to do. Instead, a confidence that of course God wants to do these things. Christ has a certainty in His prayers that He will be heard and answered. Remember what He said there at Lazarus' tomb right before He raises Lazarus from the dead? He prays. He says, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I knew that You always hear Me." You always hear Me. He prayed with a confident faith.

How about us? Do we pray with that kind of confident faith like our Lord showed? Well, you say, I'm not the Son of God. You say I'm not righteous like Jesus was. Now hold on. Hold on there. I'm not the Son of God? Well, the Bible says you're an adopted son of God. That counts for quite a bit. Don't you think? You say well, I'm not righteous like Jesus. But what does the Bible say? The Bible says you've been given robes of righteousness - the righteousness of Christ is upon you. That's how we can pray with boldness. We can go boldly to the throne of grace because we're coming in Christ's name; we're coming with Christ's atoning blood upon us. We have our sins forgiven. We have His righteousness upon us.

I think in my life that the two men I've gotten to pray with a little bit, who seem to have the most power in prayer were Keith and Bill McCloud - these preachers up in Canada - Lori's grandpa and great uncle actually. And the way they prayed was very much like Jesus' prayer here in the sense that there was just this sweet, calm, confident, matter-of-factness about their faith. I mean, it almost sounded naive. It was just childlike confidence they expressed in God. And God heard these men's prayers. They just saw constant miraculous glorious things through their ministries. But their prayers were so simple; were so matter-of-fact. It was not like they're rolling around and foaming at the mouth and trying to get something out of God. They just talked to Him as happy, confident children, that of course God would hear them. They're just used to that. Prayer is a great expression of faith in God. It's also a great test of how much faith we really have. You know, when you really need something from God; when God has to do something or you're in big trouble, and you've got these promises here and we quote these promises, but when you're having to stand on this promise - Lord, will You keep Your Word here? It really tests - do I really believe this? Do I really believe these promises? Do I really believe that God is a rewarder of those who seek Him and so on? We're tested. Can we pray with a confident faith in God? We can. We can trust the Lord, brothers and sisters. We can trust Him. He's faithful to keep His Word. We can pray with an assured confidence that God hears us. God hears us as we come to Him in Jesus' name.

Jesus Told God Things God Already Knew

A ninth thing about this prayer is that Jesus told God things God already knew. Jesus spends a lot of these 26 verses not asking for new stuff, but just rehearsing and describing what's already happened; describing His own ministry; describing things with the disciples; what God has already done. Here's the present situation. Here's what's gone on. Look. Just glance down at your Bible at v. 6 and v. 7, and v. 8 and v. 9 and v. 10. There's no request at all! Jesus is just describing how His disciples got saved basically - who these guys are. Now He's doing it for a reason. He's setting up the petitions that are coming. But He's laying out for the Father, here's why these guys are so important. Here's why these guys are so important to You, Father.

Here's what You've already done for them. Here's how much they still need You going forward. And it's that pattern through the rest of the prayer.

Some people discourage themselves from praying, because they overthink it. They overphilosophize it. They say, well, since God already knows everything, and I'm not going to tell Him anything He doesn't know, and since God's already sovereign and He's got His mind made up what He's going to do for the rest of human history, I'm not going to change His mind on anything. So why pray? Why pray? God doesn't need to be informed. God's mind's not going to change. Why mess with it? Well, those are interesting philosophical questions. But what I'm urging us today - notice I'm not touching them either - what I'm urging us today is not approach it philosophically, but just approach it biblically. I mean the Bible's full of prayer. The Bible's full of people praying. The Bible's full of encouragements and promises regarding prayer. And it's very clear as you go through the Bible that prayer is very powerful; very important; very effectual; that prayer changes things; that God has designed things in His sovereignty that prayer is the means by which He chooses to work. He wants us to pray. Prayer is real and powerful. And it's just clear in Scripture. Like James 5 saying the effectual prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. Or James saying you don't have because you don't ask. You just haven't asked, so you don't have it. These things are very real. And so yes, God already knew a lot of this stuff that Jesus prayed about here. And that was just fine. There's no problem with that at all. And when you pray, God is already going to know everything you need before you ask Him. Jesus says that. And He's going to be real happy to hear you tell Him all over again what's on your heart; what you need. See, this prayer business is not a mechanical thing. I've probably said this before. It's not just you shooting off some information to God; shooting off some arguments to God, and hoping something comes back. This is a relationship deal. It's a child and a Father.

Jesus Prayed with a Concern for God's Glory

A tenth thing about this prayer is that Jesus prayed with a concern for God's glory. He prayed with a concern for God's glory. The word glory comes up a lot in the prayer. I didn't count the times, but it's like Jesus is approaching every topic in this prayer and viewing it from God's perspective. It's really interesting. He connects everything to: how does this look to God? How does this look to the Father? How is this tied in with the name and the reputation of God and God's future glory and what God has already done in the past? He's connecting everything back to God Himself and God's glory. Look at v. 1. "Glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You." It's back to the Father. V. 3 "This is eternal life, that people may know You, the only true God." Yeah, people need to know who You are. Your glory is at stake. V. 5, He says, "Glorify Me together with Yourself." Glory for the Father. V. 6 "I manifested Your name to the men who You gave Me." Again, it's Your name, God. It's Your people that You gave to Me. V. 8 "They (these disciples) believe that You sent Me." V. 9 - Describing the disciples, He says, "Those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours." V. 10 "All things that are Mine are Yours," and so on through the prayer. So yes, Jesus is asking God to do all these things to help these weak and needy Christians, but He's also looking past the weak and needy Christians, and He's looking to the glory of God; the purposes of God that stand behind that. And He's arguing in a gentle way that God will ultimately get more glory for Himself as He helps these weak and needy Christians

that He cares for. It's not just that these people have needs, but it's God's name is at stake in the welfare of these believers.

And this is something you find in the great intercessory prayers of the Bible. I think Moses really was a master at this. You read how Moses kept having to pray for those Israelites in the Old Testament, and Moses would say, Lord, look, Your reputation is at stake here. Lord, You've made these promises; You've made these covenants and You can't go back on that. You've got to keep Your Word. He'd say Lord, what will the heathens say if all Your people die here in the wilderness like You're talking about. He brings it back to the glory and name of God. And the more that we learn to pray that way, to connect this need we're praying about to God's larger purposes - God's name, God's glory, God's reputation, God's cause - the stronger our prayers will be and the more faith we'll be able to pray with. Because we're asking God for the very things that God Himself has already said He wants to do. He wants to glorify Himself. He wants to glorify His Son through the Gospel.

And so there's ten points. Didn't think we'd get there. But we are. Ten points. Ten characteristics of Jesus' great prayer. And I'll just mention them again if you need to clean up your notes. The first is that He prayed with His eyes open. The thought of variety in our posture. Secondly, that He prayed with others. Thirdly, He prayed to the Father specifically. Fourth, that He prayed with reverence: "Holy Father." Fifth, that He prayed with simple language. Sixth, that He prayed in an orderly way. Seventh, He prayed as one with much experience in praying. Eight, He prayed with a confident, matter-of-fact faith in God. Nine, that He told God things God already knew. And that was ok. And number ten, that He prayed with a concern for God's glory.

Now, you're not going to remember ten things and I won't either. I won't remember them tomorrow probably, a lot of these. But maybe there's one or two. Maybe there's one or two things we talked about here that stuck out to you in some way; that the Holy Spirit's kind of poked you with and said that applies to you. You could pray better if you prayed more like that for the Lord Jesus. And so if that's the case - if there's one or two things that the Lord has shown you, I earnestly exhort you, get a hold of those one or two things, and then pray differently this week. Pray differently right this week in those ways. Apply it. You can apply it right today. You can apply it right tomorrow morning, right? Pray more like Jesus prayed.

The Lord's already dealt with me late last night. I felt convicted of how my prayer life needs to change. So I praise God for His Word and His Spirit. But you pay attention to what the Lord's saying to you through these thoughts. There's enough material in what we covered today for us all to pray substantially better as a church. If we were all praying like Jesus in these ten ways... I mean, we could be praying thirty percent better as a church, don't you think? Wouldn't that be a big deal? Wouldn't that be a big deal if we were? We're a church here, brothers and sisters, that is willing to do a lot of stuff. We've got a bunch of activity going on. I rejoice that there are a bunch of new people hear the Gospel from you guys every single week. That is wonderful. What we mainly lack though is spiritual power to accompany that activity. We need the power of God. We need the conviction of the Holy Spirit. That when we're talking to people they would be hearing from the Lord - not just you. They'd be hearing from the Lord about sin and righteousness and judgment. That God would work in people's hearts and change lives. Where does that power come from? Where does the power come from? God has said in the Bible that He'll give that power in response to faith-filled praying. It comes from prayer.

Remember that time when the disciples couldn't cast out that one demon there in Matthew 17? The Mount of Transfiguration is happening up there. The other 9 disciples are struggling around with this demon they can't cast out. Jesus comes down the mountain, deals with the demon, and then they come to Him and say, Lord, what was wrong? Why did we not have the power to deal with that? Jesus tells them. He says, because of the littleness of your faith. It was a faith problem. It wasn't a technique problem. It wasn't that they just should have said this one thing and it would have worked. No, it was a faith issue. He goes on, "If you have faith as a mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, 'move from here to there,' and it shall move and nothing shall be impossible to you." So He doesn't say you have to have a mountain's worth of faith to move a mountain. He says just a little bit. A little bit of faith in a mighty God. And then He says, 'This kind can not come out by anything but prayer.' Some of the manuscripts say "prayer and fasting." But definitely prayer is there. He says that's the key thing. I mean, you disciples, you didn't have any spiritual power when the crisis was upon you, because you hadn't been praying enough. You hadn't been believing God enough. You hadn't been walking in a life of faith. If you had been, you could have moved the mountain. Lord, teach us to pray. Lord, teach us to pray. Amen.