

# Sermon Notes

Practical Lessons for Understanding the Word of God



## Putting Prayer First

KEY PASSAGE: Mark 11:20-24 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE: Psalm 37:4, 119:165 | Isaiah 55:3 | Matthew 7:7-11  
Mark 1:35-37 | Luke 11:1 | James 4:2

### SUMMARY

**Jesus spoke of many subjects during His ministry, but prayer and faith were the top two.**

He not only taught about prayer, He practiced it. Mark 1:35-37 describes a time when He woke up early while it was still dark and went to a secluded place to pray. Because prayer was a priority, He regularly spent time talking to His Father in an intimate, personal way—being encouraged, sharing His concerns, and seeking His will for each day.

### SERMON POINTS

Since Jesus emphasized the importance of prayer with His example and His teaching, so should we.

#### The Priority of Prayer

- **Prayer requires uninterrupted time.** To evaluate our prayer lives, we should ask ourselves the following questions: *Where does prayer fit into my daily schedule? Do I have a set time to meet with the Lord, or do I pray on the go while driving to work or doing other tasks? Are my prayers reserved only for meals or occasions when I need God's help? Of the twenty-four hours He's given me, how much time do I give the Lord in a day?*
- **Prayerlessness is a sin against God.** Neglect of prayer results in a weak Christian life, unmet needs, and ungodly behavior.
- **Prayer affects our day.** When we meet with the Lord in the morning, He prepares us for the day ahead because He alone knows what awaits us. He

may strengthen us for a difficult situation, or He might prepare us to accept a new and challenging opportunity.

- **Jesus teaches about prayer.** When Christ taught His disciples to pray, He gave them and us a pattern to follow in the Lord's Prayer (Luke 11:1-4). In the Sermon on the Mount, He told us to ask, seek, and knock, expecting that we will receive an answer (Matt. 7:11). And to help us understand that our heavenly Father always gives what is good, Jesus used the example of an earthly father who would never give a snake to his son who asks him for a fish.
- **Prayer is communion with the Lord.** We aren't meeting with Him just to present a list of petitions but to give Him our full attention. Amazingly, God wants to fellowship with us, and that's why we need unhurried time alone with Him every day.
- **Prayer is empowered by faith.** Jesus taught that prayer and faith go together. And every time the Lord answers our requests, our faith in Him grows stronger. But if we doubt Him, our prayer is like a beautiful, high-powered automobile without wheels. Neither one will go anywhere.
- **God answers requests that are according to His will.** When our petitions are compatible with Christ's teachings and are fitting for us as His followers, we can be certain that He will grant them. Although we're not always able to distinguish whether our requests align with God's plans for us or whether our motives are right, the Lord sifts our prayers and answers them according to His wise choice.

■ **Scriptures are our anchors for prayer.** When we know what God has promised in His Word, we can confidently ask Him for it. Jesus taught that when we have faith in the Lord and do not doubt, we will receive our requests (Mark 11:22-24). In fact, He said, “Believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you” (v. 24). When our petitions are according to God’s will, we can be so confident in Him that we’ll be able to thank Him for the answers before they become a reality.

### Putting Prayer First

Since an intimate and effective prayer life never happens accidentally, we must intentionally take the following steps:

- **Schedule a time.** Early in the morning is the best time to meet with the Lord since prayer sets the course for the rest of the day. This may require that we follow Jesus’ example of rising very early before anyone else is awake.
- **Pick a place.** We also need a quiet place for prayer where we won’t be interrupted. Christ went into the wilderness to be alone with His Father, but for most of us, it will probably be a room in our home. Wherever it is, it will be like an altar where we meet with God to share our concerns and have fellowship with Him.
- **Believe the Lord hears our prayers.** We can be confident that God listens to us because he never turns a deaf ear to one of His praying children. It has nothing to do with whether we feel worthy or not. We are all invited to come boldly before His throne of grace.
- **Pray for others. Sometimes God gives us a burden to intercede for someone else.** Although we may not be able to help, the Lord can.
- **Trust in God’s power.** Jesus said that an earnest prayer of faith has the power to move a mountain (Mark 11:23). According to this promise, we can know that . . .
  - **The greatest possible difficulties can be removed when we have faith.** Nothing is

impossible for the Lord. He can handle every gigantic obstacle or challenge in our lives.

• **No task in harmony with God’s will is impossible to perform when we believe Him.**

Whatever He commands us to do, He gives us the strength and resources to accomplish. As our heavenly Father, He’s protecting, supporting, and providing everything we need to obey Him.

■ **Pray for direction.** The Lord wants to guide us into His plan for our lives. If we’ll ask Him for direction, He may not show us the entire course, but He will provide the next step. To receive further instruction, we must be willing to obey whatever He has already revealed. As we keep walking with Him, the path will gradually unfold to us.

■ **Pray with the Word.** Effective prayer is anchored in the Word of God. If we try to pray without it, our request may not be wise. But as we consistently read the Bible, the Lord will show us how to pray wisely according to His will.

### RESPONSE

- If you’re like most Christians, your prayer life is not as good as you’d like it to be. What is your biggest struggle regarding prayer?
- Would you describe your prayer time as a conversation with fellowship between you and the Lord, or is it more of a monologue? How would praying with an open Bible enrich your communion with God and determine your requests?
- Psalm 37:4 says that when we delight in the Lord, He gives us the desires of our hearts. What does it mean to delight in the Lord? How would this change your desires and your prayers?

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