

8 • WHAT JESUS SAYS ABOUT PRAYER

Like fasting and almsgiving, prayer is essential in Christian life. In Matthew 6:5, Jesus Christ says, “When you pray,” not “if you pray.” Just as He prayed, so too we are expected to pray.

In one sense, **prayer** is **conversation with God**. It may be **formal**, as in the prayers found in the Church’s service and prayer books – morning and evening prayers, prayers throughout the day, prayers for various occasions and needs – or in the book of Psalms. Or it may involve the **intimate, personal pouring out of our heart** to God in **secret**. Prayer may even **transcend words**, focusing our attention on **listening** to the “quiet, still voice” of the Lord while recognizing that **no words can fully express His very presence** at every moment and in every aspect of our lives. In any instance, prayer is communication with God, an **entering into a “common union”** with Him as we **praise and thank Him, seek** His forgiveness, and **ask** Him to reveal and accomplish His will in our lives.



Jesus Christ prayed. He prayed before He began His public ministry. He prayed on the eve of His death. He prayed while hanging on the cross. He prayed before performing miracles. If **prayer was essential in His life**, can we truly believe that we can live as committed Christians without it?

Jesus saw that much of the praying of his day was for show, done for the purpose of garnering accolades from others. Thus, He warned His disciples to **pray in secret**, not “on the street corners” as the hypocrites did. And He taught His disciples “**The Lord’s Prayer**,” which embodies the spirit that must be at the heart of our prayers.

And Jesus promised that **our prayers will be answered** – if we pray that **God’s will**, not **our will**, be accomplished in and for us – since God’s will is always for our good and, ultimately, for our salvation. Even what may appear to be **silence is an answer**, as well as a **challenge** to struggle continuously to discern His will. Our prayer must be that of Jesus Himself in the garden of Gethsemane: “**Not my will, but Thine be done.**”

Look up each of the following passages and write down what Jesus Christ says about prayer.

MATTHEW 6:5-13

LUKE 11:2-4

MATTHEW 7:7-11

LUKE 11:5-13

MATTHEW 18:18-20

MATTHEW 26:36-42

MARK 14:34-38

LUKE 22:40-46

JOHN 12:27-28

JOHN 14:13-14

"ON THE NIGHT IN WHICH HE WAS GIVEN UP..."

Read – slowly, prayerfully, and thoughtfully – the prayer Christ offered on the night of His betrayal in John 17:1-26. What does He ask? How can we strive to make His prayer our prayer? How can we fulfill that for which He prayed in our own lives?