

17. Jesus Showed the Disciples How to Develop Praying Christians

In our last two topics, we talked about the difference between the Greek style of teaching and the Hebrew style of teaching. We saw that the Greek style of instruction was primarily classroom instruction. In contrast, the Hebrew style of instruction was to show people by example. The Greek style of education increases the knowledge of people. The Hebrew style of instruction shows people how to live, and use the knowledge they learn, as they are taught by example. Today, we will see that Christ showed the disciples how to develop their communication with the Father through prayer.

In the book of Mark, we see that Christ began showing the disciples how to pray, as soon as He called them to follow Him. In Mark 1:16-20, we see that Christ told four fishermen, “Follow me and I will make you to become fishers of men.” Christ immediately began teaching the disciples about prayer. Mark 1:35-36 says, “Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed. And Simon and those *who were* with Him searched for Him.” Here, we see that Christ immediately began to teach the disciples about the priority of prayer.

People only learn about the importance of prayer as they see others pray. Since the verse says that Christ had risen and gone out to pray a long while before daylight, one or more of the disciples had heard Christ leave. In fact, one or more had seen what direction He had gone, because they knew which direction to go to find Him. When the disciples found Christ that morning, they found that He was praying. They immediately began to realize the importance Christ placed on praying and communicating with the Father. Through the following three years, they found Christ praying many times. They began to realize that Christ felt prayer was one of the most important things He did. That was something they could only learn from the example of Christ.

In Luke 9, Christ sent the twelve out in teams of two to preach the kingdom of God. Then, in Luke 10, Christ sent the seventy out in teams of two. In Luke 10:17-20, the seventy returned to give a report about their preaching. The disciples learned many lessons from those two periods of ministry. This led the disciples to make a request of Christ, in Luke 11. Luke 11:1 says, “Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, *that* one of His disciples said to Him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.’” The disciples had been observing the prayer life of Christ for nearly two years, and they realized that Christ really prayed. As a result, they also wanted to learn to pray, not just say prayers. As a result, Christ taught the disciples several lessons about prayer.

Before Christ sent out the seventy, Christ said, in Luke 10:2-4, “‘The harvest truly *is* great, but the laborers *are* few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves. Carry neither money bag, knapsack, nor sandals; and greet no one along the road.’” Christ told them to pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers. Then, He answered their prayer by sending them out as laborers into His harvest. However, in answering their prayer for laborers, Christ also showed them that they were going to have to depend on Him to be effective. They were like lambs among wolves. They had no extra

money, food, or clothes. They had to learn to pray, both for Christ to provide protection as well as for Christ to supply their needs. That is what caused them to come back and ask the Lord to teach them how to pray.

Christ responded to their request by helping them to learn to really pray. Luke 11:2-4 says, “So He said to them, ‘When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as *it is* in heaven. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, For we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one.’” Instead of giving the disciples one or more prayers to pray, Christ gave a summary of things about which they should pray. Christ showed them, first of all, that prayer is a relationship between a Father and His children. Real prayer is based on understanding this relationship. Only as we realize that we can freely come to our heavenly Father will we have a healthy relationship with Him. We also need to realize that He is holy and that we are able to come to Him because Christ made us holy by forgiving our sins.

Many Christians only talk to God about their needs. That is self-centered or selfish prayer. Prayer that is usually self-centered is a sign of spiritual immaturity. It is interesting that this request to learn how to pray came after the disciples had been sent out on ministry trips. They had learned, as Christ sent them out, that they could depend on Him to supply their needs. However, they had also learned that they needed to learn how to pray in order to see God work in and through their lives.

Christ showed us, by His example, that as we talk to our heavenly Father, we need to focus on His work, and His will in the world, before we even talk about our own needs. The disciples were shown, by example, the importance of praying for God’s work. Then, they were shown the importance of praying for God’s will in the world. Only after that did they see that they could also pray about their own physical needs, and their need for forgiveness, so that they would continue to enjoy fellowship with the Father. They also learned to pray for victory over temptation and their need for victory over the evil one.

However, after giving the disciples a summary of the things about which to pray, Christ went on to show them the importance of persistence in prayer. He did this by giving a parable about a friend who came with a need at night. Interestingly enough, his need was to meet the need of another person. Jesus showed that the friend would keep knocking until the need was met. Then, Christ said, in Luke 11:9-10, “‘So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.’” Christ told them to keep asking in prayer until the Father answered their prayer.

Then, Christ explained how the Father would answer them, since they were His children. Luke 11:11-13 says, “‘If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if *he asks* for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!’” Instead of

telling them that the Father would give them things, Christ said that the Father would give them the Holy Spirit to guide them. After His resurrection, Christ told them, in Luke 24:49, “Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.” They were promised that the Holy Spirit would teach them, guide them, and give them power. That was why it was so important they learned how to pray.

As we go to the book of Acts, we see that the disciples had learned how to help other Christians learn to really pray. In Acts 1:14, they showed the hundred and twenty disciples, who were gathered, the importance of prayer. Acts 1:14 says, “These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.” The eleven were showing the rest of the disciples the importance of prayer, by their example. They were also showing them, by example, the importance of praying for the work of God, and the will of God, rather than focusing on their own needs.

When three thousand people became followers of Christ on the Day of Pentecost, the disciples immediately began showing the new believers the importance of prayer. Acts 2:42 says, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” In every Bible study, the disciples showed the new believers, by example, how to pray. In Acts 3:1, they showed the believers the importance of gathering together for prayer, by their example. That verse says, “Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth *hour*.” When the Lord used them to heal a crippled man on the way to the temple to pray, the Lord used the occasion to give the apostles the opportunity to show other believers how to handle opposition by prayer.

Peter and John spoke boldly to the religious leaders and focused on the death and resurrection of Christ. They were threatened by the religious leaders and then allowed to leave. They immediately showed, by example, the importance of handling opposition by prayer. The apostles showed the new believers, by their example, the importance of praying for the work of God, and the will of God, to be done, instead of focusing on their own needs. Acts 4:29-31 says, “‘Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.’ And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.” They handled opposition by praying that the work and will of the Lord would be done.

Today, God calls us to show both new Christians and developing leaders, by our example, the importance of prayer. Just as the apostles showed others how to pray for the work of God, and the will of God, we need to show others the importance of praying for the work of God, and the will of God, to be done in our day. May the Lord richly bless you as you help developing leaders learn how to pray and depend on the power of the Holy Spirit to work in their lives, and then, through their lives.