

Jesus in the Garden – The Prayer that is Always Answered

Mark 14:32-42

Week of March 22 - 28

In this prayer, Jesus gives us a model of how we should pray when we ask God for something (prayers of petition). It is a short prayer, but don't let its length deceive you. While the words are simple, the prayer offered by Jesus in this passage is far from simplistic. We will look at this prayer in detail and from different perspectives in each of this week's segments.

Key Point: Jesus' model of prayer: Being honest about our own desires, but ultimately submitting to obey and work toward God's will.

Key Verse: Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want.. – Mark 14:36

Segment 1 – If you are willing...

Open your time of study with prayer:

Father, Daddy – It really is my desire that I want the same things you want. Help me to talk with you in such a way that I come to understand both what I want, and what you want, and that those are closer and closer to being the same thing. Amen.

Read Mark 14:32-42, focus on verses 35- 36

This prayer is found in the gospels Matthew, Mark and Luke. Each states the first part of the prayer slightly differently:

"If it is possible..." (Matthew 26:39)

"Everything is possible for you..." (Mark 14:36)

"If you are willing..." (Luke 22:42)

1. "Abba," the term Jesus uses to address God at the start of this prayer is Aramaic for "Father." Yet a more intimate form, closer to "dad" or "daddy". Why might Jesus use this term as he prays in this situation?

2. Verse 35 states Jesus prayed that "if it was possible" the hour (the suffering ahead of him) might pass from him. If all things are possible for God, why would he pray this? What do you think he means by "possible" here? How do the other gospels, especially Luke, add insight here?

Pray:

Take some time now to focus just on the prayer Jesus offers (Mark 14:35-36). Jesus was an example we should model our lives after, and this prayer is no exception. Allow God to speak to you through this scripture passage.

- Invite God to be with you. Ask Him to reveal what He would like for you to know in these verses.
- Read the verses completely through, slowly, at least twice, out loud if possible.
- What word or phrase stands out to you?

- Hold this word or phrase in your mind. Think about the words. Listen for what God may be saying to you through this word or phrase of the Bible. Record your thoughts/images/feelings/impressions:

- Repeat this process: Read the verses completely through at least twice, out loud if possible.
- Does a different word or phrase stand out to you?

- Hold this word or phrase in your mind. Think about the words. Listen for what God may be saying to you through this word or phrase of the Bible. Record your thoughts/feelings/impressions:

3. What words or phrases stood out to you? Did any images come to mind for you? What did you learn as you let God speak to you through these verses?

Pray:

It has been my experience in prayer that sometimes when I say, "I don't know what God is telling me to do!" that my lack of knowledge is due to my own laziness rather than a lack of God's communication. I haven't put any effort into the situation - I haven't thought about it, I haven't prayed about it, in many ways I have ignored it and hoped it would just "fix itself". When I do this, I find it is nearly impossible for me to tell the voice of God from the voice of my own thoughts.

However, when I do put some thought into a situation, when I am honest with myself about what I want, I can then approach God and say, "God - here is what I think I would like to see happen in this situation. Is that inline with what you want?" Then I am often able to more clearly understand what in fact God's will is. It is not wrong to approach God with a preference! Sometimes God's will is the same as what I want. Sometimes it's not. Sometimes God's plan is far better than what I could have hoped to want! Sometimes God's plan means me giving up something that is hard to surrender. It isn't always clear of course. But most of the time I find it to be more helpful than my "ignore it and hope it goes away" approach!

So, with that in mind, enter a time of prayer now.

- Think about a situation in which you would like God to act.
- Clearly tell God what you would like to see happen in that situation. Be clear, be honest, be detailed, don't give any kind of fuzzy, "if it's your will" kind of stuff. This is your time to tell God what you would like to see! Perhaps more importantly, this is a time for you to clarify in your mind, what you are thinking and feeling about the situation. Don't worry if this take's awhile!
- Are you sure you've clearly told God what you want? Don't be shy.
- Next - now that God has listened patiently to you, it's your turn to listen to him. Ask: God, is that in line with what you want? What do you, LORD, want out of this situation?
- Then listen. God doesn't always give you an answer, but many times he does. Be patient, be open, and really listen.
- If you feel like you have heard an answer, double check it in your prayer: "God, I feel like you're saying _____ is what you want. Am I hearing you right?" Feel free to ask God questions too.
- Now it is appropriate to pray, "not what I want, but what you want", if you are willing to surrender what you want to what God wants.
- Conclude by giving thanks to God for any insights you have gained. Ask him for help in bringing your desires in agreement with his.

8. What did you learn as you tried this? Did the situation become more clear? Were you better able to hear God's will?

Pray:

Some people refer to the prayer Jesus makes here as “the prayer that is always answered.” When they say that, they are referring to the idea that God will always answer the prayer that His will be done. While this is true, I think it’s also misleading. God will find a way to accomplish his will, no matter what we do, or fail to do. However, God has also clearly given human beings some responsibility, and privilege, to be part of his plans. Therefore, “not what I want, but what you want” is answered more easily when humans willingly surrender to God’s plans.

The reality is that Jesus made a choice. He looked at a difficult situation, and over the course of this prayer he choose to follow God’s will over his own will. Moment by moment, day by day, we are all called to make the same choice. Will we follow God’s will or our own will?

Take time now to write out your own short prayer stating your desire to follow God’s will - Your own prayer of surrender. Make it short enough that you can easily remember it, and use it to help you in your daily choices.

Write your Prayer here:

Spend some time praying this prayer. Ask God to help you remember this prayer, and affirm it again in the challenges of your daily life.

12. Are you willing to share your prayer with the group?

13. What did you find meaningful to you as you wrote your own words to express your desire to surrender to God?