

“Every believer wants to know how to fully connect with Jesus. In *Synced*, Jennifer demonstrates how the power of the Holy Spirit is accessed through a praying life and radical obedience is the result of a life in sync to the purposes and cause of Christ. If you want to know how to deepen your walk with Jesus, this book will be sure to take you there. I highly recommend it.”

—NANCY MCGUIRK, author of *To Live Is Christ*

“In *Synced*, Jennifer skillfully explains the desire, the determination, and the discipline we need to live in alignment with our God-given purpose. The message is profound yet practical.”

—DEBORAH SMITH PEGUES, best-selling author of *30 Days to Taming Your Tongue*

“As I read Jennifer Kennedy Dean’s new book, *Synced*, I thought, *Oh, that we could live in the harmony and communion with the Lord that she describes so skillfully*. And what amazing things God can do through us, His beloved children, as we are ‘synced’ to Jesus. Life would never be the same. Inspiring, clear, and compelling. Jennifer’s book is a must read for those who want to grow in grace and prayer.”

—CHERI FULLER, speaker and author of *Dangerous Prayer*, *The One Year Praying the Promises of God*, and *What A Girl Needs From Her Mom*

“Jennifer Kennedy Dean has crafted a much-needed book about a vital topic: what it means to live heart-to-heart with God through prayer. Jennifer has a gift for helping readers draw closer to Jesus, and nothing could matter more. This book can change your life! When we learn to live with God in the moment, He welcomes us into fresh discoveries of His presence, power, and love. The adventure awaits! You won’t want to miss the mercies that only happen when we pray.”

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SYNCED

Living Connected to the Heart of Jesus



New Hope® Publishers
PO Box 12065
Birmingham, AL 35202-2065
NewHopePublishers.com
New Hope Publishers is a division of WMU®.

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Dean, Jennifer Kennedy.

Synced : living connected to the heart of Jesus / Jennifer Kennedy Dean.

pages cm

ISBN 978-1-59669-466-8 (sc)

1. Lord's prayer--Criticism, interpretation, etc. 2. Spiritual life--Christianity. I. Title.

BV230.D355 2016

226.9'606--dc23

2015034199

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ISBN-10: 1-59669-466-1

ISBN-13: 978-1-59669-466-8

N164106 • 0316 • 3M1

DEDICATION

As always, to my sons and daughters-in-law:

Brantley and Caroline

Kennedy and Sara

Stinson and Stephanie

PHILIPPIANS 1:9–11

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Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.

—MATTHEW 6:9–13



CHAPTER 1

LIVING SYNCED

The Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does.

—JOHN 5:19–20



The secret to Jesus' life of power lies in this: His heart was perfectly synced to the Father's. He had neither action nor interest that was separate from the Father's. The heart of the Son beat in unison with the heart of the Father. Though they were one in nature, this unity of interest was born of a conscious willingness on Jesus' part to live fully yielded and in unbroken obedience. Jesus *decided* to submit to the Father's will. He made a *choice* to surrender. "Not my will, but yours be done" (Luke 22:42). "For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me" (John 6:38).

Though Jesus had His own desires arising from His humanity, when those desires conflicted with the Father's, He always chose the Father's will. Jesus had no sinful desires because sin never had a place

in His heart, but He had natural desires. In His manhood, He desired, for example, not to go to the Cross. Along the way, He had natural desires that were not sinful but at times had to be subjugated to the Father's will. On purpose and with resolve. When His natural desires conflicted with the Father's will, He had to *choose* the Father's will.

Every time He encountered a situation in which His human will and the Father's divine will differed, He bowed to the Father's desires. In Philippians 2:8, Paul writes that Jesus "humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!" He went from being equal with the Father to being humbly obedient to the Father. He was obedient in everything, even to the point of dying on the Cross. The Book of Hebrews further says that He "learned obedience" (Hebrews 5:8). I addressed this in depth in *Power in the Blood of Christ*. Here is a synopsis.

He was never disobedient, but He continually progressed to deeper levels of obedience as deeper levels were required. He progressed to the point where He could be "obedient to death—even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:8). The Father did not require the same level of obedience from 12-year-old Jesus as He did from 20-year-old Jesus. Nor did He require the same level of obedience from 20-year-old Jesus as He did from 33-year-old Jesus. God trained His Son step-by-step. He trained Him in deeper levels of obedience.

In living synced to the Father's heart, Jesus chose the Father's will over and over. Andrew Murray, in *Holiest of All*, explains this:

As the Son of God, come from heaven, one would say that there could be no thought of His learning obedience. But so real was His emptying Himself of His life in glory, and so complete was His entrance into all the conditions and likeness of our nature, that He did indeed need to learn obedience. This is of the very essence of the life of a reasonable creature, of man—that the life and the will he has received from God cannot be developed without the exercise of a self-determining power and without the voluntary giving up to God in all that He asks, even where it appears to be a sacrifice. The creature can only attain his perfection under a law of growth, of trial, and of development, in the overcoming of what is contrary to God’s will and the assimilating of what that will reveals.

Living synced, then, starts with an unreserved commitment to full and undiluted obedience.

LIVING IN THE FLOW

We see the aspect of obedience that entails a deliberate choice of God’s will over Jesus’ human will when the two differed. But there is another aspect to obedience: the deliberate doing of the Father’s desires. Accomplishing the Father’s goals. Aligning with the Father’s purposes. Also in Hebrews we read a quotation from the Psalms attributed to the Messiah: “Then I said, ‘Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll—I have come to do your will, my God’” (Hebrews 10:7). He did what the Father showed Him to do. So, a combination of

relinquishing desires when necessary, and embracing the aspirations of the Father to carry out His agenda, defined Jesus' complete obedience. His adherence to the Father's will and full surrender to His desires enabled Jesus to live synced with the Father's heart.

To live synced, Jesus had to have an intuition—an immediate knowing—of what the Father was doing. He didn't have to stop every so often to bow His head and close His eyes and ask the Father. He just walked perpetually in the power and provision of God. "For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does" (John 5:20). Throughout this book, we will see what that looks like—this living in the flow.

The picture His intuitive and persistent obedience paints is of two so perfectly synchronized that they are one. Their movements correlate precisely. Their thoughts are integrated so that they are in tandem. Their hearts beat simultaneously.

Think synchronized swimmers. Graceful, original movements. Incredibly difficult complex choreography. Every move executed so that the myriad team members seem to be one. Almost mirror images. The beauty of the performance is in the flawless synchronization. Their seamless execution looks easy and natural.

In reality, the stunning synchronization is far from natural or easy. It is unnatural. It is contrary to what comes naturally. Their beautiful synchronicity is the result of hours and hours of work and practice, overcoming the innate inclination to act independently. No room for improvisation.

The hours of training—as much as eight to ten hours a day six days a week—is not necessary for only learning the moves. That likely comes more easily. The hours are for learning to make each move in

sync with someone else. This requires far more than skill or ability. It demands that a swimmer practices the moves with her eyes glued to someone else. Moves are measured and timed so that the exact same move is being performed in the exact same way at the exact same time. The most challenging training involved is the training of the mind, essentially syncing the thoughts of several individuals until the several have become as one. The training yields a performance of many swimmers so in tandem that it seems to be natural, belying the hours of deliberate concentration and training to be in sync.

LIVING SYNCED

Even for Jesus, syncing His heart to the Father's required deliberate intention and decision. Jesus was one in nature with the Father from the beginning but was a separate being. He chose submission as the very tenor of His life but chose to obey in the moment as the moment arose.

He kept His eyes glued to the Father. I'm captured by the way Jesus uses the language of seeing to indicate how He knew His Father's will. He can only do what He *sees* His Father doing, and the Father *shows* Him everything He is doing. To live synced, Jesus never let His gaze wander. He kept the eyes of His heart locked on the Father.

As He walked out His days in step with the Father, His perfectly choreographed obedience seemed to come effortlessly. He seemed to know instinctively what the Father was doing at any given juncture. Doing the Father's will appeared to be the natural cadence of His life.

Like the synchronized swimmers, what came effortlessly at the appointed time flowed from what preceded it. The hours spent syncing His heart to the Father's in prayer were the explanation for His flowing, fluent rhythms of obedience, in step with the Father.

Prayer marked Jesus' life. Long, extended times of prayer. Spontaneous eruptions of prayer. Prayer in public, and alone with His disciples. Certainly, Jesus, who only did and spoke what the Father showed Him, did not use prayer to argue, beg, or try to change God's mind. Then why did Jesus pray? Why was prayer such a hallmark of His life that His disciples asked Him to teach them to pray like He prayed? What was He doing when He rose up early to pray or spent all night in prayer?

We might get a hint from His time in Gethsemane, where some of His words are recorded, and so we get a glimpse into the tone of His interchange with the Father. We see Him synchronizing His heart with the Father's heart.

I think it works like this: I have many mobile electronic devices that I use to accomplish my daily tasks, entertain myself, or stay in touch with others. I do most of my work on my main desktop computer, but then I need to transfer the work I've done, the information I've added, or the files I've edited from my main computer to my mobile devices. How do I accomplish that? How do I get what is on the hard drive of my computer downloaded onto my mobile devices? All those new files I created, or tweaks to existing files, are stored in the cloud. When I open one of my mobile devices, a program is activated that automatically syncs all the changes, updates, and new files. What is on my computer is reproduced on my mobile device.

In His all-night prayer in Gethsemane, we see Jesus linking His heart to the Father's. Let me summarize the content of His recorded prayer in some new words. "Father, download Your will into my heart so that it overwrites any other desire. Download courageous faith that deletes fear. Synchronize My heart's desire to Yours."

What came from that heart-to-heart transaction? Observe the Jesus who emerges from His hours of agony. Observe a Jesus who is courageous, deliberate, and marching out to meet His enemy rather than waiting to be taken. Handing Himself over to the purposes of the Father without reservation. "The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!" (Mark 14:41-42).

In response to His disciples' request to teach them to pray, He taught them the topics He addressed in prayer and the heart of those topics in a typically rabbinical style prayer we call the Model Prayer. If we move on from what the words mean and look at the effect those words produced in His life and ministry, we will see what a praying life looks like. We will see what it means to live synced. We will see how the prayers He prayed became the life He lived.

PATTERNED AFTER THE PROTOTYPE

*If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love,
just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in
his love.*

—JOHN 15:10

One of Jesus' roles was to be the prototype of a new creation—a new kind of human being. He lived out in real time what a man synced to the Father's heart looked like. He told us the secrets of the synchronized life. He promised that the same secrets that kept Him living synced with the Father would keep us living synced with Him. He invites us to follow Him—a call that requires that we keep our eyes glued to Him, a call that speaks of being on the move, a call that says that the destination is the journey. Living synced.

JESUS' RELATIONSHIP TO THE FATHER	OUR RELATIONSHIP TO JESUS
"The Son can do nothing by himself" (John 5:19).	"Apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).
The Father . . . shows him all he does" (John 5:20).	"I . . . will . . . show myself to them" (John 14:21).
"I am in the Father, and . . . the Father is in me" (John 14:10).	"If you remain in me and I in you" (John 15:5).
"The Father may be glorified in the Son" (John 14:13).	"Glory has come to me through them" (John 17:10).
"Just as the Father knows me and I know the Father" (John 10:15).	"I know my sheep and my sheep know me" (John 10:14).

Embedded in the prayer outline Jesus offered His disciples is the blueprint for how Jesus kept His life synced. The key lies not so much in the words themselves but in the way His articulated prayer was fleshed out in His life and activity, in the way His prayer life became His praying life.

LIVE A PRAYING LIFE

Jesus lived a praying life. Prayer was not an activity with set boundaries and assigned wording but a way of walking in the power and provision of the Father every minute of every day.

I have been learning about, teaching about, and writing about a praying life for several decades now. It is the grid through which I have come to view life. It has been so transformative for me that I have spent all my adult life sharing the concept with others. I still remember when the phrase came to me and recalibrated everything in my understanding. Not “have a prayer life” but “live a praying life.”

Jesus knows what makes prayer work, and He is perfectly willing to teach us the secret. In my own life, as I replaced the thought of saying prayers—sandwiching words between “dear God” and “amen”—with the awareness of being in the flow of His power and provision, I expanded my definition of prayer. Now it includes the continual interaction between the material and the spiritual realm—sometimes articulated, but often simply an inarticulate flow between His heart and mine.

A praying life, then, is flowing continually. Prayer is an ongoing pursuit. Rather than start, stop, pick up where you left off, it just moves from one level to another in your multitasking mind. Yet this praying life is undergirded and nourished by daily times of concentrated prayer.

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.

—MARK 1:35

At daybreak, Jesus went out to a solitary place.

—LUKE 4:42

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished . . .

—LUKE 11:1

One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God.

—LUKE 6:12

After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone.

—MATTHEW 14:23

THE PRAYER TEACHER

A praying life is a life lived on earth in the power of heaven.

The earthly life of Jesus demonstrates this paradox. The Son of Man lived every earthly moment in the power from on high. He lived a praying life. In and through Jesus, heaven invaded earth. His obedient praying life was the conduit through which heaven's power changed earth's circumstances. He lived and moved and had His being (Acts 17:28) in the atmosphere of the spiritual realm, though He walked out His life as a man tethered to earth just like we are. From the heavenly realms, He drew His energy and power, accessed wisdom and insight, secured peace and joy. He lived out of heaven's

resources for the daily demands of earth's circumstances. He lived in the flow of God's power and provision.

He alone can teach us to pray, and He alone can reproduce His praying life in us. His praying life, indwelling us and flowing through us like the vine's life flows through the branch, is the source of our praying lives.

SYNCED TO THE SPIRIT

Paul writes; "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25). The phrase *keep in step* makes me think of a march or dance. Where my foot lands is determined by where another's foot has landed. Eugene Peterson interprets Galatians 5:25 like this in *The Message*:

Since this is the kind of life we have chosen, the life of the Spirit, let us make sure that we do not just hold it as an idea in our heads or a sentiment in our hearts, but work out its implications in every detail of our lives.

Keep in step with the Spirit, who is the life of Jesus indwelling you in present-tense power, imparting His very energy and impulses to each step we take. Does it sound exciting? Or impossible?

God does not issue a command for which He does not supply power. If He commands us to keep in step with the Spirit, then we can read that as His promise that He will empower us to do so. He does not intend that our Christian walk should be a struggle or a

burden. Instead, He offers rest for our souls. Living in step with Him means living at rest.

For years I have been describing this walk as a praying life. To me, it means a dimension of living where your daily, minute-by-minute experience is walking in the flow of God's provision. You are met at every step with the progressive unfolding of His tailor-made plan for your life (Ephesians 2:10). You cease your struggle to find the will of God because the will of God has found you.

Every moment is pregnant with purpose. Every moment is drenched in power. Prayer is no longer the means by which you attempt to get God to perform for you and becomes, instead, the means by which you connect with His heart and mind. A praying life is a life of peace and soul rest.

Here's the secret: the praying life is Jesus. He lives in you. He is longing to express His praying life through you. He is the one and only Praying Life, and He is living in you. Andrew Murray, in his book *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, explains it this way:

We do this because we are partakers of His life—"Christ is our life"; "No longer I, but Christ liveth in me." The life in Him and in us is one and the same. His life in heaven is an *ever-praying* life. When it descends and takes possession of us . . . in us too it is the *ever-praying* life—a life that without ceasing asks and receives from God. . . . As we know that Jesus communicates His whole life in us, He also out of that prayerfulness which is His alone, breathes into us our praying.

Jesus says that when we *learn from Him*, we will find rest for our souls. He will teach us His secret for living synced, and when we learn His secret, we will find escape from our wearying anxiety, shame, worry, anger, and every other burden weighing us down.

Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.

—MATTHEW 11:28–29 (NASB, author’s emphasis)

What did those who observed Him day-by-day, minute-by-minute, recognize as the key to His joy, His confidence, and His soul rest?

“One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray’” (Luke 11:1). The implied end of that request is “like you pray.” His answer to how He prays is what we call the Model Prayer.

His life of power and confidence had its roots in His life of prayer. In *Synced*, we will explore the Model Prayer from this vantage point:

- First, what did each petition mean to Jesus? He claimed these to be the topics He prayed, by which He synced His heart with the Father’s.
- Second, how can we see that petition working itself out in Jesus’ daily life? How did God’s “yes” to that particular petition take on flesh? The Gospel accounts of Jesus’ earthly life show us that Jesus

found Himself in the right place at the right time without struggling and agonizing.

I will include real-life stories of people living connected to the heart of Jesus, finding themselves in the right place at the right time.

I'm not attempting to write an exegesis of the Model Prayer but, rather, to use the petitions of the prayer as the anchor points for the way Jesus lived His life in step with the Father, and how we can live our lives in step with the Spirit.

The first breakthrough understanding about prayer is that there is no recipe to follow or “ten easy steps” to power in prayer. Power praying does not require that you master a skill but that you pursue a present-tense relationship with the living and indwelling Jesus.

“Lord, teach me to pray” is not a cry for better words to say or a better order to put them in. Rather it is a heart cry to learn to pray like He prays. To tap in to a flowing undercurrent of prayer that puts me smack-dab in the middle of the good works God prepared in advance for me to do (Ephesians 2:10). To align my heart with His so fully that I instinctively act in ways that fulfill His purposes (Philippians 2:13). I want Jesus to teach me to live synced to His heart.

CHAPTER 2

THE ART OF PRAYER



Jesus, during His earthly ministry, was a rabbi. *Rabbi* had a specific meaning. It meant one who was trained and educated in Scripture and whose life and livelihood was the teaching of Scripture to disciples. Jesus was recognized as a rabbi among His contemporaries. No one disputed the title when He was addressed as such. He was afforded the prerogatives of a rabbi, like teaching in the synagogue, being an honored guest in homes, being invited to banquets, and amassing crowds who traveled to hear Him teach.

He was noted as an *extraordinary* rabbi. When Rabbi Jesus taught, other rabbis and scholars—men whose whole lives consisted of studying and teaching and who listened to numerous teachers year after year—were astounded at His teaching. Astounded! Left speechless. “The Jews were amazed and asked, ‘How did this man get such learning without having been taught?’” (John 7:15). The leading scholars and opinion shapers were amazed. They were all the more amazed because He had such learning without having studied with a rabbi.

No controversy on this point. This man, formally credentialed or not, was a rabbi in the full sense of the word. “The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law” (Mark 1:22). Other experts and rabbis backed their teaching with the teaching of rabbis before them. But Rabbi Jesus, because God Himself was His rabbi, proclaimed eternal truth with power and authority. Something in His delivery, and in the very words He spoke, found a target in the hearts of His listeners and struck a chord of truth.

In an incident toward the end of Jesus’ earthly life, the religious leaders sent the temple guards to arrest Him. Now, think about this. Temple guards were accustomed to taking people into custody. They had encountered people who resisted them or tried to escape them. It’s what they do. But they returned without Jesus in tow. Here is the description of that moment:

Finally the temple guards went back to the chief priests and the Pharisees, who asked them, “Why didn’t you bring him in?” “No one ever spoke the way this man does,” the guards replied.

—JOHN 7:45–46

They didn’t say that He had outrun them or outmaneuvered them. They were held back by the very power of His person and the words He spoke with such authority. They were temple guards. They had heard many spellbinding preachers, charismatic teachers, and respected rabbis. But they had never heard the very Word of God

speaking the words of God. They had never heard anything like it. It stopped them in their tracks.

Without question, Jesus was a rabbi, recognized as such by His peers. Like all rabbis, He chose disciples. Each rabbi had a group of disciples who traveled with him, not only acquiring knowledge from the rabbi but also learning from his life. A rabbi might have a large group of disciples who accompanied him, but he had a hand-selected few from that group who were his elite. These were the ones who stayed with him day and night and who were the recipients of his innermost thoughts and ideas. The larger group of disciples might follow for a while and then return home. Their ranks changed from day to day. But those in the inner circle devoted their lives to this particular rabbi. The rabbi's goal was to reproduce himself in his disciples so that they thought what he thought but also thought *as he thought*. They reasoned the way he reasoned and came at a passage of Scripture as he did. By having front-row seats to a rabbi's life, the disciples began to reflect his character. They conformed their habits and speech to his. A disciple did more than simply hear his rabbi. He observed his rabbi.

TAKE MY YOKE, AND LEARN FROM ME

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

—MATTHEW 11:28–30

In the rabbinical system, there were different schools of rabbinical thought, and these schools, or ways of approaching interpretation of the Torah, were called “yokes.” To become a disciple of one rabbi or another was to take that particular rabbi’s yoke “upon your neck.” Rabbis debated one another, and their disciples debated the disciples of other rabbis. They wore different “yokes.”

When Jesus’ contemporaries heard Him invite them to take His yoke upon them, there was no confusion about what He meant. “Take my yoke upon you and learn *from* me” (v. 29, author’s emphasis) He said. A disciple did not learn *about* his rabbi. He learned *from* his rabbi. A disciple was not a casual learner; rather, he was one who left everything else in order to follow his rabbi day and night.

A rabbi tried to teach his disciples everything he knew. He wanted to pour into his disciples all of his knowledge and wisdom. Jesus said to His disciples, “Everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you” (John 15:15). Everything! Do you see the heart of a rabbi? When a disciple was fully taught, he would be like his rabbi or teacher. Jesus put it this way: “The student [disciple] is not above the teacher [Jesus would likely have used the word *rabbi* as that is His role with His disciples], but everyone who is fully trained [disciple] will be like their teacher [rabbi]” (Luke 6:40, author’s words added). Again, a rabbi’s intention was to teach his disciples everything he knew and reproduce himself in his disciples. Do you see it here?

You call me “Teacher” and “Lord,” and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet.

I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

—JOHN 13:13–15

The disciple should do and become everything his rabbi taught him and modeled for him.

It was customary for a rabbi to teach his disciples to pray. It was expected. It was part of the curriculum. They had many formulaic prayers that were said in certain settings at certain times of day, but each rabbi would teach a more personal form of the standard prayers to his disciples. Notice how Jesus' disciples included in their request that He teach them to pray, "Just as John taught his disciples" (Luke 11:1). It was a rabbi's job to teach his disciples to pray like he prayed. They taught index prayers, or bullet point prayers, exactly like the form of Jesus' Model Prayer. These rabbi-taught prayers got to the heart of what the rabbi believed significant, and they encapsulated the topics he felt to be essential. How a rabbi taught his disciples to pray said much about the heart of the rabbi.

Knowing that, it catches my attention that Jesus' disciples had to ask Him to teach them to pray. Why wasn't that lesson number one? We have already looked at the central role that prayer played in Jesus' life, so why wasn't prayer the primary lesson? Why wasn't prayer the first thing He poured into them?

Could it be that He wanted them to be hungry to know how to pray? He wanted them to have seen the effect of prayer and to have observed prayer's role in His life and ministry so that when they asked Him to teach them to pray, they were not asking just for the sake of being informed or increasing their knowledge or advancing

their standing as disciples. He wanted to teach them to pray when the desire to pray like their rabbi had grown in them to become a thirst that had to be quenched. He wanted them to have developed an insatiable appetite for prayer.

By being with Him long enough and through many and varied situations, they had opportunity to observe a direct correlation between prayer and power, a direct link from the time spent alone with the Father to the unflappable peace that carried Him, the nexus of prayer and the joy that was the hallmark of His life (see John 15:11).

By the time they asked Him specifically to teach them to pray, they were primed exactly as Jesus wanted them to be. They couldn't wait any longer. They couldn't be patient until their rabbi got around to teaching them to pray. It became a burning desire that could not be held in. It was more than wanting to know how to say good prayers. They wanted to know how to live with prayer as the fulcrum of their lives. It was the kind of living that flowed from praying that they longed to experience. Like their rabbi.

TEACHING PRAYER

Jesus gave His disciples instruction in praying. The essential portion of the instruction was how He lived, not what He said. But He gave them words in which to express the aspect of prayer that is articulated. These were not words that have to be repeated verbatim but, rather, a guide, model, or outline. Likely, Jesus would have expanded on each of the topics in His index prayer during other times of in-depth teaching. Rabbis taught their disciples in ways that made it easier for them to memorize because memorization is how they

learned. They didn't have textbooks or writing utensils with which to take notes. They had to memorize. So, the form of index prayer was a typical way to teach the main points.

Keeping in mind that Jesus and His disciples spent 24 hours a day together, we know we don't have a record of every word Jesus said to them. You can imagine that they talked many hours about prayer and that they prayed together with Jesus and each other. We have only a few recorded prayers of Jesus. We have the two versions of His Model Prayer from two different settings. Matthew's version was in the context of Jesus' inaugural sermon that we often refer to as the Sermon on the Mount and was part of a teaching on how the kingdom of God operates. It was addressed to the crowds. Luke's version is Jesus' response to His disciples' plea to teach them to pray like He, their rabbi, prays. It is addressed to His disciples in an intimate setting. We have Jesus' prayer recorded in John 17, His prayer as He contemplated the change that was about to occur in His ministry. He was about to leave the physical presence of His beloved disciples and transition to being with them through His indwelling presence communicated by His Spirit. We also have some of His prayer in Gethsemane as He faced His execution. Other than those, we have records of short, spontaneous prayers that give great insight into the content of His prayers, as they are the overflow of His heart. Each of these recorded prayers teach us much about prayer, and we see His prayers lived out as He walked the earth and interacted with the flawed and ragged personalities of those He came to save.

The Jesus present-in-flesh-and-blood man during His days on earth is the very same Jesus present to us by His indwelling Spirit. In fact, Jesus told His disciples that He would be more present to

them through His Spirit than He was in the earthly body that was His temporary habitation.

He told His disciples that it was to their advantage that He “go away,” or leave their physical sight. “But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you” (John 16:7). He told them that by His indwelling Spirit, He would be with them in such a way that He would never leave them or forsake them (Hebrews 13:5). He wouldn’t leave them for one single nanosecond. He is with them always. All the time. Everywhere. *Always* (Matthew 28:20). Not for a heartbeat would He be separate from them in this new arrangement where, by His Spirit, He made His home in them. What He explained to His disciples is the truth for all His followers forever. True for you and for me.

If Jesus was willing and eager to teach His disciples to pray like He prays while He was in His earthly ministry, then He is equally eager to teach us to pray right now. In fact, He can teach us from inside better than He could teach the disciples who could hear Him with physical ears and see Him with physical eyes. The Spirit of Truth, whose job it is to teach us all things, lives in us with direct access to our minds and hearts (John 14:26; 16:13). Jesus, through His Spirit in us, will joyfully teach us to pray.

When you want to learn something, you want to learn from the best. If you can learn from the master, the one who instigated and established the discipline you want to understand, all the better. Who knows the ins and outs of any skill better than the one who first established it? You and I have the great privilege of learning from the Master Pray-er, the One who instigated prayer from the beginning

and designed it so that it works as He means for it to work. He knows the intricacies and the potential roadblocks. He established and pioneered prayer. He wants to be our Rabbi and to teach us everything He knows about prayer.

Not only does He know all about prayer, but He knows all about us. He knows every detail about each one of us. He knows how we learn and what our bent is and what it will take to teach any one of us exactly what we need to know to live the abundant life He promised. He knows what lies behind that has colored our perceptions of prayer and of Him, and He knows what lies ahead that will challenge our faith beyond its current boundaries. He is the perfect teacher. Fully versed in His subject and fully aware of His student.

He loves His subject matter. Have you ever had a teacher who just loved the material they were teaching? Did that enthusiasm infect you? Did you come to love the subject also? And then to pursue it further than you thought you might? Jesus loves prayer. When He teaches you to pray, He will be teaching you His own heart. He will communicate His own joy to you and His joy will be in you and your joy will be full (John 15:11).

My sister Julie is a teacher. I don't mean that is her job. I mean that is who she is. She loves the subject she teaches and wants her students to love it. So, to that end, she is endlessly creative in how she will present the information so that it matters to them and engages them. She has goals past seeing her students do well on tests. She wants to see them become lifelong learners. It's just in her DNA—this love of instilling knowledge. Jesus is that kind of teacher multiplied to infinity. His love for prayer will be infectious. He will creatively design modules for your learning that will engage you fully

and will be designed with just your learning style and personality and experience in mind. He'll be your private tutor while also bringing you into prayer experiences within the community of believers.

LEARNING PRAYER

You have access to the perfect Teacher in Rabbi Jesus. What will it take to be the best student—disciple—you can be so that you can learn all that He wants to impart?

First, believe. Believe Him. Believe that He is available to you and loves you and longs for you to experience all of Him that you possibly can. Let your heart listen in on a small portion of His prayer for you:

I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.

—JOHN 17:26

What He says about His disciples includes you. You are His disciple. He says that He has already made the Father known to you. The only reason you have a relationship with Christ is because He has made the Father known to you. The only reason you want to learn how to pray is because He has made the Father known to you. Remember that He said, “Everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you” (John 15:15). But, look further. He will continue to make the Father known. He will keep teaching you. He always has

more to disclose to you and it delights Him to continue showing you more and more of the Father.

What is the purpose of showing you more of the Father? In order that the very same love Jesus experiences from the Father may be reproduced in us. He prays that we will love Him the way the Father loves Him and that He Himself will be in us. The more we know the Father, the more we love the Son. The more we love the Son, the more His presence in us is made real to us. As our understanding of spiritual truth deepens and matures, so will our love for Him and our experience of His love for us. This is the very core of a praying life—the flow of love between your heart and His. He prayed for you that you would experience this reality. He wants you to know the essence of prayer, and He has asked that for you.

Can you believe this unbelievable truth? That the Lord of lords so loves you that He has taken up residence in you and yearns to impart to you what He alone knows and He alone can teach? That He has arranged your salvation so that it includes His indwelling presence and that He can teach you from the inside things that are too deep for you to learn or search out on your own? Listen to this promise: “Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know” (Jeremiah 33:3).

First, believe Him. Second, yield to Him. Let Him run the show. Trust that He knows how to accomplish in you and for you exactly what He has in mind, and that He has in mind only your good. Your advancement. Your peace.

You can only yield to one you trust. Otherwise, you have to be ready to take the reins yourself in case things go off course. You have to be watching for a wrong move. You have to be careful and

protective of your own course in case someone tries to head you in the wrong direction. Can you fully yield to Him, knowing that Jesus loves you beyond reason, with an obsessive love that hovers over you and manages even the smallest moments of your life?

First, believe. Second, yield. Third, follow. The call to prayer is not a command, but an invitation. He is calling you to a journey. He is calling you to follow Him (Mark 1:17). The call is active and risky. The great surprise in a praying life is that you find your little life swept up into the great purposes of God. Prayer is not passive or sedentary. It will catch you up in the current of His activity, and you will never be the same. Risky becomes safe when it is in response to the leading of Jesus.

Are you ready?

Are you ready to ask Jesus to teach you to pray? Are you ready to join Him in the grand expedition into all truth? Are you ready to lay aside anything He shows you that is slowing you down? Are you ready to run the race full throttle? Have you reached that place the first disciples must have reached where you can ask Him to teach you to pray like He prays because you are like a deer panting in the desert? Like a traveler in a dry and thirsty land? Nothing will satisfy except everything heaven has available. You can't think of settling for less than what He says is possible. Are you ready to live synced to His heart? Then, ask Him. "Lord, teach me to pray."