

Sun 14 Jan

When Jesus Prayed

Pt2 Before big decisions & in special situations Jn 6:8-15, Lk22:14-22

Introduction

The classic time when many people “try praying” is when they’re faced with a difficult decision or a challenging situation.

But G.O.D does not stand for God On Demand – to call on only when we want something fixed or need a decision.

The NT, especially Jesus’ prayer life, teaches us that prayer is constant communication with God about anything, at any time – that **ongoing dialogue makes difficult decisions or situations become easier.**

[We also have times and seasons of stress, ongoing uncertainty, pain & discomfort that we bring to God in prayer – next week].

Today, we’re looking at how Jesus models prayer at challenging times for us, including how he manages strong emotions in a mix of circumstances.

Share: Why or how do you pray when facing difficult situations or with big decisions?

Before important decisions

There are times when Jesus had to make decisions and manage situations, so of course, he prays.

- He is mindful of his Father when facing important choices – examples:
 - *One day soon afterward Jesus went up on a mountain to pray, and he prayed to God all night.*
– Why all night? He was about to choose *twelve of his disciples to be apostles* Lk6:12-13.
 - Before climactic last days of his mission Jn12:27-28 & Jn17:1-5 – these are moments when Jesus feels the pressure of his mission, facing its climax in Jerusalem.
Jesus says Jn12:27: *Now my soul is deeply troubled. Should I pray, ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But this is the very reason I came! Father, bring glory to your name.* [later again in Gethsemane]
In Jn17 he begins his lengthy prayer for us with *Father the hour has come. Glorify your Son so he can give glory back to you.*
 - Jesus’ concern was for God to be glorified – an important factor in some of our choices.
 - Despite the unbelief of crowds and opposition from Pharisees, Jesus pushes on into Jerusalem.
- ➔ WE come to God with important decisions because **we don’t do life on our own** – decisions are just another ongoing conversation with God, though we attach more weight to them.
 - There is no pre-determined choice that God has decreed for us (his ‘will’ for us), but we use our minds and partner with the Spirit to weigh up the variables and implications.

- There may not be any right or wrong choice, but we want to make a decision that we've entrusted to his ultimate control in our lives – and later we'll be thanking him.

Facing challenging situations with prayer

Examples from Jesus' challenges.

- Nature miracles
 - Feeding five thousand Jn6:11-15 – the first thing Jesus did was to take the loaves & give *thanks to God*, doing *the same with the fish*. Afterwards, to escape their demands, *he slipped away into the hills by himself* 15 – his regular pattern.
 - This is also recorded in Mark6:46 & Matt14:23 before Jesus walks out to his disciples across the water.
 - The significance for us is that retreating gives us a sense of calm and confidence in God's control, and we can listen for his voice.
 - Just before raising Lazarus Jn11:41-42 – again we see Jesus conscious of his Father: he *looks up to heaven and says "Father thank you for hearing me ..."*
 - We may not have Jesus' powers, but like him we talk with God because we know he hears us.

This time there was a witnessing aspect to his prayer 42: *You always hear me, but I said it out loud for the sake of these people so they will believe you sent me.*

 - We can be a witness when we ask people if we can pray for them – few will say 'no', but it does require us to be faithful.
- ➔ WE bring challenging situations to God: bad news, difficult relationships, need for a 'miracle', spiritual conversations – we pray for his comfort and assurance, and for **his ultimate control of the situation**.
 - We bring difficult situations to God for wisdom or strength (whatever we need) to manage the situation.
 - He is with us in these challenges, so we know he hears us and provides whatever we need to get through them.
 - Remember our faith is tested and challenges are also opportunities; God wants us to grow.
- Jesus also models **connecting with God when managing heavy emotional situations with others**.
 - The last supper Lk22:14ff – Jesus tells his disciples he is *very eager to eat this Passover meal with you before my suffering begins. For I tell you now that I won't eat this meal again until its meaning is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God* 15-16. He has a deep desire to eat this special meal with them.
 - When he took both the bread and cup, he *gave thanks to God* and shared it with them.
 - He then told them that one of them would betray him – amid such strong & mixed emotions, Jesus has this habit of recognising God in his situation.

- He also predicted Peter's denial Lk22:31ff and tells Peter: *Satan has asked to sift each of you like wheat. But I have pleaded in prayer for you, Simon, that your faith should not fail* – we can manage emotional conversations with prayer.
- ➔ WE can learn from Jesus as he negotiates these powerful emotions – he is always perceptive of and managing his own & other's emotions, even praying for them.
 - This is very hard, but managing our emotions, especially when other people are involved, is a pattern we learn by bringing them to God.

Wrap up

Ongoing dialogue with God makes difficult decisions and situations become easier because we're not on our own.

- WE come to God with important decisions because he has ultimate control.
 - We use our minds and partner with the Spirit to weigh up the variables and implications, to make a choice that we've entrusted to God's control of our lives.
- It's the same with challenging situations – we want his comfort and assurance, so we ask God for whatever we need to manage the situation, including emotions.
 - He hears us, he is with us, and he provides whatever we need to get through them.
 - Our faith is tested, challenges are also opportunities, and God wants us to grow.

Share: Why or how do you pray when facing difficult situations or with big decisions?

