



# # 2 Deliberate in Prayer

## Introduction:

When we prioritise prayer, we participate in God's purposes. In today's text we see that Jesus regularly drew aside to pray and lean on God, even while he was doing God's most important work. This teaches us how much we need to draw on God through prayer. If Jesus needed to, so do we.

**Text: Mark 1:32-39, 6:46, 14:32-42**

Points to discuss:

## 1. Prioritising prayer ensures that we pursue GOD and not success

Jesus was having a run of ministry success, displaying the reversal of the kingdom of darkness, as he healed people and cast out demons. However, he did not allow that to interfere with being connected to and reliant on God. He got up before his disciples and followers could interfere, and made sure that he could spend some real time talking to God alone. He knew that he needed to keep connecting to God all the way through his ministry. He did not allow the allure of success and a need to prove himself, to distract him from his number one priority – doing the will of the Father. This allowed Jesus to keep on track and focused.

In our desire to be successful and to have other people approve of, respect and affirm us, we can lose track of why we are here. It is very easy to go along with what the crowd expects, and not to keep God's will at the centre of our lives. Being aware of this temptation, and being intentional about our prayer time, will help us to pastor our hearts, and keep our priorities in check.

## 2. Prioritising prayer causes us to love people but OBEY God

We tend to feel special and valuable when people need us. The more they need us, the more special we feel, especially when they are people we esteem. (And let's be honest, we tend to get irritated with people needing us that cannot fuel our need for being a hero.)

When we are sought after for our expertise, and people listen to us and admire us, we feel incredible. Many of us then pursue being experts, so that we can continue to fuel our deep desire for respect and admiration. Growing in our skills and education is a good thing, but it is not always motivated by a heart focussed and submitted to God's will. God's will is about loving and serving others, and not our own agendas and needs. So, it is helpful to ask ourselves the difficult heart-motive questions from time to time.



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Jesus knew the people needed his healing touch, and that their issues were real. But he also knew that it was more important that he stay on course with the Father's will, and that his obedience and dependence on God was of much greater value to them, in the long run. He had to choose letting real people, with real needs, down, in order to choose what was better. One can only make that decision when God truly is your first love and the one you have chosen to obey at all costs. Choosing to prioritise God almost always comes at a direct cost to our own personal success/agenda. The question is, are we willing to choose to prioritise and obey God over our own desires and needs for success and admiration of others?

### [3. Prioritising prayer empowers us to fulfil GOD'S purposes as redeemed image-bearers of God](#)

Jesus was sent by God to do his will, and fulfil the mission. Not once did Jesus ever veer off and try and create a new plan. He was faithful to God's plan all the way along, even though he was tempted in a variety of ways to 'jump ship'. His temptations were real, and as a human being, he would have experienced the desire to choose what was easier, or would make him feel good. But knowing this, he made the right decision, time and time again, to draw away from the people, and to connect with God in prayer, where he would be reminded of his purpose, and draw strength. This models for us the way we are designed. We were not designed to do our own thing. We were designed to be in fellowship with God, and to find our strength for each day from him. If Jesus needed to do this, to continue the work God had sent him to do, then it is obvious that we do too. Jesus sets a wonderful pattern of what it looks like for us, as God's image bearers, to be continually dependent on God.

### Discussion Questions:

1. Why did Jesus get up early and go to a desolate place to pray?
2. What can we learn about his motives for doing this?
3. Why is success often such a barrier to our time spent with God and what does this story teach us about that?
4. What particular area of your life are you pursuing success at all costs, and how has it impacted your time with God?
5. Why is it difficult to choose to obey God rather than to always feed the needs of others who vie for our attention?
6. ♥ Personal Reflection: When last did it cost you in respect or admiration, or in having to disappoint someone, because you chose to obey/prioritise Christ? What would you have gained had you chosen your way over God's?
7. Why is it always worth it to choose God over our own needs, even when it hurts?
8. If Jesus needed to continually depend on God in prayer, why do we sometimes think we don't need to?
9. Why does the Father want us to draw near to him, and what will we gain from choosing to prioritise prayer in this way?

