

WHY SOMETIMES WE NEED TO WITHDRAW AND PRAY

Text: Matthew 14:22-23

The Bible records all different kinds of praying. Public praying like Jesus did at the tomb of Lazarus before the crowd that had formed that day. Short prayers like “Father forgive them for they know not what they do”. The blessing of food prayers that the Lord would pray before serving people bread. There are all manners of praying we do like sitting on the porch in the morning. Praying in the car on the way to work. Giving thanks for our food and asking God to bless it. Short prayers throughout the day for various reasons like someone asking us to pray for their needs. All of these are good and valid but the Lord Jesus repeatedly throughout the gospel books had a habit of withdrawing himself, finding a place to be alone and praying to the Father. Those were prayers not meant to be heard by anyone and they weren’t short. Sometimes he’d be gone all night. Why? Because he enjoyed fellowship with the Father, he poured out his heart, he received encouragement and direction, and it prepared him to do his Father’s will.

Jesus Christ is our ultimate example in all things. Even though he was and is the Son of God, he lived life on earth as a Spirit-filled and Spirit-led man to teach us how to navigate life. Some years ago, it became popular to wear wristbands that had the letters “WWJD” on them which stood for “What would Jesus do”. Well, there’s a lot that Jesus did that we can’t do but we can definitely do this. There are times when we need to withdraw like Christ did and find us a place where we can be completely alone with God. A place where we can’t be disturbed. A place away from the world, crowds, friends, and even family. Jesus not only left the multitudes behind, but he also left his disciples. Not only did he practice it, he preached it to others and it’s recorded for our benefit:

Matthew 6:5-6 And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites *are*: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

The promise is secret prayer yields public rewards. When we withdraw to pray in secret, to be alone with the Father, it shows that we value prayer enough to forsake everything else to do it. It shows the Father that we intend to give Him our full attention. It means we intend to take the time to really pray, open up and pour out our hearts and obtain help. I want to share a few examples of Christ withdrawing to pray and the purpose of it.

- **To know God's will - Luke 6:12-13** And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called *unto him* his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles;
- **To prepare for power - Luke 5:16-17** And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed. And it came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judaea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was *present* to heal them.
- **To refill and refuel - Mark 1:32-38** And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him. And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed. And Simon and they that were with him followed after him. And when they had found him, they said unto him, All *men* seek for thee. And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth.
- **To get strength and encouragement - Luke 22:39-43** And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him. And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation. And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.