

Praying Like Jesus  
ReCatechism I  
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Good evening reverent father, brothers and sisters. I like to thank and glorify God for giving us this opportunity to study His word and help us to understand His will and expectations from us.

I would also like to thank each and every one for attending tonight's Bible Study.

As you already know, our theme this year is "**Imitating Christ**".

In times that the values of life are changing on a daily basis, when our role models are great athletes, actors, entertainers, and so on, when we hear that we "**should enjoy life because probably there is no God**", one might be wondering why we should imitate Christ. After all, He lived 2,000 years ago. Shouldn't we be focusing on today? Shouldn't we be looking how much man has accomplished in science and technology instead of looking back what happened 2,000 years ago?

Questions like this might cross the mind of unbelievers but not Christians. Why? Because Christians believe that Christ did not live 2,000 years ago, but, as God, he was, is, and will be forever. He made it clear when He said to the Judeans:

**"Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."** (John 8:58). He also said:

**Be Holy as I am Holy (1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1:16)** and Paul is telling us:

**Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1).**

For Christians therefore, imitating Christ is no longer a choice, but a command, a duty.

Impossible, you'll say. Christ is God and Paul was His disciple. I am just an ordinary man. How can I be like Christ or even Paul for that matter?

Good question, however, when it comes to secular life we are not afraid to try what sometimes seems to be impossible.

For instance, if you told some one 150 years ago that man will fly like birds, if you told them that we will walk on the moon, they would laugh at you and probably commit you to an institution. Yet, both of the above happened, and today we are looking forward to go to Mars.

If we have managed to accomplish so much in our secular lives, why couldn't we at least try to do the same in the spiritual? All we have to do is try and God will do the rest.

One look around the church's walls and we will see hundreds of ordinary people like you and me. If we check the church's history, we will find millions of people that did just that. Imitated Christ. So, if these ordinary people did it, why couldn't I do it?

The last couple of studies we talked about imitating Christ as in “**Thinking like Christ**” and “**Offering like Christ**”

Tonight we will look in ways of how to imitate Christ as in “**Praying like Christ**”.

Six things come to mind:

What is prayer?

Why should we pray?

Where should we pray?

How should we pray?

When should we pray? And last but not least,

Are all prayers answered?

We will find all these answers in the life of Christ while He lived amongst us here on earth.

### **What is prayer?**

According to Saint John Chrysostom, prayer is a dialog with God. It is a communication between men and the “King of Kings and Lord of Lords”  
**Revelation 21:16**

That been said, we go to the second question.

### **Why should we pray?**

Prayer is a fulfillment of our inner being. If we look back in history we will find out that every one had and has a need to communicate with the one they believe is god.

**Plutarch**, an ancient Greek philosopher who lived around 100 BC, said that, during his time, “**it would be possible for a man traveling through the world to find cities without walls, men uneducated and ungoverned, cruel and uncivilized, but nowhere would some one find a city or a village without a religious place of worship, without a sanctuary, without some type of god or gods.**”

Praying therefore is nothing new. It goes back to the beginning of humanity. Regardless whether they prayed to the real God, or, the one they believed was God, they needed to **glorify him**, to **request protection**, to **appease him**, if they thought they did something wrong and he was upset with them, to **request help** for some one they cared about, and so on. Those are some of the reasons we too pray today.

Prayer played a major role in Christ's life. The New Testament is full of verses showing Christ praying. (Actually they're over 500 verses referring to prayer but I am told to keep this study down to five hours so, we will not go through all of them).

Here are some:

**Luke 3:21. When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened.**

**Luke 6:12. One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God.**

**Luke 9:18. Once when Jesus was praying in private and His disciples were with Him, He asked them, "Who do the crowds say I am?"**

**John 18:1. When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley.**

Christ is the only man ever lived that committed no sin. If He had a need to pray to the Father, shouldn't I have the same need?

Now the question is:

**Where should we pray?**

Again there are a lot of verses that show us where Jesus prayed.

**Matthew 14:23 ...and when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray.**

**Luke 9:28 Now it came to pass, about eight days after these sayings, that He took Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain to pray.**

In these cases, Jesus went up in the mountain away from every one else, and there he prayed to God the Father. Being alone with the Father and praying was something that Jesus did a lot.

Jesus also gave us some instruction of how we should pray.

**Matthew 6:6 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you openly.**

Why would I lock myself in a room and pray, you say? For one, not to be distracted from the noise and focus to God. Also, in Jesus time, the Pharisees used to pray out in the open, sometimes at the corner of the streets, so people can see them.

**Matthew 6:5. "And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. What reward? They wanted to be seeing by men. So they got what they wanted. People noticed them praying. God however doesn't hear these kinds of prayers.**

When we talk to God He wants all of our attention. If you are talking to the Prime Minister, do you care what the rest of the world is doing at that time, or, do

you have all your attention to the Prime Minister? Shouldn't we be treating God with the same respect?

A parenthesis here: On Jesus days on earth, people wanted to show off by praying out loud and in places where every one can see them. Today, we have the exact opposite. We are shy to pray in open places, restaurants, work, and some one else's house, because we are afraid what they will think of us. I believe if Christ were living on earth today, he would remind us of what He said:

**Luke 9:26 For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels.**

While on the subject of where to pray, Christ also said the Samaritan woman:

**John 4:24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth,**" meaning, you cannot confine God in a certain place like the temple of Solomon as the Judeans did, or the mountain Garazin s the Samaritans did, because he is Spirit and as Spirit, He is everywhere, therefore, you can pray anywhere, at home, at work, in your car, at the buss stop.

So, to answer the question where can we pray? We can pray anywhere, any time, as long as we are sincere and we don't do it to show off. You can be in a crowd and yet be alone, and you can be alone and feel that God is there with you.

Needless to say, we can pray in the church amongst brothers and sisters in Christ, a place that is dedicated for God's worship.

The next question is **How we should pray**. In other wards, should I be on my knees, should I raise my hands to heaven, should I bow down, lay in bed, what is the best way to pray?

You might be surprise but the correct answer is, all of the above. There will be times that you feel the weight of the sin and you need to go down on your knees like the tax collector in the parable for the Pharisee and the tax collector. Luke is telling us:

**"he was beating his breast, saying "God, be merciful to me a sinner. Luke 18:13.**

There will be other times that you raise your hands to heaven and glorify God as in **Psalm 141:2 Let my prayer rise as incense before you; the lifting up of my hands as an evening sacrifice**, or, you can be laying in bed in pain and asking God to help you out.

How did Jesus pray? When he resurrected Lazarus wee read:

**John 11:41 Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was lying. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me.**

**Matthew 26:39 He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."**

It is not the position of our body that God is interested in, but the state of our mind.

On the same subject how to pray, we need to clarify what should we ask in our prayers.

On that point Jesus has also given us a few examples:

**Matthew 6:7** **And when you pray do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.**

**Matthew 6:31-33** **“Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ (Usually these are the things we ask for, don’t we?). For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.**

Should I pray for my family, my friends, my neighbours? Yes, Christ says, but don’t stop there.

**Matthew 5:44... pray for those who persecute you.**

Even for my enemies? Yes Christ says, even for your enemies, if you really want to imitate me, you pray for them too. Remember my prayer on the Cross-?

**Father, forgive them because they don’t know what they do. Luke 23:34**

On the same subject here is how we should **not** pray.

You probably have heard people saying call us with your prayers request and they usually will give you a number to call.

I heard a story the other day for some one that did just that and he received a coffee mug with a note:

**Fill it up with coffee or juice and drink it just before you go to bed. Then place the empty mug under your pillow and next day send us twenty dollars to the self-address envelope. God will answer your prayer.**

God will not answer your prayer because you place the mug under your pillow or because you sent twenty dollars. Yes we should pray for one another but not get paid for it. Christ said:

**Matthew 10:8.... Freely you have received, freely give.**

Prayer is not something to take advantage of people. In Christ days, the Pharisees did exactly that and Christ rebuked them saying:

**Matthew 23:14** **Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows’ houses, and for pretence make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation.**

So, how we should pray? I am glad you asked. That is exactly what the disciples wanted to know and they asked Christ.

**Luke 11:1. “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples”** and Christ did: **Matthew 6:9-13 in this manner, therefore, pray:**

<b>Our</b>	<b>Father</b>	<b>who</b>	<b>art</b>	<b>in</b>	<b>heaven,</b>
<b>Hallowed</b>		<b>be</b>	<b>Your</b>		<b>name.</b>
<b>Your</b>		<b>kingdom</b>			<b>come.</b>
<b>Your</b>		<b>will</b>	<b>be</b>		<b>done</b>

on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from the evil one.  
**For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.**

The first thing we need to do is glorify God, praise Him. That will put us in the right state of mind. I, mister nobody, is talking to God almighty, to the creator of the universe. And yet, this almighty God is my Father. I should therefore, respect Him for who He is but also, remember that as a Father, He wants to help me. He is so big, that the heaven of heavens is not big enough to contain Him and yet, small enough, that He can live in my heart, if I let Him.

Then I need to surrender myself to His will. Request that His will be done, not mine. Exactly as it is happening in heaven. No questions asked.

Then request only what is good and beneficial to my soul and body, and not to be greedy either.

**Proverbs 30:8-10. Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the LORD?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God.**

The next step is to have a personal agreement. Since I am weak and some times I sin even though I don't want to, I will ask Him to forgive my trespasses, but, here comes my commitment. I promise to do the same. In fact I request that he will forgive me on the same measure as I forgive others.

Last but not least, because every now and then I let my guard down when I shouldn't, I ask Him to protect me from the evil one.

And why you say He will do all these?

Because He is the almighty, **His** is the heavenly kingdom and **He** has the power to do all these and save me through His grace.

**Does God really answer our prayers?**

The answer is definitely YES.

**Matthew 11:24. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.**

All things, you say? I have been praying to win the 649 for years now and nothing happens.

As long as my request will not work against my spiritual needs, or, I am not greedy, God will give me what I asked for.

**James 4:3 you ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend *it* on your pleasures.**

He answers our prayers in one of three ways. **Yes, No, or, wait.** It is up to me to accept either one, and continue with my life. Paul asked Christ three times to remove the thorn from his flesh and he was told:

**“My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” (2 Corinthians 12:9).**

Abraham waited twenty-five years for God’s promise to have a son.

Monica, the mother of Saint Augustine, prayed for her son for thirty-five years to change his life style and God did answer. He is a Saint of our church today.

In conclusion, imitating Christ in my prayers is something that, as a Christian, I owe to myself to do. It will keep me connected with Him. It will help me to understand who I am and where I am going. It will help me to go through life the way He wants me to live it and inherit eternal life.

Yes, imitating Chris will keep me spiritual alive and close to Him my God and my Saviour.

Amen.