

# Jesus, *the* Holy Spirit, and Prayer



## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week’s Study:** *Luke 2:25–32, John 16:5–7, Luke 23:46, Luke 11:1–4, Matt. 7:21–23, Luke 11:9–13.*

**Memory Text:** “ ‘So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened’ ” (*Luke 11:9, 10, NKJV*).

Of the three synoptic Gospels, Luke speaks more often than do the others about Jesus’ relationship to the Holy Spirit. While Matthew refers to the Spirit 12 times and Mark does so 6 times, Luke has 17 references in his Gospel and 57 in the book of Acts. From the conception of Jesus into humanity (*Luke 1:35*) to the directive establishing His global mission (*Luke 24:44–49*), Luke sees an operational link between Jesus and the Holy Spirit. The link is basic to understanding the ministry of our Savior. Likewise, Luke shows the importance of prayer in Jesus’ life and mission. Fully divine, equal with the Father and the Spirit, Jesus in His humanity left us an example in regard to prayer.

If Jesus saw the need for prayer, how much more must we need it?

“Without unceasing prayer and diligent watching we are in danger of growing careless and of deviating from the right path. The adversary seeks continually to obstruct the way to the mercy seat, that we may not by earnest supplication and faith obtain grace and power to resist temptation.”—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 95.

\* Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, May 16.

## Jesus and the Holy Spirit

As a Gentile convert and a missionary companion of the apostle Paul, Luke viewed the entire Christological entrance into history—from Jesus’ incarnation to His ascension and to the spread of the church—as a divine wonder brought about and guided by the Holy Spirit. In Jesus’ life we see the whole Godhead at work in our redemption (*Luke 3:21, 22*); and, through his constant references to the Holy Spirit, Luke emphasizes this point.

**What** do the following texts tell us about the role of the Holy Spirit in Christ’s coming here in human flesh? *Luke 1:35, 41; 2:25–32.*

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Jesus’ mission began with several references to the Holy Spirit. According to Luke, John the Baptist predicted that although he baptized with water, the One who would follow him would baptize with the Spirit (*Luke 3:16*). At Jesus’ baptism, both the Father and the Holy Spirit affirmed the authenticity of His redemptive mission. God the Father declared from above that Christ is His beloved Son sent to redeem humankind, while the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in the form of a dove (*vss. 21, 22*). From then on Jesus was “filled with the Holy Spirit” (*Luke 4:1, NKJV*) and ready to take on the foe in the desert, as well as to begin His ministry (*vs. 14*).

The opening words of His Nazareth sermon were an application of Isaiah’s Messianic prophecy to Himself: “‘The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me’ ” (*vs. 18, NKJV*). The Spirit was His constant companion, His affirming strength, and His abiding presence among His followers when Jesus would no longer be in their midst (*John 16:5–7*). Not only that, Jesus promised that God would give the gift of the Spirit to those who ask for it (*Luke 11:13*). The Spirit that ever linked Christ to His Father and the redemptive mission is the same Spirit that would strengthen the disciples in their journey of faith. Hence, the crucial importance of the Spirit in Christian life: indeed, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is the gravest of all sins (*Luke 12:10*).

**What are concrete, practical ways we can open ourselves to the leading of the Holy Spirit? That is, how can we be careful that our choices are not in any way hardening us to His voice?**

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## The Prayer Life of Jesus

Among the many times that Jesus prayed, some are recorded only in Luke. Note the following incidents that show Jesus in prayer during great moments in His life.

**1. Jesus prayed at His baptism** (*Luke 3:21*). “A new and important era was opening before Him. He was now, upon a wider stage, entering on the conflict of His life.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 111. He dared not begin that wider stage of His public ministry—which would take Him eventually to Calvary’s cross—without prayer.

**2. Jesus prayed before choosing His 12 disciples** (*Luke 6:12, 13*). No leader chooses his followers haphazardly. But Jesus was not just selecting followers but choosing those who would understand and identify completely with His Person and His mission. “Their office was the most important to which human beings had ever been called, and was second only to that of Christ Himself.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 291.

**3. Jesus prayed for His disciples** (*Luke 9:18*). Discipleship demands absolute commitment to Jesus and an understanding of His identity. In order that the Twelve might know who He was, Jesus “was alone praying,” and then after that He challenged them with the crucial question: “ ‘Who do you say that I am?’ ” (*Luke 9:20, NKJV*).

**4. Jesus prayed before His transfiguration** (*Luke 9:28–36*) and obtained for Himself Heaven’s second endorsement that He is God’s “beloved Son.” Trials thus far, and trials to come, could not change the closest affinity between the Father and the Son. The prayer also resulted in the disciples becoming “eyewitnesses of His majesty” (*2 Pet. 1:16, NKJV*).

**5. Jesus prayed in Gethsemane** (*Luke 22:39–46*). This is perhaps the most important prayer in the history of salvation. Here we have the Savior linking heaven and earth, and by so doing He establishes three crucial principles: the primacy of God’s will and purpose; the commitment to fulfill that primacy even at the risk of blood and death; and the strength to overcome every temptation along the way toward fulfilling God’s purpose.

**6. Jesus prayed, committing His life into God’s hands** (*Luke 23:46*). In His final words on the cross, “ ‘Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit’ ” (*NKJV*), Jesus gives us the ultimate purpose of prayer. At birth or at death, before enemies or friends, while asleep or awake, prayer must keep us in permanent linkage with God.

**What do these examples from Jesus’ prayer life tell you about your own prayer life?**

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## The Model Prayer: Part 1

**Read** Luke 11:1–4. How do these verses help us to understand how prayer works?

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“Father” is Christ’s favorite way of describing God and is so recorded at least one hundred seventy times in the four Gospels. In addressing God as our Father, we acknowledge that God is a Person, capable of the most intimate relationship with humans. God is as personal, as real, as loving, and as caring as a human father. But He is the Father *in heaven*. He is different from our earthly father, for He is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, and perfectly holy.

The phrase “Father in heaven” forever reminds us that God is holy and personal and that Christianity is neither a mere philosophic idea nor a pantheistic notion of a god who is everything.

“ ‘Hallowed be Your name’ ” (Luke 11:2, NKJV). Here we have another reminder of the holiness and sacredness of God. Those who claim to follow the Lord must sanctify His name in word and deed. To claim to follow Him and yet to sin against Him is to defile that name. The words of Jesus in Matthew 7:21–23 can help us better to understand what it means to hallow God’s name.

“ ‘Your kingdom come’ ” (Luke 11:2, NKJV). The Gospels refer to the kingdom of God more than one hundred times: nearly forty in Luke, nearly fifty in Matthew, 16 in Mark, and 3 in John. It is what Jesus came to reveal and establish, both in the present reality of the kingdom of grace and in the future promise of the kingdom of glory. Without entering the first kingdom, there would be no entry into the second, and it is the Savior’s wish that His disciples should experience the first in anticipation of the second.

“ ‘Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven’ ” (Luke 11:2, NKJV). The will of God is recognized and obeyed in heaven. Jesus takes that fact and converts it into a hope that such will be the case on earth, as well. “On earth” suggests not generality but particularity. Let the will of God be done on earth, but let it begin with us, with each one of us personally.

**Do you know the Lord, or just about Him? In what ways can your prayer life draw you closer to Him?**

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## The Model Prayer: Part 2

“ ‘Give us day by day our daily bread’ ” (Luke 11:3, NKJV). The petition begins with the word *give*. Whether the word comes from the lips of a millionaire or an orphan in perpetual want, the prayer is at once an expression of dependence and acknowledgment of trust. We are all dependent on God, and the imperative plea, “Give,” forces us to recognize that God is the source of all gifts. He is the Creator. In Him we live, move, and have our being. “It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves” (Ps. 100:3, NKJV).

**God** is the Father who gives us all that we need. In light of this promise, what grand assurance can you find in Luke 11:9–13?

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“ ‘Forgive us our sins’ ” (Luke 11:4, NKJV). The prayer to forgive as “ ‘we also forgive’ ” (vs. 4, NKJV) emphasizes the fact that if we truly have accepted God’s forgiveness into our hearts, we will be ready and willing to forgive others also. Logically, it also follows that if we do not forgive others, then we have not really accepted God’s forgiveness (Matt. 6:14). “God’s forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness for sin, but reclaiming from sin. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart.”—Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 114. Therefore, as disciples of Christ, we have the joy of living within the widening circle of divine grace—receiving God’s benevolence on the one hand as well as extending His love and forgiveness to others who may have offended us.

“ ‘Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us’ ” (Luke 11:4, NKJV). Two facts need to be noted. First, temptation is not sin. The Greek word for “temptation” is *peirasmos*. Greek nouns that end in *-asmos* normally describe a process, not a product. The Scriptures do not look at temptation as a finished product; it is a method, a process used to achieve a particular product. Although temptation is not sin, yielding to it is. Second, God is not the author of temptation (James 1:13). God may allow temptations to come, but He never tempts in the sense of alluring one to sin. The prayer, therefore, is recognition that God is the source of ultimate strength to resist the evil one.

**Review Luke 11:1–4. Think about all the issues it covers. In what ways can your experience with each of these issues be enriched and deepened through prayer?**

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## More Lessons on Prayer

Immediately after giving His disciples a model prayer, Jesus taught them, through the parable of a friend at midnight (*Luke 11:5–13*), the need for persistent prayer. Then, as He neared the end of His ministry, He reminded His followers of the need for penitence and humility in prayer (*Luke 18:9–14*). Both of these parables show that prayer is not just a religious routine but also a persistent walking, talking, and living with the Father.

Read *Luke 11:5–8*. Jesus told this parable to encourage perseverance in prayer. Prayer should not become a routine. Instead, prayer should be the foundation of a relationship—of absolute, persistent, and continual reliance on God. Prayer is the breath of the soul: without it, we are spiritually dead. Jesus tells the parable of a neighbor who refuses to be neighborly. The continuous pleas of his friend for a loaf of bread to meet a midnight emergency go in vain. But finally, even such a neighbor gives up and yields to the persistence of the continuous midnight knocks. How much more responsive would God be toward someone persistent in prayer? Such persistence is not to change God’s mind but to strengthen our trust.

**Read** *Luke 18:9–14*. What’s the crucial lesson here about prayer?

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The Pharisee expected God to endorse him on the basis of what he had done, his works of righteousness. The publican threw himself at God’s mercy and pleaded for acceptance on the basis of God’s grace. God’s acceptance comes to us not on the basis of who or what we are but through His grace alone. Only those who are penitent, humble, and broken in spirit can receive that grace.

“Meekness and lowliness are the conditions of success and victory. A crown of glory awaits those who bow at the foot of the cross.”—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 590.

**People who have not known the Lord tend to compare themselves to those who are, supposedly, worse than they are, all in order to convince themselves that they are not so bad. Why is that such a spiritual deception? What does it matter if others are worse than we are?**

**Further Study:** “The soul that turns to God for its help, its support, its power, by daily, earnest prayer, will have noble aspirations, clear perceptions of truth and duty, lofty purposes of action, and a continual hungering and thirsting after righteousness. By maintaining a connection with God, we shall be enabled to diffuse to others, through our association with them, the light, the peace, the serenity, that rule in our hearts. The strength acquired in prayer to God, united with persevering effort in training the mind in thoughtfulness and care-taking, prepares one for daily duties and keeps the spirit in peace under all circumstances.”—Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 85.

“In calling God our Father, we recognize all His children as our brethren. We are all a part of the great web of humanity, all members of one family. In our petitions we are to include our neighbors as well as ourselves. No one prays aright who seeks a blessing for himself alone.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 105.

### Discussion Questions:

**1** Luke’s linking of Jesus and the Holy Spirit does not end with his Gospel alone. No one can read the book of Acts, Luke’s second volume for the history of the Christian church, without noting the compelling dynamic of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian community, its missions, and its ministers. Indeed, only Luke records Jesus’ post-resurrection instruction to His disciples to stay in Jerusalem until they “‘are endued with power from on high’ ” (*Luke 24:49, NKJV*) before they could go to the ends of the earth with the message of the crucified and risen Savior. Luke then begins the book of Acts with Jesus repeating the promise of the Holy Spirit (*Acts 1:7, 8*) and the promise being fulfilled at Pentecost (*Acts 2*). What does all this tell us about the central role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church?

**2** In what ways is the very act of prayer itself an acknowledgment of our dependence on and need of God? Read *Luke 18:9*. What deep spiritual problem was Jesus addressing with the parable that followed?

## The Banner Man

SONG SUNGSUB, SOUTH KOREA

Wherever Song Sungsub goes, people follow—sometimes with stares, sometimes with their feet—but that’s OK because he has a message to share.

“I wanted people to see the truth, so my strategy was to come up with a way for them to immediately see the heart of the three angels’ messages—the Sabbath.”

Sungsub designed a customized backpack advertising banner, proclaiming in large letters that the “Sabbath Day = Saturday = Seventh-day.” The banner included more details surrounding the main message.

Sungsub wears his backpack banner as he rides his bicycle to and from work each day. He also takes it for a walk in the park and has been happily surprised with the response.

“When people see the banner, they are curious, and they read it with loud voices. There are always people around, and they talk about it. The Sabbath is an important message, a testing truth. There are many ways to spread this message, but this is my strategy,” Sungsub says.

In thinking about his unique form of evangelizing, Sungsub had two biblical examples in mind: Jonah, who was sent to walk around a large city proclaiming the need for repentance, and the children of Israel who were a silent witness as they marched around Jericho.

“The idea,” he said, “is that in this way I will be able to proclaim the Sabbath truth effectively and conveniently.” He is delighted that many people are interested in the message he carries.

“One day I took the subway, and someone followed me. Finally the man said, ‘I know this is truth. Is there a church that keeps the Sabbath day?’ ”

Another time Sungsub was walking through a park when he was approached by a couple. “You must be from the Seventh-day Adventist Church,” they said. “We haven’t attended church in a long time. Where’s the church? We’ve been looking for one!”

“Sometimes people ask me how can I carry this banner around,” Sungsub admits. “My heart isn’t brave enough, and I need to behave well because I’m carrying this important message. My mind should be peaceful, so I pray a lot. Then I feel at peace and am filled with the Holy Spirit’s power.” And the idea is catching on. Recently, an elder in Sungsub’s church asked for a copy of the banner’s design.

“I feel very happy,” says Sungsub. “I am seeking lost sheep. My strategy is just one glance, and it’s forever recorded in their minds. And whenever people ask, I share some literature with them. Who knows what the results will be?”

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*To see pictures of Sungsub’s banner, visit our Web site and choose “Youth and Adult Magazine” under the “Resources” menu.*