

# The Lord Jesus Christ Teaches Us to Pray

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Of the Seventy

When you pray, are you really praying or just saying prayers?

In 1977, I was serving as a full-time missionary in Cusco, Peru. My companion and I received approval to take all the missionaries in the Cusco zone to the magnificent Machu Picchu ruins.

Towards the end of our visit to the ruins, some of the missionaries wanted to go to the Inca Bridge, part of a mountain trail. Immediately, I felt in my heart the Spirit constraining me not to go there. The trail was on the side of a mountain with a 2,000-foot (610 m) drop-off. In several areas the trail was only wide enough for one person to pass at a time. My companion and I told them that we should not go to the Inca Bridge.

However, the missionaries insisted that we go. The pleadings became more intense, and despite what the Spirit had indicated to me, I gave in to the peer pressure and told them that we would visit the bridge but only if we were very careful.

We entered the trail that leads to the Inca Bridge with me at the end of the group, and at first everyone walked slowly, as agreed. Then the missionaries started to walk very fast and even run. They ignored my petitions to slow down. I felt obligated to catch up to them, to tell them that we had to turn back. I was far behind them, and I had to run fast to catch up with them.

As I came around a turn, in a passage too narrow for two to walk, I found a missionary standing still with his back against the rocks. I asked him why he was standing there. He told me he had received an impression to remain in that spot for a moment and that I should go on.

I felt the urgency to catch up to those ahead of us, so he helped me to pass him, and I was able to get a little farther down the trail. I noticed that the ground was full of greenery. I planted my right foot on the ground, realizing, as I fell, that there was no ground underneath the greenery. I desperately grabbed onto some branches that were underneath the trail. For a moment I could see down, some 2,000 feet below me, the Urubamba River, which crosses the Sacred Valley of the Incas. I felt as if my strength had left me, and it was only a matter of time before I could not hold on anymore. In that moment, I prayed intensely. It was a very brief prayer. I opened my mouth and said, "Father, help me!"

The branches were not strong enough to support the weight of my body. I knew the end was near. In the *very* moment when I was about to fall, I felt a firm hand take me by the arm and pull me up. With that help I was able to continue fighting and get myself back on the trail. The missionary who had stayed behind was the one who saved me.

But in reality our Father in Heaven saved me. He listened to my voice. I had heard the voice of the Spirit three times before, telling me not to go to the Inca Bridge, but I had not obeyed that voice. I was in shock, I was pale, and I did not know what to say. Then I remembered that the other missionaries were ahead of us, and so we went looking for them until we found them and told them what had happened to me.

We returned to Machu Picchu very carefully and in silence. On the return trip I remained silent, and the idea came to my mind that He had paid attention to my voice but that I had not paid any attention to His. There was a deep pain in my heart for disobeying His voice and at the same time a deep sense of gratitude for His mercy. He did not exercise His justice upon me, but in His great mercy, He had saved my life (see Alma 26:20).

At the end of the day, when it was time for my personal prayer, I prayed from the heart to “the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort” (2 Corinthians 1:3). I prayed “with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ” (Moroni 10:4).

In the early morning of that same day, I had prayed with my lips, and when I was about to perish, I prayed from the heart to Him. I pondered my life to that point. I found that on many occasions, our Father in Heaven had been so merciful to me. He taught me many lessons that day in Machu Picchu and in Cusco, Peru. One of the greatest lessons was that I should always, always pray “with a sincere heart, with real intent, [exercising] faith in Christ.”

On one occasion the Lord Jesus Christ “was praying in a certain place,” and “when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1). Then He taught His disciples to pray. And today He teaches you and me to pray as we see Him in our minds praying in Gethsemane and saying, “Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42). When you pray, do you really, truly want that “not my will, but thine, be done”?

Paul describes how Jesus prayed “in the days of his flesh,” especially in Gethsemane: “When he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared” (Hebrews 5:7). When you pray, are you really praying or just saying prayers? Are you superficial with your prayers?

Jesus prayed intensely and spoke with His Father. “It came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened” (Luke 3:21). When you pray, do

you feel like heaven is opened? When was the last time you felt that connection with heaven?

Jesus prepared Himself to make important decisions by praying to His Father.

“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” (Luke 6:12–13).

Do you prepare yourself to make important decisions by praying to your Heavenly Father? Do you prepare yourself for a moment of prayer?

When Jesus came to the American continent, He taught the people to pray. “And Jesus said unto them: Pray on; nevertheless they did not cease to pray” (3 Nephi 19:26).

Jesus invites us to “pray always” (D&C 10:5). Jesus knows that our Heavenly Father hears and gives what is best for us. Why is it that sometimes we don’t want to receive? Why?

At the very moment we say, “Father in Heaven,” He hears our prayers and is sensitive to us and our needs. And so His eyes and His ears are now connected to you. He reads our minds, and He feels our hearts. You cannot hide anything from Him. Now, the wonderful thing is that He will see you with eyes of love and mercy—love and mercy that we cannot fully understand. But love and mercy are with Him the very moment you say, “Father in Heaven.”

So a moment of prayer is a very, very sacred moment. He is not one to say, “No, I will not listen to you now because you only come to me when you are in trouble.” Only men do that. He is not one to say, “Oh, you cannot imagine how busy I am now.” Only men say that.

That we all may pray as Jesus has taught us to pray is my hope and my prayer in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

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