

“The Prayer Life of Jesus: A Path to Divine Friendship”

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While defending the Sabbath healing of a sick man at the Pool of Bethesda, Jesus said, “the Father loves the Son” (John 5:20). In this Johannine pericope, Jesus explained that since the Father loved the Son, He revealed to Jesus what to do, and in response, Jesus did what was revealed. In this case, it involved healing a man on the Sabbath.

Jesus’ statement that “the Father loves the Son” may at first glance sound a bit obvious. Since Jesus is the Only-Begotten of the Father, existing for all eternity with the Father, wouldn’t there naturally be reciprocal love between the two?

Probing into the relationship between the kenotic¹ Christ and His Father, we find that there existed a relationship beyond mere familial or Trinitarian strata. The Greek word used for “loves” here is *phileo*, and it means “to be friends with, to be fond of.” The Father and the Son were fond friends. This intimate friendship with the Father enabled Jesus to see and hear what the Father was doing and revealing – including healings, miracles, and insights about people.

Was Jesus’ eternal relationship with His Father the catalyst for this friendship, or was there something else that augmented their bond as intimate friends? There may be several reasons for their intimate friendship (including Jesus’ unwavering obedience to the Father). However, in this article, my conjecture is that Jesus’ prayer life included two aspects that may have ‘advanced’ His relationship with the Father into the realm of an intimate, partnering friendship.

Let’s briefly examine the two aspects of Jesus’ prayer life that I believe contributed to this divine friendship: continual communion and isolated intimacy.

1. Continual Communion

John 8:16

And yet if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone, but **I am with the Father who sent Me.** [emphasis added]

John 16:32

Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone. And yet **I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.** [emphasis added]

Jesus knew the Father was always with Him. He had a connection with the Father that was unbreakable. Ministering to the sick and demonized did not impede their communion. Debating with the religious establishment did not hinder their intimacy. He and the Father were always together, despite the circumstances Jesus found Himself in.

During Jesus' daily life, this intimate communion was continuous and incessant. The things Jesus did were in response to what the Father wanted Him to do; the things the Father showed Him to do during their constant communion:

John 8:28-29

Then Jesus said to them, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things. ²⁹And He who sent Me is with Me. **The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.**" [emphasis added]

This obedience on Jesus' part would not have been possible had He not lived in continual communion with the Father, receiving the Father's direction for varying circumstances.

As Jesus, we can also traverse this earth in knowledge and confidence that God Almighty walks with us continually, without pause. He will never leave us nor forsake us. Maintaining this mindset may prove difficult depending on the events thrust into our lives. Nevertheless, the fact remains – the God of the universe is always with us and wants to continually fellowship with us. We simply have to respond to His overtures to commune intimately with Him.

What are some of the ways we can do this? We can begin to make a practice of acknowledging that His presence is with us wherever we are. Throughout the day, we can chat with Him, praise Him, and rest in His sweet embrace. This does not require us to be verbal in the midst of crowds. It can entail an inner dialogue with our living Lord, and a listening spirit to our loving God.

Somehow, somehow, we can begin to cultivate a continuous communion with God. We will soon find ourselves friends of His, and as such, those in whom He confides in and partners with.

2. Isolated Intimacy

Matthew 14:22-23

Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. ²³And **when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there.** [emphasis added]

Mark 1:35

Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, **He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.** [emphasis added]

Why did Jesus desire isolated intimacy with the Father when He was already experiencing continual communion with Him? I believe it was because there were times He just wanted to be alone with the Father to engage in prayer and conversation.

Moreover, in the midst of a life that could have ministered to people twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, Jesus realized the importance of isolating Himself from the demands of that ministry.

Luke 5:15-16

However, the report went around concerning Him all the more; and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by Him of their

infirmities. ¹⁶**So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed.** [emphasis added]

Even though there were many who needed ministry, Jesus split off from the crowds to engage with the Father in intimate communion.

Realizing Jesus lived on earth as a man, He may have needed the refreshing presence of His Father to gain strength for life and ministry. Perhaps it was in those times that He received instruction from the Father on how to minister to the crowds that followed Him. Whatever the case, Jesus set boundaries that gave Him isolated time with the Father.

Likewise, we need to set boundaries that will give us times of solitude with the Father. We cannot live a Christian life in this world, without the strength that comes from being in the presence of our God. Nor can we minister effectively without time spent at His feet, garnering His instruction and ministerial insight.

Spending time alone with God does not mean one is avoiding ministry. Rather, it is a solid response to the realization that without His strength and leading, we will soon become empty vessels of no benefit to those who need His touch.

Jesus' time in isolation with the Father also involved times of earnest prayer:

Luke 6:12

Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and **continued all night in prayer to God.** [emphasis added]

In this passage, Jesus proceeded from a night of prayer to the choosing of twelve disciples that He wanted to be with Him (Luke 6:13; Mark 3:13-14). The text does not explicitly tell us that Jesus spent the night in prayer for the purpose of deciding on which disciples to choose, but we cannot dismiss the possibility.

Is there a big decision you or I have to make? Is there a problem for which we need an answer or direction? Perhaps an extended period of solitude with the Father will provide the

needed resolution. We should make time to inquire of God and spend time with Him alone. He may just communicate with us!

In closing, the Father desires intense intimacy with His children. In all likelihood, He desires it more than we do or ever will. Therefore, let us adopt the practices of communing with the Father throughout the day, and making time to be alone with Him. By doing so, we will become friends with the God of eternity, and our lives will never be the same.

¹ Relating to the laying aside of Jesus' deity in becoming man and suffering death. See Philippians 2:5-11.