



Developing Christian leaders who listen and respond to God's voice, embody His character and extend His kingdom.



The Jesus Prayer

Three Versions:

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.

Lord Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me.

Lord Jesus...have mercy...Jesus...mercy.

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Integrating Spiritual Formation & Leadership Development

HISTORY

Old & New Testaments – The Jesus Prayer finds its roots in the reverent awe reserved for the name of the true and living God in the Judeo-Christian tradition. One manifestation of this awe in Jewish history was the refusal to say aloud the most sacred of all names for God—YHWH.

The Old Testament veneration for God's name was transferred by early Jewish Christians to the name of Jesus. The power of the Jesus Prayer lies in the authority of the name, person, and character of Jesus over the power and reign of evil. Elements of this prayer are found in the New Testament: (a) blind Bartimaeus's cry to Jesus, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" (Mk. 10:47, Lk. 18:38); (b) two blind beggars shouting "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!" (Mt. 20:30); and (c) the publican's plea, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." (Lk. 18:13)

Church history – The Jesus Prayer comes down to us through the Eastern Orthodox tradition as a way to practice the unceasing prayer that Paul commends (1 Thess. 5:17). The prayer has usually been said rhythmically with silent pauses in between each repetition.

Some form of this prayer was probably said in the Egyptian Desert in the fourth century and the first record we have with the invocation of the name of Jesus was St. Nilus (d. c. 430) and St. Diadochus (d. before 486). The standard (long) form of the prayer above is first found in *The Life of Abba Philemon* in Egypt sometime between the 6th and 8th centuries and also in some Coptic sources in this period. It was used extensively in the 14th century in the monastic community at Mount Athos in Greece.

It is sometimes referred to as *hesychast* prayer or the prayer of the heart that descends from the mind into the heart. It was popularized in 18th century Greece by St. Nicodemus of Mt. Athos. It was popularized in 19th century Russia by monks like Theophan and the anonymous author of *The Way of the Pilgrim* and lately grew in Russia, Romania, Greece and the Orthodox diaspora.

THREE STAGES

Three stages of the prayer (Pause in silence after each repetition so that it is not prayed more often than once every 10 seconds. The silence allows for meditations on the prayer's words and keeps it from becoming vain repetition about which Jesus warned, Matt 6:7.).

(1) Pray out loud.

(2) Pray silently in your mind standing before God.

(3) Pray descending from the mind down to the heart (seat of your motives, attitudes, convictions, feelings of joy, pain) and there silently pray before God.

ADAPTATIONS

Turn the prayer into intercession by adding the word “on” ... “have mercy on.....” trusting the Holy Spirit bring a name to mind in the silence.

Thank God for new mercies that have already been experienced within the day.