

Who do I pray to – Jesus or God?
A Series on Who do I worship – God or Jesus: Part 4

Related to the question of Who to worship is the question of Who to pray to. Both questions share the most common answer that people will hear - that both God the Father and God the Son are of the Trinity and, because of their ontological unity, can both be prayed to and receive worship as One God.

Basing the answer on the Trinity, brings to mind an interesting question, "What about the Holy Spirit?" Exploring this question forces one to sharpen their understanding of the role of each Person of the Trinity. In this instance, the Holy Spirit is the Person abiding in the Believer (John 14:16-17) through Whom Jesus is abiding within the Believer (Acts 16:6-7; Phil 1:19; 1 Pet 1:11).

Jesus never speaks of praying to the Holy Spirit; instead the Holy Spirit, Who knows the Believer intimately, prays for Believer!

In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. (Rom 8:26-27)

Throughout His ministry, Jesus places the priority and focus of prayer on God His Father and teaches this when He shows His disciples how to pray.

And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. Pray, then, in this way:

Our Father who is in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. (Matt 6:7-13)

It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples." And He said to them, "When you pray, say:

'Father, hallowed be Your name.
Your kingdom come.
Give us each day our daily bread.
And forgive us our sins,
For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.
And lead us not into temptation.'" (Luke 11:1-4)

Prayer is not simply the recitation of words. A legitimate prayer is one in which the petitioner: a) has faith in God, and b) is making a request in keeping with God's will.

And Jesus answered saying to them, "Have faith in God. Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him. Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you. (Mark 11:22-24)

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Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight. (1 John 3:21-22)

And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him. (1 John 5:11-15)

Because sending His only Son was the sole means to express His lovingkindness to His unilateral and unconditional covenant with Abraham, God was glorified when Jesus completed the work His Father intended for Him. Jesus' accomplishments glorify His Father (John 12:27-28; 13:31-32). On the last night of His life, concerned about leaving the disciples on their own, Jesus makes a remarkable offer to His disciples: since whatever I do glorifies My Father, pray in My name so that I can do more to glorify My Father! While this appears to be a departure from the Lord's prayer that He had taught His disciples earlier, this implies that this singular event of crucifixion is the crowning glory of His Father.

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; **because I go to the Father**. Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it. If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. **I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever**; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. **I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you**. (John 14:12-18)

In His Upper Room Discourse on this last night on earth, Jesus presents a logical sequence of thought:

1. Whoever receives Jesus Christ, receives God His Father.

From now on I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am He. Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me." (John 13:19-20)

2. When He completes His Father's work, a) Jesus Christ is glorified, b) God is glorified in Jesus Christ, and c) God will glorify Jesus Christ in Himself.

Therefore when he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him; if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately. (John 13:31-32)

3. Jesus Christ is speaking and doing God's work, because His Father abides within Him.

Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves. (John 14:10-11)

4. In placing an emphasis on praying in His name, Jesus Christ continues to do His Father's work and bring greater glory to His Father. In this context, when praying to God, in the name of Jesus Christ, God His Father will do it.

If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. (John 15:7-8)

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You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that **you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.** (John 15:16)

In that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, **if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you.** Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full. These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; an hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but will tell you plainly of the Father. In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request of the Father on your behalf; for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father. I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father. (John 16:23-28)

Because of the gospel, Jesus continues to save and demonstrate God's loving commitment to His promises to Abraham. With a genuine faith in Jesus, praying to God in the name of Jesus is praying in the context of God's will and glory and is equivalent to praying to God.