

# Matthew 14:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.

## Analysis

'And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.' After intensive ministry—teaching, healing, feeding 5000, managing messianic fervor—Jesus seeks solitude for prayer. He went 'up into a mountain' (εἰς τὸ ὄρος/eis to oros), 'apart' (κατ' ιδίαν/kat' idian, privately, alone), 'to pray' (προσεύξασθαι/proseuxasthai). Reformed theology sees this demonstrating:

1. Jesus's full humanity—He needed prayer, communion with Father
2. Priority of prayer—even during intense ministry, He made time
3. Solitude's necessity—effective ministry requires withdrawal for spiritual renewal
4. Jesus's example—if He needed prayer, how much more do we? The timing—evening, after crowds departed—shows Jesus prioritizing communion with Father over rest.

Mountains were traditional prayer locations (Moses, Elijah), symbolizing nearness to God. Jesus's prayer life was constant, deliberate, essential—modeling dependence on Father despite His deity. This challenges activism valuing constant ministry over spiritual disciplines. Effective service flows from communion with God.

## Historical Context

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Mountains held spiritual significance in Jewish tradition: Sinai (law given), Carmel (Elijah's victory), Horeb (Elijah's encounter with God). Jesus frequently withdrew to mountains/deserted places for prayer (Matthew 14:23, Mark 1:35, Luke 5:16, 6:12, 9:28). These weren't brief prayers but extended communion—Luke records Jesus praying all night before choosing apostles (Luke 6:12). After feeding 5000 and managing crowd's kingship attempt, Jesus needed Father's perspective, strength, guidance. His prayer life demonstrates that divine power operates through dependence, not independence. Early church followed this pattern: Acts repeatedly records believers praying before major decisions, during crises, for direction. Throughout history, spiritual giants have maintained rigorous prayer disciplines: early Christians' daily hours, monastics' liturgical prayers, Reformers' prayer emphasis, Puritans' 'closet prayer,' revival leaders' intercession. The pattern holds: powerful ministry emerges from deep prayer. Modern activism often reverses this, attempting ministry without adequate communion with God.

## Related Passages

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**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

**Psalm 19:1** — Heavens declare God's glory

## Study Questions

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1. What does Jesus's example teach about balancing ministry activity with prayer and solitude?
2. How do you prioritize communion with God even during intense ministry or busy seasons?
3. What happens to your ministry effectiveness when prayer is neglected versus prioritized?

## Interlinear Text

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καὶ ἀπολύσας τοὺς ὄχλους ἀνέβη εἰς τὸ ὄρος  
And away G3588 the multitudes he went up into G3588 a mountain  
G2532 G630 G3793 G305 G1519 G3735

κατ' ἴδιαν προσεύξασθαι ὄψιας δὲ γενομένης  
apart G2398 to pray when the evening and was come  
G2596 G4336 G3798 G1161 G1096

μόνος ἦν ἐκεῖ  
alone he was there  
G3441 G2258 G1563

## Additional Cross-References

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**Luke 6:12** (Prayer): And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

**Mark 6:46** (Prayer): And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray.

**Acts 6:4** (Prayer): But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

**Matthew 26:36** (Prayer): Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.

**Matthew 6:6** (Prayer): But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

**Luke 9:28** (Prayer): And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray.