

THE LIFE

EMBRACING THE LIFE OF A CHRIST-FOLLOWER

PART 2: THE PICTURE OF A DISCIPLE
Unit 2: A Disciple Hungers To Know God
LESSON 23: KNOWING GOD
THROUGH PRAYER, PART 1

What we want students to learn: That you can't live as a true follower of Christ if you don't commit to prayer.

What we want students to do with what they've learned: To identify ways in which they can draw even closer to God through prayer.

Scripture Focus: Jeremiah 33:3

Supporting Scripture: Luke 5:16; Mark 1:35; Philippians 4:6

Overview: You might say that prayer is the language of our relationship with God. If one of the primary descriptions of us as disciples is a hunger for knowing God, we cannot hope to come anywhere close to accomplishing this without prayer. And yet, a lifestyle of prayer is something that many teenagers find challenging. This lesson, along with the next one, will help you encourage students to begin to understand the value of prayer in the life of a disciple.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO

Each **LIFE** lesson comes with a Teacher Prep Video. These are short videos designed to help you grasp the main point of the lesson as you prepare to teach.

To access your **LIFE** lesson 23 Teacher Prep Video, login to your Lesson Manager, navigate to lesson 23, and click on the "Background" tab. You'll notice the Teacher Prep Video near the top of the Lesson Manager window.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

The *Bible Background* is designed to help you provide some context for the Scripture you'll be studying. The Details gives you background info for each book, The Setting informs you what's happening in and around the passage, and The Main Point gives you an overview of how the passage will be used in the lesson.

- **What do we mean by "context"?** In every **YM360** Bible study lesson, you'll notice we make a point to encourage you to provide the context for the passages you study. By "context" we mean at the very least helping students know **who** wrote the book, **when** it was written, and **why** it was written.
- **What's the big deal?** When we teach the Bible without giving context, students don't get a "big picture" understanding of the story of the Bible. But this view is vital to grasping the story of God's plan of redemption for humankind. As you teach, use the Bible Background to help summarize the context.

THE DETAILS

- **Author:** Though there has been some disagreement over the years, there is no compelling reason to doubt that the Prophet Jeremiah is the author is indeed the author of the book that shares his name. He was accompanied by his scribe, Baruch.
- **Time frame:** Best estimates have the book completed sometime around 550 BC.

THE LIFE

EMBRACING THE LIFE OF A CHRIST-FOLLOWER

PART 2: THE PICTURE OF A DISCIPLE
Unit 2: A Disciple Hungers To Know God
LESSON 23: KNOWING GOD
THROUGH PRAYER, PART 1

- **Purpose:** Jeremiah and Baruch wrote the book to capture the turmoil that faced them and to cast a vision for the hopeful future God had in store for Israel.

THE SETTING

The verses in this lesson provide multiple perspectives on prayer. First, we see God's instruction to pray in Jeremiah. Then, we see the example of Jesus' prayer habits recorded by Mark and Luke. Finally, we receive Paul's instruction to pray.

THE MAIN POINT

In our call to discipleship, we recognize that we are to learn to imitate Jesus. There are many defining characteristics of Jesus' character, but none are as intimate as His prayer time with the Father. If disciples are defined by following Jesus' example, then Jesus' disciples will pray.

LESSON PLAN

The *Lesson Plan* contains three elements: An introductory activity called **The Lead In**; the Bible study section called **The Main Event**; and an application-focused segment called **The Last Word**.

THE LEAD IN

- **Goal:** To help students see the importance of communication in a healthy relationship.
- **Set-Up:** Students will need paper and pens.

FIRST, give a piece of paper and pen to each student. Then tell them to think of the person (or handful of people) that they consider their best friend or confidant.

THEN, say something like:

- **Think of the main person, or people, that you would say you have the strongest relationship with. Who is the person that you go to when you have a problem or the first person you call or text when you have good news?**
- **Write that person's name on the top of your paper.**

NEXT, say to your students something like the following:

- **There are probably a lot of reasons why you are close with this person, but there is one thing for sure; if you never talked with this person, you wouldn't stay very close.**
- **Try and brainstorm in the past month all of the ways and times that you have communicated with this person. Write down as many as you can think of on this piece of paper. You have one minute!**

THEN, call on some students to share the ways in which they communicate with those closest to them. Emphasize the frequency and compelling feeling that they may have to contact them. When students have had a chance to share, say/ask something like:

THE LIFE

EMBRACING THE LIFE OF A CHRIST-FOLLOWER

PART 2: THE PICTURE OF A DISCIPLE
Unit 2: A Disciple Hungers To Know God
LESSON 23: KNOWING GOD
THROUGH PRAYER, PART 1

- That urge that you have to talk to your friend or family member is a sign of the health of your relationship with them. When you care about someone, you want to share your life with them. You want them to know when you are hurting and celebrate with you when life is great. Hopefully, you also want to listen to them, hear their heart, and celebrate what makes them happy too. Let's apply this same logic to our faith. If we say we have a relationship with Christ, why do we sometimes neglect communicating with Him?

- Allow students time to share various answers. Don't worry about feeling like you have to land on an answer here. The goal is to get students thinking about the concept of prayer as communication.

FINALLY, begin to transition to the Bible study portion of your lesson by saying the following:

- **If our relationship with Christ is to be a healthy one, if we are to embrace the life of a disciple, then we have to spend time communicating with Him to stay close to Him and learn His heart. Today we will look at a simple truth: you can't follow Christ if you don't know where He's going. We will discuss the fact that prayer is our way to communicate with God and keep an open relationship with our Savior so we can walk in His steps.**

Transition into *The Main Event* portion of your lesson.

THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** For students to accept that you can't live as a true follower of Christ if you don't commit to prayer.
- **Set Up:** Make sure students have a Bible, or that they are able to look along with a friend.

FIRST, have students turn to the book of Jeremiah. As they are finding it, provide them with some of the context for the book by referencing the Bible Background section of your lesson plan. Then, read or have a student read Jeremiah 33:3. When you have finished, lead students in a short discussion. Ask something like:

- **Who is speaking in this passage?**
 - Answer: God
- **What is God saying here?**
 - Allow students to answer as they will. If they give a surface answer at first, that's fine. You're about to dig in a bit deeper.
- **This is one short verse. But there are two very important concepts implied here. Can you identify them?**
 - Answer: The first is that God wants our prayers. He wants to be in communication with us. The second is that God essentially promises that He will respond to our prayers. He basically tell us that He will engage with us if we reach out to Him.
- **What if God didn't want us to pray to Him? Would it change His character any at all? Would He be less God? Explain your answer.**
 - Answers will vary. The purpose of this question isn't to come up with a concrete answer either way. The goal is really to set up your next point, and to help your students think a little about God's character and nature. Encourage students to hash this out a bit.

Explain that God could have created a relationship with us where prayer wasn't necessary. After all, He made the

THE LIFE

EMBRACING THE LIFE OF A CHRIST-FOLLOWER

PART 2: THE PICTURE OF A DISCIPLE
Unit 2: A Disciple Hungers To Know God
LESSON 23: KNOWING GOD
THROUGH PRAYER, PART 1

rules! He knows what we need. He could have simply crafted relationship between Himself and people in such a way that He just gave us what He knows we need without ever having to worry about us praying to Him. But remind students that God didn't do that. God set it up so that there would be lines of communication open between Him and us. Encourage them to think for a moment about how amazing this is: the God of the universe, the creator of all things WANTS to hear us call out to Him! Furthermore, He promises to engage with us in communication as well. That is totally remarkable stuff.

THEN, explain to students that if we doubt the importance of prayer, we can look to Jesus as a model (which, as far as models go, is a pretty good one). Instruct students to turn to Luke 5. Once they have found the passage, read or have a student read Luke 5:16. When you've finished, lead students in a brief discussion. Ask:

- **The descriptive words in this passage are very important. What words do you see that describe the manner and place of Jesus' prayers?**
 - Answer: He "withdrew" to "desolate" places.
- **Why do you think it was important that Jesus withdrew from others so He could pray?**
 - Answer: His prayers were an intimate time between Him and the Father. There is a time for public prayer, but it does not replace time alone in conversation with God. He made a conscious effort to let others know that this time was important and He desired to be alone with God.
- **How do you withdraw from others so that you can pray? Are you intentional about that?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **Why do you think Jesus found "desolate places" to pray?**
 - Answers will vary, but may include His desire not to be interrupted. Jesus also was a busy person, in high demand to meet the needs of those He encountered. He needed to remove distractions so He could focus on the Father's will and hear from Him.
- **Are you able to find or create "desolate places" where you can protect your prayer time? How?**
 - Answers will vary. Share how you have found success guarding your prayer time with fewer interruptions. Encourage them to brainstorm ideas such as going outside or putting up a sign on their door.

Say something like the following to your group:

- **It can be difficult to find time in our busy schedules to be still and quiet so that we can have uninterrupted time with God. We live in a fast-paced, high-demand society where people don't always understand the value of silence, much less prayer. We have to be intentional to create and protect our time with God. Jesus knew this and had a plan.**

NEXT, have students turn to Mark 1:35, and have a student read the verse aloud. When you've finished, ask:

- **What descriptive word do you see repeated from our previous passage?**
 - Answer: Desolate
- **How was Jesus able to find this desolate place away from interruptions?**
 - Answer: He got up early while it was still dark.
- **How many of you would consider yourself a morning person?**
 - Allow for some brief responses.
- **Why is it harder to find time alone when you get up after the day is underway and bustling with other people?**
 - Allow for responses.
- **When we talk about creating and protecting time with God, it requires an intentional action to with-**

THE LIFE

EMBRACING THE LIFE OF A CHRIST-FOLLOWER

PART 2: THE PICTURE OF A DISCIPLE
Unit 2: A Disciple Hungers To Know God
LESSON 23: KNOWING GOD
THROUGH PRAYER, PART 1

draw from others to desolate places. Most people don't get up earlier than they have to. With that in mind, why is the early morning a good time for prayer?

o Answer: No one else will be up. You can be alone.

- Can you think of any other reasons why the morning is a good time to hear from God and focus your heart on Him?
 - o Answers will vary. Steer students toward the idea that we need to seek Him first! If we begin our day seeking God, we can spend more time praising Him and less time confessing a wasted day!

FINALLY, help students understand that prayer is the language of our relationship with God. As disciples, we should hunger to know God. And we can't accomplish this without prayer. Say something like:

- A lifestyle of prayer is something that many of us find challenging. But we have to understand that its absolutely essential as Christ-followers that we cultivate a constant posture of talking with and listening to God.

Ask if there are any questions, then transition into *The Last Word*.

THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** To identify ways in which they can draw even closer to God through prayer.
- **Set-Up:** Paper for each student or a class poster board and a marker board.

FIRST, lead students in a discussion. Ask:

- **Have you ever stopped to take inventory of your prayer life? Let's do that now. First, let's take stock of how often we pray. Raise your hand if you pray daily. Weekly? Monthly? Less?**
 - o Without names, keep a running tally on the marker board with categories: daily, weekly, monthly, less.
- **Second, let's look at WHEN we pray. Raise your hand if you pray in the morning when you first wake up. At bedtime? Only at meals? Random times throughout the day?**
 - o Without names, keep a running tally on the marker board with a new column for the categories: morning, evening, meals, random
- **Last, let's look at WHAT we pray. Take a minute and talk with the person next to you and brainstorm the things you have prayed for in the last week or month. When you have a good list, be ready to share some with the group.**
 - o When they are ready, make a list on your board of the types of things that have been prayed for. (Save some room for the next part of the discussion.)

THEN, explain to your group that oftentimes, our prayer life consists only of our "want list," where we make our requests known to God. This is certainly an important part of prayer. God tells us to pour out our requests to Him. But explain that this is not the main purpose of prayer. Say something like:

- **Imagine if you had a friend who only spoke to you to ask you for favors. Would you consider that a healthy relationship? We don't only pray to God to ask Him what He can do for us. We pray to**

THE LIFE

EMBRACING THE LIFE OF A CHRIST-FOLLOWER

PART 2: THE PICTURE OF A DISCIPLE
Unit 2: A Disciple Hungers To Know God
LESSON 23: KNOWING GOD
THROUGH PRAYER, PART 1

commune with God and align our hearts with His.

NEXT, read Philippians 4:6-7 and discuss the following questions Ask:

- **What is Paul instructing Christ-followers to do with their concerns?**
 - Answer: He tells them to let go of the stress by taking their concerns to God through prayer.
- **What do we stand to gain when we surrender our needs and fears to God in prayer rather than attempting (hopelessly, by the way) to control them ourselves?**
 - Answer: The peace of God. God tells us that when we come to Him we can be anxious about less, and that He will guard our hearts and minds. This is how we align our lives with God's purpose.
- **Prayer is the language of our relationship with God. To seek this kind of closeness with God, we go beyond making requests. Aside from our wants, what are some things that should be included in our prayers?**
 - Try to steer them toward the ideas of thankfulness, praise for who God is, or even less immediate requests like a desire for wisdom or participation in God's work on earth. The idea is to take the focus off themselves, and to see the bigger picture of prayer.

FINALLY, close by saying something like:

- **You can see by our list that there are a lot of good reasons to talk to God. But this list can't contain the best part of prayer: the things that God wants to say to us! When we focus more on God than on ourselves, we learn to hear His voice. There are things He wants to say to each of us, and we all have to learn to listen. When you spend time in prayer this week, add in a little bit of quiet time to just listen and ask God to speak to you. You'll be surprised the ways He will use to do it.**

Allow time for any closing thoughts or questions from your students. Then close in prayer.

- Don't forget to distribute the devotions to your students this week. If you're posting them on Instagram or some other means of electronic distribution, make sure you inform students of when they will be receiving them.
- Use the **Social Media Guide** to stay in touch with students via text or Instagram and to encourage them to follow through with reading their devotions.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU . . .

- Do you have questions about a lesson?
- Something that worked particularly well you want to share?
- Something that didn't work you want to bring up?

We value your feedback! Please do not hesitate to email us with your questions, comments, or concerns, at feedback@youthministry360.com.