

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 24: KNOWING GOD
THROUGH PRAYER, PART 2

What we want students to learn: That Jesus gave us the blueprint for what God-honoring prayer looks like.

What we want students to do with what they've learned: To begin to use the Lord's Prayer as model to grow closer to God in prayer.

Scripture Focus: Matthew 6:5-15

Overview: Even people who are not particularly religious are most likely familiar with the Lord's Prayer. However, the interesting part of the Lord's Prayer isn't just the words He taught His followers to pray. It is the context in which He spoke. You see, Jesus was concerned with His disciples praying in the wrong way or with the wrong motivation. His giving of the Lord's Prayer was a way to teach His followers a model of prayer, one that uniquely drew them to the Lord in the relationship of discipleship. Jesus was concerned with His followers praying to God in a manner that was appropriate for the nature of their relationship. As Christ-followers seeking to draw near to God, we can learn much from adopting the Lord's Prayer as model for communicating with God.

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 24 Teacher Prep Video, login to your Lesson Manager, navigate to lesson 24, 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:** Matthew, a former tax collector, was a disciple of Jesus and a firsthand witness to the stories he relates in his gospel.
- **Time frame:** Most people hold to Matthew's gospel being written in the late 50's or 60's AD, though there

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are some who think it was written after the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD.

- **Purpose:** Matthew was writing to a primarily Jewish audience to convince them that Jesus was indeed the long-awaited Messiah. But he was probably aware of a Gentile audience, as his gospel makes the case that the saving truth of Christ is for all nations.

THE SETTING

This teaching from Jesus on prayer is right in the middle of what is known as “The Sermon on the Mount” (Matthew chapters 5-7). Though delivered in public, this message seems to have been directed specifically to those who had chosen to follow Jesus (Matthew 5:1). Jesus instructs His followers about how a disciple of Jesus should live and act in this world, touching on subjects such as anger, lust, loving our enemies, serving the poor, worry, difficult relationships, and of course, prayer. In short, the Sermon on the Mount is a description of what a life transformed by Jesus should look like on a very practical level.

THE MAIN POINT

The main point is that prayer—the way Jesus instructs us to do it—is characterized by a personal relationship with our Heavenly Father where we recognize our dependence on Him. Prayer is not a formula that can get us what we want if we say the right things (Matthew 6:7) or a competition to see who is the most spiritual (Matthew 6:5). Rather, the kind of prayer Jesus teaches reminds us that not only are we desperately in need, but that our Father is a good father who has already provided for those needs. The specific prayer Jesus leads His followers in, known as the “Lord’s Prayer,” is not meant to simply be memorized as the only way to pray, but rather it is a blueprint for how we approach our loving Father in prayer.

LESSON PLAN

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

THE LEAD IN

- **Goal:** To get students thinking about how we sometimes aren’t really sure how to pray.
- **Set-Up:** You’ll need a way to show a YouTube clip, “Greg’s Dinner Prayer.” The clip is a scene from the movie *Meet the Parents*. You can find the clip at <https://youtu.be/IKE1IXvJB9Q>.

FIRST, show the clip to your group, explaining that in the movie, Greg is meeting his girlfriend’s parents for the first time. Then ask:

- **What do you think was going through Greg’s mind when he was asked to pray?**
 - o Answers will vary.
- **What kind of language did Greg use? How did he speak?**
 - o Answer: He used very formal language such as “thee” and had a very religious tone. The whole thing felt pretty impersonal.

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THEN, lead a short conversation on the connection between how we pray and what we imagine God to be like.

- **Based on his prayer, what do you think Greg believed is the “right” way to pray?**
 - Answers will vary; he seems to think that you have to use the right words and sound very spiritual.
- **Based only on his prayer, what do you think Greg imagines God is like?**
 - Help your students think through this question; the goal is to help them begin to see that how we view God and how we approach prayer is connected.

FINALLY, let your students know that you’ll be talking about prayer and how God wants us to approach prayer. Say:

- **Prayer is kind of a mysterious thing, isn’t it? Has it ever struck you as flat out amazing that God Himself hears our prayers? Many of us, if we’re honest, will admit that at times prayer makes us just as uncomfortable as Greg seemed in the clip. I hope that as we dig in, we’ll see how God views prayer. And once we understand this, hopefully it will seem a little less unusual by the end of our study.**

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

THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** Students will understand that Jesus gave us the blueprint for what God-honoring prayer looks like.
- **Set Up:** You may benefit from a dry-erase board, but it’s not critical. Make sure students have a Bible or that they are able to look along with a friend.

FIRST, start off a discussion by getting students to think about their own presuppositions about prayer. Ask:

- **What do you think the point of prayer is?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **There are a lot of opinions about what the point of prayer is; people from different cultures may view prayer differently. We saw in the movie clip how Greg’s prayer was different from what his girlfriend’s father expected to hear. Why do you think there are so many different views on prayer?**
 - Possible answers: People have different experiences with God; people have different beliefs about God.

NEXT, explain that you’ll spend most of the study hearing from Jesus about prayer. Have a student read Matthew 6:5-8. While students are finding the passage, provide some context using the Bible Background. Then, lead students in a brief discussion. Ask:

- **What is the first thing Jesus says about prayer?**
 - Answer: To not be “like the hypocrites.”
- **Why does He warn against approaching prayer like the “hypocrites” do?**
 - Answer: The hypocrites’ goal in prayer is to impress other people, rather than to be in a relationship with God.
- **Give me an example of what you think one of these prayers that impress others would sound like?**
 - Answer: Encourage your group to actually think of some examples.

THEN, unpack how Jesus does want His followers to pray. Ask:

- **So—based on these four verses—what does Jesus want His followers to do when they pray?**

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- o Answer: Literally, He said to go into a room by ourselves. Help students go deeper.
- Do **you think Jesus means that we can only pray when we're all by ourselves locked in a room?**
 - o Answer: The short answer is no. After all, Jesus Himself prayed in front of His followers just a few verses later. Press your group to think through Jesus' statement. Jesus is emphasizing that prayer is based on a personal relationship with God.
- **Why do you think Jesus warned against "babbling" when we pray?**
 - o Answer: Prayer isn't about impressing God with our words. In fact, there's no way we can, because He already knows what we need before we ask. Again, Jesus is stressing the idea that prayer is based on a relationship with God.

NEXT, have a student read Matthew 6:9-15. Then, ask:

- **Jesus then gives His followers a prayer they should pray. Though Christians for thousands of years have been praying this prayer, the point isn't that this is the only pray we can pray; it's kind of a blueprint for God-honoring prayer should look like. Before we talk about the prayer in detail, what do you notice about it?**
 - o Possible answers: It's fairly short; it uses simple language; it covers all the basic "needs," and so on.
- **What does Jesus communicate about God in His prayer, especially at the beginning?**
 - o Possible answers: That God is our Father; that He is in heaven (and therefore in command of the universe); that He has a Kingdom.
- **By saying "Our Father in heaven," Jesus communicates that God loves us deeply, and that He is in command of the universe and able to answer prayer. Are those two things difficult to believe at times?**
 - o Allow students space to answer this question honestly. Feel free to be vulnerable with examples from your own life.

THEN, look at the things that Jesus invites His followers to pray for. Ask:

- **In this prayer, what specific things does Jesus tell His followers to pray for in verses 10-13?**
 - o Answer: That God's Kingdom would be a reality on earth; that we would have the food and necessities for daily living; that God would forgive our debts (or trespasses/sins) as we forgive others; that we would be delivered from temptation and the evil one.
- **What do you think about the fact that the first personal request Jesus mentions in the prayer is for a physical need (bread) rather than what we would think of as a spiritual one?**
 - o Answer: God cares about all our needs. Help your group think through the idea that when it comes to God caring for us as Father, we don't really need to make a distinction between the spiritual and non-spiritual; God is a loving father who loves to take care of His children.
- **We've learned in this series that all of our sins—past, present and future—were forgiven by Jesus' work on the cross when we surrendered our lives to Him. Why do you think Jesus wants His followers to ask for forgiveness in this prayer?**
 - o Answer: When we put our trust in Jesus, the eternal consequences for our sin were taken on by Him through the cross, and our relationship with God was restored. But though our relationship with God can no longer be destroyed by our sin, our sin still can impair that relationship. When we ask for forgiveness daily, we recognize that we are still sinners saved only by God's grace. Make sure your group understands this important distinction.
- **Why should we pray for God to not lead us in temptation? Shouldn't we just not do the stupid stuff**

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that leads us to sinful choices?

- o Answer: Just as God's grace saves us from our sin, His grace and His presence, through the Holy Spirit, also empower us to choose to be obedient to Him.

FINALLY, finish up this section on prayer and have a student read Matthew 6:14-15. Ask:

- **I'm a little confused here. I thought our salvation was based only on God's grace. We don't earn anything, we just trust in what Jesus did for us on the cross. Is God's forgiveness of us dependent on how we treat others?**
 - o Allow your students time to wrestle with these two verses. Jesus is communicating two important truths: 1) Followers of Jesus—who have accepted God's forgiveness—will be characterized by forgiving others; 2) Just as in Matthew 6:12, Jesus is likely referring to the fact that our sin can still impair our personal relationship with God. When we are unforgiving toward others, it hinders our ability to come before God and admit our need of forgiveness to Him.
- **Why is it sometimes so hard to forgive others?**
 - o Answers will vary.

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

THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** To begin to use the Lord's Prayer as model to grow closer to God in prayer.
- **Set-Up:** You'll need a copy of the "Praying Like Jesus" handout for each student and leader.

FIRST, explain to your group that they'll have an opportunity to put into practice what Jesus taught His followers about prayer. Give everyone the "Praying Like Jesus" handout and say:

- **Here's the thing about prayer. It's kind of silly to spend more time talking about prayer than actually praying. We're going to use the prayer Jesus taught His followers as a guide for our own prayer. And since Jesus said that prayer should be first and foremost a personal thing between us and God, we're going to do it on our own, and only share what we feel comfortable sharing.**

Make sure that your group understands the instructions before giving everyone about five minutes to fill out the handout.

NEXT, give students two or three minutes (more if you have enough time left) to pray through what they wrote down. Say:

- **Now, we're going to take a few minutes and silently pray through everything that we wrote down. There's no right way to do this, but a good place to start is just start at the top and pray to God about what you have written down.**
 - o Give your students a few minutes of silence before moving on to the next question.
- **What was that like for you?**
 - o Answers will vary.
- **Did it feel easier to pray by just answering the questions?**

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o Allow space to answer. Where appropriate, follow up one-word or short answers with "Tell me more about that."

FINALLY, encourage your group to use the form as a blueprint this week for their own prayer times. Say:

- **Spending time with Jesus in prayer is something just about everyone has a hard time doing at some point or another. To put into practice what we talked about today, try to spend about five minutes each day just praying with this handout in front of you. If something happens this week that you can add to it, feel free to do that.**

Close your Bible study in prayer, perhaps ending with a version of the prayer Jesus taught His disciples.

- 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.