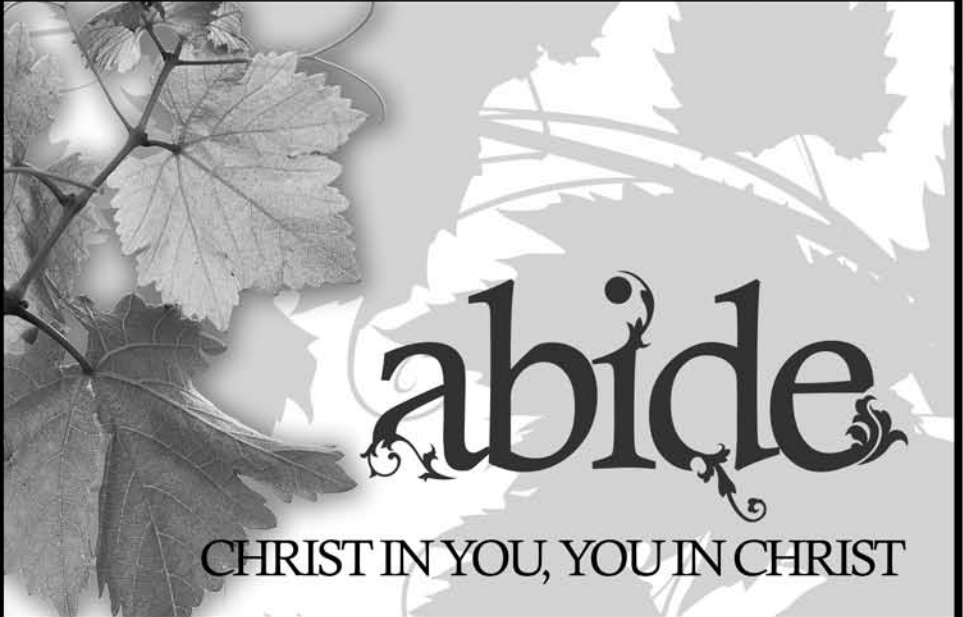


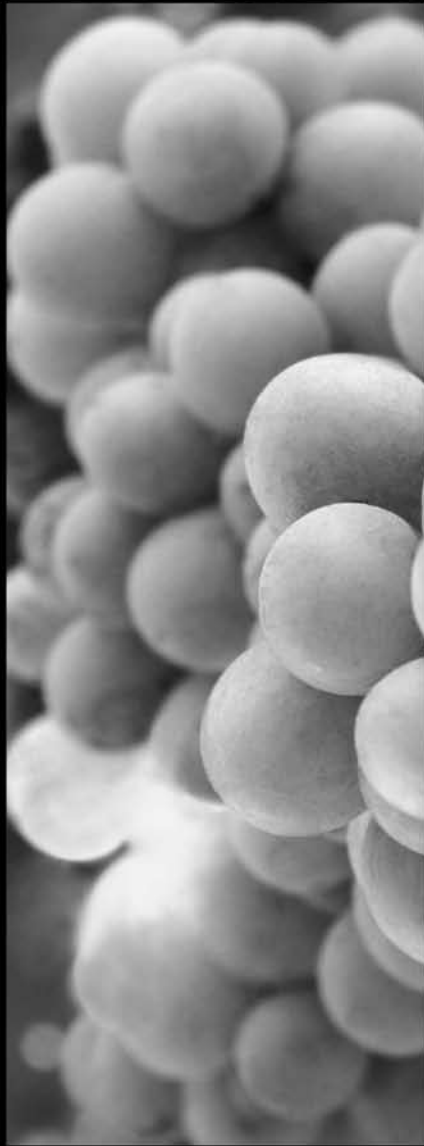


SMALL GROUP BIBLE STUDY



abide

CHRIST IN YOU, YOU IN CHRIST



LESSON 6

Abide Through Prayer

Key Text: John 15:7-8; Matthew 6:9-13; cross-references

Introduction

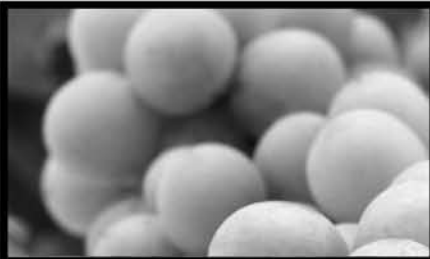
As we begin the sixth week of our study of the Parable of the Vine, we have learned from God's Word that apart from Christ we can do nothing. Just as a branch must remain in the vine in order to bear fruit, we must abide in Christ in order to bear fruit for God's glory. As believers, we cannot produce fruit and we are not expected to do so. Producing fruit is what the Vine does; and the branches bear it, as they remain connected to the Vine. When God redeems us, He places us "in Christ." As we abide in that position through developing an intimate relationship with Christ, our lives will become fruitful.

Through the Word and Trials

In the last two lessons we have studied how to abide in Christ through His Word, and how to abide through times of adversity in our lives. Last week, we studied John 15:2 and learned that the "cutting off" and "pruning" of the branches by God is actually good news for the branches. This is the Gardener's way of ensuring that His branches are fulfilling their purpose of bearing fruit that will last. It is how He keeps us healthy. God "lifts up" branches that are not bearing fruit through loving discipline. He "prunes" those branches that are bearing fruit through testing their faith (trials and suffering) to make sure that they don't "overgrow" and become so dense they cannot bear more fruit. These seasons of discipline, trials and suffering are the acts of a loving Father, and they prove that we are legitimate children.

Before you begin this week's study, lead your group in a quick review of the main points of last week's lesson on abiding through times of adversity. Use the following questions to help guide your review.

- 1) How does God (gardener) tend to the branches in Christ that aren't bearing fruit? Explain what "cuts off" means in John 15:2 when you answer.



- 2) Describe God's discipline according to the passage we studied in Hebrews 12.
- 3) How does God (gardener) tend to the branches in Christ that are bearing fruit? Explain what "pruning" means in John 15:2 when you answer.
- 4) What does the testing of faith and suffering produce in a believer's life?

Intimacy Through Prayer

This week we are going to study another practical way to develop intimacy with Christ in our daily lives—abiding through prayer. Our focus will be on John 15:7-8 which says:

"If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to My Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."

This is a wonderful promise by Christ to His followers; but it is also one that can easily be taken out of context—especially the phrase "whatever you wish." Today, we are going to see how to pray in a way that lines up with this passage. Jesus never lies, so this promise is true. It is possible to abide in Christ through prayer is such a way that "whatever we ask" will be given to us.

Opening Prayer

Begin your time in study of God's Word by praying for your group. Pray that God will open the heart of every person and reveal Himself to you all in a new way as you study and discuss His Word together. Pray that the Holy Spirit will guide you into the truth and show you all how to apply what you learn to your lives in a practical way. And pray that God will be glorified through your discussion today.

Key Study

As we begin our study today, it is important to remember that prayer isn't a religious ritual that we perform. Prayer is a way that we abide in Christ. The purpose of this study is developing intimacy with Christ. There is no way to stay "connected" with Christ on a daily basis without prayer. Therefore, there is no way to bear fruit without a Biblical prayer life. Just like any relationship in our lives, communication is essential. Not all prayer connects us relationally with God. If we come to God in prayer with a list of what we want Him to do for us, and never seek His heart and His desires for our lives, we aren't connecting with Him, and our prayers will not be "fruitful." In this kind of prayer, He becomes like a "Santa Claus" in our lives—someone we go to when we want or need something.

This type of prayer relationship is not what Jesus meant in John 15:7. So what does He mean? Throughout Scripture, God promises to answer our prayers. Here are some of these Scriptures:

John 15:7-8

"If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to My Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be My disciples."

1 John 5:14-15

"This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of Him."

Mark 11:24

“Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.”

John 14:13-14

“I will do whatever you ask in My name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask Me for anything in My name, and I will do it.”

These verses contain the promise of answered prayers, but they also contain conditions. These conditions are:

- Remaining in Christ and His words remaining in you—John 15:7
- Asking according to God’s will—1 John 5:14
- Believing that you have received it—Mark 11:24
- Asking in Christ’s name—John 14:14

The question of whether God will answer our prayers is not one about God, but about us. Are we praying in such a way that we are abiding in Him and His words are abiding in us? Are we asking according to God’s will and not our own? Do we pray in full faith that we have received what we ask? Are we asking in Christ’s name? These are the questions we must ask ourselves if we are going to pray in a way that develops a deeper intimacy and connection with Christ.

Seeking God’s Heart

If we are praying in the ways described in these verses, then we are no longer bringing God a list of demands, nor are we “tossing up” our requests, hoping He might answer. Our prayer life will become a time of seeking God’s heart, and praying prayers that He wants to answer because they reflect His desires and will for our lives. This is how Jesus wants us to pray.

These Biblical “conditions” to the promise of answered prayer are the key to understanding why Christ made such a bold promise. Another way to say this promise based on these verses is, “If you are abiding in Me through My Word and asking in complete faith, you can ask anything you want, as long as it is according to God’s will and reflects My character, and I promise God will answer your prayer.”

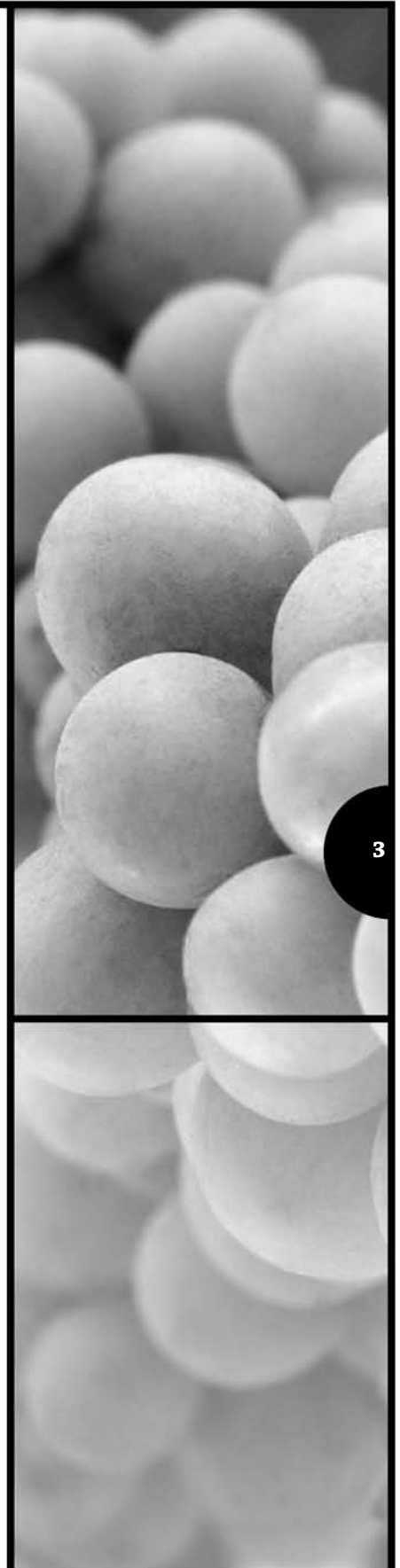
Receiving Anything We Ask

We will receive anything we ask for in prayer if we are asking for that which God already wants to do. How do we pray this way? How do we know what God already wants to do? By abiding in Christ through His Word. The deeper and more intimate our relationship and connection with Christ, the more we will know Him and His will.

Have your group turn in their Bible to John 15:7-8. Have someone read it aloud. Using the commentary and the following questions, lead your group in a discussion of these verses.

- 1) What is the promise Jesus makes regarding prayer in verse 7?
- 2) What is the condition of this promise?
- 3) Based on what we have studied so far in this series, what does Jesus mean by, “If you remain in Me, and My words remain in you?”
- 4) How will abiding be reflected in prayer?
- 5) In verse 8, Jesus gives a reason that “whatever you ask” will be granted. What reason does He give?

Explain that you are going to lead the group in a brief “tour” of other places in Scripture where promises regarding prayer are made. Have the group turn





in their Bible and ask volunteers to read the verses. After each verse, use the commentary and following questions to discuss them.

1 John 5:14-15

- 6) What is our confidence in approaching God, according to verse 14?
- 7) How do we know that He hears us, according to verse 14?
- 8) The word “hears” in this passage is the Greek word akouo, and it means, “To attend to; to consider what has been said.” Based on this definition, what does it mean that God “hears” our prayers if we pray according to His will?
- 9) And if He hears us, according to verse 15, what do we know?

Mark 11:24

- 10) What is the condition for answered prayer in this verse?

John 14:13-14

- 11) In Whose name should we make our requests in prayer, according to this passage?
- 12) Asking “in Christ’s name” means to ask in accordance with His character. How does this affect the meaning of this passage?
- 13) Why will Christ grant our requests based on verse 13?

Our Desires Aligned to God’s Will

Explain to your group that based on all of these cross-references, Jesus isn’t saying in John 15:7 that we can ask God for anything that we want and receive it. Christ is saying that when we abide in Him, God will change our desires to align with God’s will. And when we pray according to His will, we can have confidence that God will answer our prayers. Why does praying according to God’s will assure that He gives us whatever we ask? Have a volunteer read the following passage in order to answer that question.

Isaiah 46:9-11

“Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please. From the east I summon a bird of prey; from a far-off land, a man to fulfill My purpose. What I have said, that will I bring about; what I have planned, that will I do.”

God will fulfill His purposes and His will with or without us according to this passage in Isaiah. Prayer is His way of involving us in the process. It is a way that we abide in Christ (connect with Him intimately). When we pray according to God’s will, He will answer our prayers because He will accomplish His plan on the earth. Now we must answer the question, “How do I pray according to God’s will?”

Practical Prayer

The rest of today’s lesson is going to be practical in nature. Christ’s disciples asked Him the same question we are asking today. In Luke 11:1, Jesus’ disciples saw Him praying and when He finished, they asked, “Lord, teach us to pray.” Christ’s lesson in prayer that day was what is now known as “The Lord’s Prayer” or the Model Prayer.

This prayer was not meant to be a religious ritual that is mindlessly repeated as it has become today. It was an intimate conversation between Jesus and His twelve disciples as He answered their request to teach them how to pray. How did He teach them to pray? He prayed in front of them. He was giving them a

model to follow, not a prayer to be repeated word for word. It is still a model for us to follow that can help us pray according to God's will. Let's examine the prayer line by line in order to understand why Jesus told His followers to "pray in this way."

Matthew 6:9-13

"This, then, is how you should pray:

'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name,

Your kingdom come,

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Our Father In Heaven, Hallowed (Holy) Be Your Name

All answered prayer begins with God. In the model Jesus gave us, He is teaching us to begin our prayers with acknowledging God's position and character. He is "in heaven," which means He rules and reigns over all; and He is hallowed. This means He is holy, and we are to be in reverent awe of Him. He is above all, and His ways are higher than our own.

When we begin prayer in worship of God, we humble ourselves before Him. The strength of our prayers is in knowing God through His Son Jesus Christ. How can we acknowledge and worship Him if we do not know Him? Notice that Jesus says to call Him "Father." In this model, Jesus teaches us not to come before God with a list of demands, but to begin our prayers in humble adoration for who God is and in respect of His authority over all the earth (Isaiah 6:3).

Your Kingdom Come

In this part of Christ's prayer we see complete and total allegiance to God's kingdom. We align ourselves with God's will on earth. Many times we are double-minded, forgetting that our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20). By praying, "Your kingdom come," Christ is showing us that our prayers should focus on God's priorities and not our own. This is our way of saying to God, "You are in control, not me."

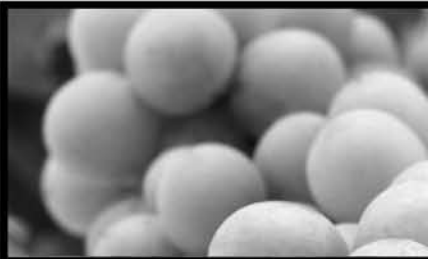
Your Will Be Done On Earth As It Is In Heaven

Once we have acknowledged God's character and position and pledged our allegiance to His kingdom, we must submit our will to the Father's will. Remember from our earlier cross-references, this is how we know God will answer our prayers—if we pray according to His will. This is the part of our prayers when we seek God's viewpoint, praying for what He wants to do. Our prayers must reflect divine purposes. There is no way we will ever be able to pray this way if God's Word does not fill our minds. This is why Jesus said in John 15:7, "If My words remain in you..." In order to know God's will, we must abide in Christ. We must surrender to Him, allowing Him to change our hearts and minds.

Give Us Today Our Daily Bread

This is when we present our needs to God and confess our dependence upon Him. Notice Christ asks for "daily bread." Not enough bread for a week, or a month, or a year. Just enough for "today." This models for us daily intimacy with Christ through prayer. It presupposes that tomorrow, we will be talking to Him again. And also note that Jesus prays for "bread." He doesn't teach us to ask for filet mignon. We are to ask God to meet our needs, not our earthly desires, and trust Him that He will come through.





Forgive Us Our Debts, As We Also Forgive Our Debtors

The “debts” Jesus is referring to are moral debts, not financial ones. This is the part of our prayers that involves confession and forgiveness of sins. Notice the order in which Jesus prayed as He taught His disciples. He begins with worship and adoration of the Father, followed by allegiance to His kingdom and submission to His will. Then Jesus humbly asks that God will meet His basic needs for this day. It is natural that confession would come in such a prayer. As we meditate on God’s holiness and His provision, the Holy Spirit will convict us of our sin so that we can confess it to the Father, which builds greater intimacy with Him.

And Lead Us Not Into Temptation, But Deliver Us From The Evil One

Finally, we ask for God’s guidance and protection from the evil one (Satan). Christ knew that His disciples could not handle Satan alone. Christ Himself prayed for His disciples’ protection in John 17:11,15. This is the part of our prayers where we cry out to God in poverty of Spirit, acknowledging that we need Him every moment of every day in order not to fall short of His righteous standards. This is when we express our desire to please Him by obeying Him, and yet also acknowledging that we cannot do this apart from Him.

Prayer That Models Abiding

As you can see, Christ gave His disciples quite a lesson in how to pray in Matthew 6:9-13. This model falls right in line with Jesus’ promise in John 15:7-8. This is a prayer model that shows us how to pray in a way that fulfills Christ’s “conditions” of abiding in Him, His words abiding in us, praying according to God’s will, and praying based on the character of Christ (in His name).

You may be thinking, “When do we pray for the needs of others in this model?” The answer is simple, but easy to miss. Notice that throughout the passage, Christ prays using the pronoun “our,” instead of “my.” Throughout the prayer, He is praying for Himself and for others. This teaches us that our prayers should not only be for ourselves, but also for others.

Taking Your Group Through The Model Prayer

Have your group turn in their Bible to Matthew 6:9-13. Explain that today we are going to see how Jesus taught His disciples to pray. Explain that this prayer was never meant to be repeated word for word, but it is a model for how to pray. Have someone read the passage aloud.

Using the commentary, write each line of the Lord’s Prayer on the board (you may want to write it before class begins). Go back through the passage line by line with the group, writing a brief explanation next to each line explaining Christ’s model. As you go through each line, give a brief description of Christ’s model using the commentary above. You may write something like the following:

- Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name – Worship
- Your kingdom come – Allegiance
- Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven – Submission to God’s will
- Give us today our daily bread – Needs/Faith
- Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors – Confession/forgiveness
- And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one – Guidance/Protection

The remainder of the lesson is going to be taking a deeper look into each “line” of Christ’s model prayer. Break everyone into smaller groups and give each group one of the handouts for deeper discussion. If you don’t have enough

groups for each to receive one handout, you may give more than one handout to the groups. In a very small setting (6-8 people), you can assign each “group” reading to one person, and ask them to complete the questions on their own—let the exercise “scale” to your group size. Give them 20-25 minutes to complete their work and then let each group share with the rest of the class what they learned.

It will be helpful for you as a leader to complete each group assignment yourself prior to class so that you can facilitate discussion and help answer any questions they have. The group assignments are listed below for your review.

GROUP IN-CLASS BREAKOUT WORK

Group One

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.”

Worship

Read the following passages and answer the questions that follow.

Daniel 2:19-23

Jeremiah 32:16-25

- 1) How do these prayers compare to how Jesus teaches us to pray?
- 2) How does Daniel worship and adore God in these prayers?
- 3) How does Daniel acknowledge God’s character in these prayers?
- 4) List some of the characteristics of God that Daniel acknowledges in these prayers.
- 5) How does Daniel acknowledge God’s position and authority in these prayers?
- 6) Do you think these are examples of prayers that please the Father? Why or why not?
- 7) What can you learn from these examples that will help you as you approach God in prayer?

Spend a few moments together in prayer, not asking God “for” anything, but just worshipping and adoring Him for who He is and His authority over all.

Group Two

“Your kingdom come”

Allegiance

Read the following passages and answer the questions that follow.

Matthew 6:33

- 1) Based on Matthew 6:33, what are we to “seek first”?
- 2) The Greek definition of the word “kingdom” in Matthew 6:33 actually means, “Royal power, kingship, dominion, rule; not to be confused with an actual kingdom but rather the right or authority to rule over a kingdom.” Based on this definition, what is Jesus teaching in this verse?

Mark 8:34

- 3) What must we do in order to follow Christ (be His disciple)?
- 4) What does it mean to deny yourself?
- 5) How does this verse show that Jesus expects allegiance to God’s kingdom from His followers?
- 6) How does denying yourself relate to what we have studied about abiding in Christ?





Luke 9:59-62

- 7) What did the man want to do “before” he followed Christ in verse 59?
- 8) How did Jesus respond to his request in verse 60?
- 9) What did Jesus tell the man to “proclaim”?
- 10) What did another man want to do before he followed Christ in verse 61?
- 11) How did Christ respond to his request?
- 12) How does this passage illustrate how important allegiance to the Father’s kingdom is to Christ?
- 13) How do all of these passages relate to Jesus telling His disciples to pray, “Your kingdom come” in Matthew 6:10 (the Lord’s Prayer)?

Spend a few moments together in prayer, aligning yourselves with His will by expressing your allegiance to His kingdom (authority, rule, right to reign).

Group 3
“Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven”
Submission to His Will

Read the following passages and answer the questions that follow.

Romans 12:1-2

- 1) According to this passage, how can you “test and approve” what God’s will is? *Note: The phrase “test and approve” in verse 2 literally means, “To recognize as genuine after examination.”*
- 2) Based on this passage, is it God’s will that you be able to recognize His will?
- 3) How do we renew our minds in order to recognize His will?

James 4:1-3

- 4) According to verse 1, what causes fights and quarrels among believers?
- 5) What are the 2 reasons given in verses 2-3 for why we sometimes don’t receive what we ask for from God?
- 6) What are some “wrong motives” we have when we pray?
- 7) How does this passage relate to submission to God’s will?

Luke 22:39-44

- 8) What did Jesus request from God in verse 42?
- 9) How did Jesus submit to the Father’s will in verse 42?
- 10) In this passage, was Jesus’ will (desires) ever in conflict with the Father’s?
- 11) How did Jesus handle this conflict of wills?
- 12) How does verse 44 describe Jesus’ anguish as He prayed in submission to God’s will?
- 13) What encouragement do you get from this passage for when your feelings and will conflict with what God wants to do in your life?
- 14) What if Jesus had not submitted to God’s will?
- 15) What are the consequences if we, Christ’s Body, do not submit ourselves to God’s will?

Spend a few moments praying together, submitting yourselves to God’s will.

Group 4

“Give us today our daily bread”

Needs

Read the following passages and answer the questions that follow.

Philippians 4:19

- 1) What is God’s promise to us in this verse?
- 2) How many of our needs will He supply?
- 3) What is the difference in a “need” and a “want”?
- 4) According to Whose riches will He meet our needs?
- 5) How are Christ’s riches different from earthly riches?

Jeremiah 17:5-6

- 6) Who is “cursed” according to verse 5?
- 7) What are some ways that we tend to “trust in man” instead of trusting in God for our needs to be met?

Job 12:7-10

- 8) According to verses 7-8, who can teach us of God’s provision?
- 9) What do these “know” based on verse 9?
- 10) How is God described in verse 10?
- 11) What does this teach you about His ability to meet all of your needs?

Matthew 6:25-34

- 12) What are we “not” to worry about according to verse 25?
- 13) Who is our example in such faith, based on verse 26-30?
- 14) How are we to pray for our needs, according to verses 31-34?
- 15) What does verse 32 teach us about God’s knowledge of our needs?
- 16) Why is it so hard not to worry about tomorrow?
- 17) What does worrying show about our faith in God?

Spend a few moments in prayer together, thanking God for His provision in your life and His ability to meet all of your needs.

Group 5

“Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors”

Confession and Forgiveness

Read the following passages and answer the questions that follow.

Hebrews 10:10

- 1) What has God already done for us according to this verse? In other words, what have we “been made”?
- 2) Through what have we been made holy?
- 3) For how long, according to this verse?

1 John 1:9

- 4) According to this verse, what are we to do in prayer?
- 5) What is God’s promise if we do so?
- 6) If we have already been forgiven and made holy according to Hebrews 10:10, why should we confess our sins like 1 John 1:9 says to? What does sin do to our fellowship with God, even though our relationship with Him is secure? (Look up Isaiah 59:2 to help you answer)





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James 5:16

- 7) What are believers commanded to do in this verse?
- 8) Why?
- 9) How are the prayers of a righteous man described here?

Matthew 6:14

- 10) According to this verse, what must we do in order to be forgiven of our own sins and enjoy intimacy with Christ?
- 11) How can bitterness and unforgiveness towards others result in a lack of intimacy with Christ?

Spend a few moments praying together as a group for any sins you are struggling with.

Group 6

**“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one”
Guidance and Protection**

Read the following passages and answer the questions that follow.

Luke 22:31-32

- 1) What request did Satan make regarding Peter?
- 2) What did Christ do for Peter according to verse 32?
- 3) What did Jesus pray for Peter?

1 Peter 5:8

- 4) How is Satan described in this verse?
- 5) How, then, should we “be”?
- 6) Based on this verse, why should we pray for God’s guidance and protection?

1 Corinthians 10:13

- 7) What is God’s promise to believers regarding the temptations we will face in life?
- 8) What is the difference in “getting out of it” and in “standing up under it?”

2 Corinthians 2:14

- 9) How does Christ always “lead us” based on this verse?
- 10) What does it mean to triumph?
- 11) What does this verse teach you about how God will answer if you pray, “lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one?” Should we fear Satan?

John 17:15

- 12) How did Jesus pray for His followers in this verse?
- 13) Why doesn’t He want us “taken out of the world?”

Spend a few moments praying together, asking God to protect and guide you.

Conclusion

Give each group a few minutes to share some of the key points of their discussion. You will not have time for them to share all they studied and learned. You might want to give them all a copy of the different “group studies” from this lesson for their personal study time this week. As you close your time together, remind the group that the purpose of prayer is not to get what we want from God, but to develop our intimacy with Him by abiding in Christ through prayer.

Prayer is how God involves us in His work on earth. He wants to reveal His will to us through His Word and His Spirit—but He will not if we are not abiding in Christ. As we remain closely connected in the Vine, God will show us how to pray, and what to pray for. These are the prayers that He promises to answer. Prayers based on His agenda, and not our own.

Let's be a people connected to God through prayer. If we remain in Christ, and His words remain in us, we will receive whatever we ask for in prayer. Why? Because it is to God's glory that we bear fruit (John 15:7-8).

