

A Study from Jersey Church

TRANSFORMING
Prayer



Published: October 2026

Bible study content and devotional material for this booklet are provided by Jersey Church in partnership with Lifeway Custom Church Resources.

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TRANSFORMING PRAYER

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DEVOTIONALS

PRAYER THAT TRANSFORMS

DAY 1

Matthew 6:9

Our Father in heaven, your name be honored as holy.

This Sunday we're starting a new series on prayer, and it seems fitting to begin the week the same way Jesus began his model prayer, not with a request, but with an address. Before "give us," before "forgive us," before "deliver us," Jesus teaches his disciples to simply name who they're talking to. Our Father. In heaven. Holy.

It's easy to skip straight past this part. Most of our prayers start with the problem, not the person we're bringing it to. But notice the order Jesus gives us. He doesn't forbid requests, the model prayer is full of them a few lines later. He simply insists that reverence comes first, that we remember who God is before we tell him what we need.

There's something steadying about that order. A need can feel enormous when it's the first thing on your mind. It tends to shrink, or at least come into better proportion, once you've spent a moment remembering the Father you're bringing it to.

- **Before your next prayer request today, try spending thirty seconds just naming something true about who God is. What difference does that make?**
- **Father, thank You that You are holy, near, and good, all at once. Forgive me for how quickly I rush past who You are to get to what I want. Teach me this week what it means to seek Your face before I seek Your hand. Amen.**

DAY 2

Acts 3:6

But Peter said, 'I don't have silver or gold, but what I have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk!'

Sunday's series opens in Acts 4, in the middle of a prayer meeting sparked by real danger. But that danger started with something much smaller and much more ordinary, two apostles walking into the temple to pray and noticing a man who had been unable to walk since birth, begging at the gate like he did every day.

Peter had no money to offer him, which he says plainly. What he had instead was the name of Jesus, and he gave what he had. The man didn't just start walking, he went in with them leaping and praising God, and the resulting crowd is what eventually landed Peter and John in front of the religious council.

It's worth remembering that the prayer we'll study this Sunday, a prayer bold enough to shake the room, began with something as unremarkable as stopping for a beggar. Big moments of prayer often trace back to small moments of obedience.

- **Is there something small, an act of compassion or obedience, that God is nudging you toward today, even if you can't see yet where it leads?**
- **Jesus, thank You that You use ordinary moments to set larger things in motion. Help me not overlook the person in front of me today because I'm waiting for something bigger. Give me what Peter had, not silver or gold, but You, to offer freely. Amen.**

DAY 3

Acts 1:14

They were all continually united in prayer, along with the women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

Long before the prayer meeting we'll look at this Sunday, the early believers had already built a habit of praying together. This verse, describing the days right after Jesus ascended, shows a room full of very different people, apostles, women, Jesus' own brothers, united in one activity: continual, shared prayer.

It's telling that when real trouble eventually came, that same instinct was already in place. They didn't have to learn how to pray together in a crisis, because they had already been practicing it in ordinary days. The habit was there before the hardship was.

Most of us default to praying alone, quietly, privately, and there's real value in that kind of prayer. But this verse is a reminder that Scripture also expects something more, a shared, spoken, united kind of prayer that carries weight a solitary prayer life alone can't reach.

- **Who is someone you could invite into shared prayer this week, even for just a few minutes, instead of carrying a concern by yourself?**
- **Lord, thank You for the gift of praying alongside other believers. Forgive me for treating prayer as something private I do instead of something we do together. Build in me the same habit of shared prayer that carried the early church through what was ahead. Amen.**

DAY 4

Ephesians 6:19-20

Pray also for me, that the message may be given to me when I open my mouth to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, so that I might be bold enough to speak as I should.

Paul wrote these words from prison, and what's striking is what he does and doesn't ask the church to pray. He doesn't ask them to pray for his release, though that would be understandable. He asks them to pray that he would keep speaking the gospel boldly, chains and all.

This Sunday's passage in Acts shows the exact same pattern from an earlier generation of believers. Threatened by the religious council, they didn't primarily pray for the threats to stop. They prayed for boldness to keep going anyway. It's a different kind of request than most of us default to, and a harder one to pray honestly.

Asking God to remove a hard circumstance is a natural, faithful prayer. But asking him for courage to remain faithful inside the hard circumstance, whether or not it changes, reaches for something even deeper

- **Is there a difficult situation in your life right now where you've only been praying for it to end, rather than also praying for boldness and faithfulness while it lasts?**
- **Father, give me the same courage Paul asked for, not necessarily an easier circumstance, but boldness inside whatever circumstance I'm in. Where I've been asking only for relief, teach me to also ask for strength. Use me right where I am, chains or none. Amen.**

DAY 5

Psalm 46:10

Stop your fighting, and know that I am God, exalted among the nations, exalted on the earth.

As we head into this Sunday and the start of a whole series on prayer, this verse is a fitting place to land. Before it, Psalm 46 describes real chaos, nations raging, mountains shaking, the earth changing. And right in the middle of that chaos comes this command: stop, and know that I am God.

It's not a suggestion to relax because everything is fine. Everything, in the psalm, is not fine. It's an invitation to remember who is still in control precisely when it doesn't feel like anyone is. That's the same posture we'll see modeled this Sunday, believers under real pressure choosing reverence and remembrance before they ever get to their requests.

Transforming prayer starts here, in stillness, in simply knowing him, before it moves anywhere else. Whatever you're carrying into this weekend, let this be the first move.

- **What would it look like to actually “stop” today, even briefly, and let your mind rest on who God is before you move on to everything else on your list?**
- **God, help me stop long enough to remember that You are exalted, sovereign, and near. Quiet the noise in my mind that keeps pulling me toward everything but You. As this new season of prayer begins, teach me to know You first. Amen.**

PRAYER THAT TRANSFORMS

ACTS 4:23-21

OCTOBER 25, 2026

MAIN POINT

When Peter and John were released from their trial before the Sanhedrin, threatened into silence, the believers did not call a strategy meeting. They called a prayer meeting. Before asking God for anything, they spent the first half of their prayer simply telling him who he is, the sovereign Maker who spoke through David centuries earlier and was never caught off guard by the opposition now standing against them. Only after that reminder of his greatness did they ask for boldness, not an end to the threats. Transforming prayer works the same way now as it did then, less about managing the crisis in front of us and more about remembering who is still on the throne.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

Most of us treat prayer like a fire extinguisher, something we reach for once things have already gone wrong. We rehearse the problem, list what we need fixed, and hope God gets to it quickly. There is nothing wrong with bringing our needs to him. But it is worth noticing that is usually where we start, and where we stop.

Today begins a new series built around a different pattern, one Jesus himself gave his disciples when they asked him to teach them to pray. Today's passage shows that pattern in action, in real time, in the middle of a genuine crisis. A group of ordinary believers, freshly threatened by the most powerful religious council in Jerusalem, prayed in a way that changed not their circumstances but them.

- **When you're facing pressure or bad news, is your first instinct to start problem solving or to pray? What do you think shapes that instinct?**

- **Have you ever noticed a real difference between a prayer that starts by focusing on who God is and a prayer that jumps straight to your list of needs?**

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> Have a volunteer read Acts 4:23-31.

After they were released, they went to their own people and reported everything the chief priests and the elders had said to them. When they heard this, they raised their voices together to God and said, 'Master, you are the one who made the heaven, the earth, and the sea, and everything in them. You said through the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of our father David your servant: Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers assemble together against the Lord and against his Christ. For, in fact, in this city, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, assembled together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. And now, Lord, consider their threats, and grant that your servants may speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand for healing, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.' When they had prayed, the place where they were assembled was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God boldly. (Acts 4:23-31, CSB)

A few days before this prayer, Peter and John had done nothing more threatening than heal a man who had been lame from birth, a familiar beggar at the temple gate everyone in Jerusalem recognized. The healing drew a crowd, Peter preached Jesus to them, and the temple authorities had the two apostles arrested overnight. The next morning, standing before the same council that had handed Jesus over for crucifixion, Peter answered every question about “what power” had healed the man with a direct claim, that it was the name of Jesus, the one they had crucified

and God had raised. The council could not deny the miracle. The healed man was standing right there. So they did the only thing left to do, they threatened Peter and John and ordered them to stop speaking about Jesus at all, then let them go.

- **Peter and John walked out of that trial having done nothing wrong except tell the truth about who healed a man. Have you ever faced consequences simply for being honest about what you believe?**

The first thing the believers do with this news is remarkable for what it is not. It is not a debate about legal strategy or a plan to keep a lower profile. Luke tells us they “raised their voices together,” a whole room praying with one voice, and the first word out of their mouths is “Master,” addressing God as the sovereign ruler over heaven, earth, and sea. Before a single request is made, they spend the opening of this prayer doing nothing but affirming who God is and what he has already done.

- **The believers’ very first words in a moment of real danger were about God’s identity, not their problem. What would it look like for your own prayers to start the same way?**

Then something even more striking happens. They quote Psalm 2, a psalm about kings and rulers plotting against God’s anointed one, and they apply it directly to Herod, Pilate, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel who had just crucified Jesus. In other words, they recognized that the very opposition they were now facing had already been anticipated by God, written into Scripture centuries earlier and worked out according to what God’s “hand and plan had predestined.” Nothing about their situation, not even the threats from the Sanhedrin, had caught God by surprise.

- **Knowing that God's plan already accounted for opposition against Jesus, and now against his followers, how might that change the way you view unexpected hardship in your own life?**

Only after all of that, after reverence and after remembering God's sovereign plan, do the believers finally ask for something. And notice what they ask for. Not comfort, not an end to the threats, not protection from the council. They ask God to "consider their threats" and then grant them boldness to keep speaking, along with continued healing and signs done in Jesus' name. Their prayer moves from who God is to what he has already been doing to, only at the very end, a request shaped entirely by the mission he had already given them.

- **The believers didn't pray for the threats to disappear, they prayed for boldness in spite of them. Is there a situation in your life right now where you've been praying for the pressure to go away rather than for strength to remain faithful in it?**

The chapter ends with the room itself shaking and everyone present being filled with the Holy Spirit, immediately followed by bold proclamation of God's word. This was not a new experience for these believers, most of them had already been filled with the Spirit once before at Pentecost. This was a fresh filling for a fresh need, God's visible confirmation that he had heard exactly the prayer they prayed. They asked for boldness, and boldness is precisely what they received.

- **What would change in your own life if you genuinely believed God responds to prayers for boldness and faithfulness the same way He responded here?**

APPLICATION

Offer the following action steps for the application of God's Word.

- **This week, try starting your prayers with two or three minutes of simply telling God who he is before you ask him for anything. What is different about praying that way?**
- **Where in your life have you been asking God to remove a pressure or a threat rather than asking him for boldness and faithfulness in the middle of it?**
- **The believers prayed “together,” with one voice, not alone. Who is one person you could invite to pray with you this week about something specific you’re facing?**
- **Psalm 2 reminded the believers that their opposition was not a surprise to God. What current circumstance do you need to hand over to God’s sovereign plan instead of carrying the weight of it yourself?**

PRAY

Spend time simply praising God for who he is before bringing him any requests, the same pattern this passage models. Thank him that no opposition you face today catches him off guard. Ask him for boldness rather than only relief, the courage to keep speaking and living for Jesus even where it costs something. Pray as a group with one voice for a specific need in your community, and ask God to confirm his presence the way he did for the believers in Jerusalem.

ACTS 4:23-31

This prayer comes immediately after the first real conflict the young church faced. Peter and John had healed a well known lame beggar at the temple's Beautiful Gate, and when the resulting crowd gave Peter an opportunity to preach Jesus, the temple authorities had both men arrested. Standing the next day before the Sanhedrin, the same council that had sent Jesus to his death, Peter answered their question about the healing with startling directness, insisting that Jesus of Nazareth, whom this council had crucified and God had raised, was the one who healed the man and the only name by which anyone can be saved. Unable to deny an obvious miracle and unwilling to punish two men who had become popular heroes, the council settled for threats and released them.

The prayer itself divides into three clear movements. It opens by affirming God's sovereignty as the Creator of heaven, earth, and sea. It then recalls God's plan as already announced in Scripture, quoting Psalm 2's picture of rulers gathering against God's anointed one and applying it directly to Herod, Pilate, and the very leaders who had just threatened the apostles. Only in its final movement does the prayer turn to request, and even then the request is not for safety but for boldness to keep speaking, alongside continued signs and healing done in Jesus' name.

The language used throughout is worth noticing. David and Jesus are both called God's "servant," a term of honored service, while the believers refer to themselves with a different word meaning something closer to "bond servant," a deliberate posture of humility before the God they have just spent several verses exalting. The prayer's opening focus on creation was a common and fitting way to approach God when a request for his power was about to follow, echoing similar prayers found throughout the Old Testament.

The shaking of the place where they were gathered, followed immediately by a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit, functioned as visible confirmation that God had heard this prayer and was answering it precisely as asked. This was not a repeat of the initial Spirit baptism these believers had already experienced at Pentecost, but a renewed filling suited to a renewed need. What follows in the text bears this out directly, the believers who had just been threatened into silence went on to speak the word of God with exactly the boldness they had asked for.

DEVOTIONALS

SEEK HIS FACE: FROM WORRY TO WORSHIP

DAY 1

Read Day 1 of *21 Days of Transforming Prayer*

In Day 1 of *21 Days of Transforming Prayer*, Daniel Henderson writes about how most of us learned to pray: by watching someone else. For many of us, what we picked up was a list: bless this, fix that, help with the other thing. None of that is wrong. God invites our requests. But when Jesus taught his disciples to pray, he didn't start with their needs. He started with his Father's name, kingdom, and will.

That's the heart of worship-based prayer: seeking God's face before his hand. His face is who he is. His hand is what he gives. If all we ever do is reach for his hand, we can miss his face entirely. But when we seek him first, we find that he's glad to meet our needs, and our requests start to sound different because we've remembered who we're talking to.

This week, before you bring God your list, spend a few minutes simply telling him who he is.

- **Who taught you to pray, and what did they model for you? What would change if you started your prayers with worship instead of requests?**
- **Father, you are holy, and your name deserves honor before anything I ask. Forgive me for the times I've treated prayer like a shopping list. Teach me to seek your face first, and let my requests grow out of knowing you. Your kingdom come, your will be done, in my life today. Amen.**

DAY 2

Read Day 2 of *21 Days of Transforming Prayer*

In Day 2 of *21 Days of Transforming Prayer*, Daniel Henderson writes about prayer as something God uses to change us, not just our circumstances. It's easy to treat prayer as a tool for rearranging our lives, but God's primary goal is transforming us. When he gets things right on the inside, a lot of the outside starts to line up.

And the fruit of that change spreads. God gets the glory because we start noticing his work everywhere. We grow more like Jesus in how we think, speak, and serve. The church gets healthier as people pray together. Even people far from God begin to sense that he is really among us.

Paul says we are transformed by looking at the Lord's glory. We don't change by trying harder. We change by beholding him.

- **Is there a situation you've been asking God to change where He might want to change you first?**
- **Lord, I confess that I often come to you wanting my circumstances fixed more than my heart changed. As I look to You, transform me. Make me more like Jesus, and let that change spill over into my family, my church, and my neighbors. Amen.**

DAY 3

Read Day 3 of *21 Days of Transforming Prayer*

In Day 3 of *21 Days of Transforming Prayer*, Daniel Henderson writes about why prayer is such a struggle for so many believers, pastors included. Only a small fraction of pastors say they're very satisfied with their prayer lives. The obstacles are real: spiritual opposition, a fear of letting anyone (including God) get too close, habits we inherited but never questioned, treating prayer as a last resort, and plain old boredom.

But notice what happened with the disciples. They didn't ask Jesus to teach them to pray after a lecture. They asked after watching him pray. Prayer is caught more than it's taught. We learn it best by being around people who genuinely meet with God.

The good news is that none of these barriers is permanent. The same Jesus who taught his disciples is ready to teach you.

- **Which barrier do you relate to most right now? Who in your life models prayer well, and how could you spend time praying with them?**
- **Jesus, like your disciples, I need you to teach me to pray. Break through whatever is holding me back, whether it's fear, distraction, old habits, or boredom. Put people in my life who show me what real prayer looks like, and make me that kind of person for someone else. Amen.**

DAY 4

Read Day 4 of *21 Days of Transforming Prayer*

In Day 4 of *21 Days of Transforming Prayer*, Daniel Henderson writes about what it means to have “face time” with God. Time with the people we love is always meaningful, and throughout Scripture, God’s “face” means his personal, intimate presence. It’s the difference between knowing about someone and actually knowing them.

When Israel felt God had hidden his face, it was a season of real distress. When his face shone on them, it meant blessing, grace, and peace. That’s why the priests spoke blessing over God’s people day after day. And the invitation still stands. In Psalm 27, God says, “Seek my face,” and David answers, “Lord, I will seek your face.”

Face time with God is what your soul needs most. It’s also a good checkup. How much of it you’re getting says a lot about how you’re really doing.

- **When did you last spend unhurried time with God, just being with Him? What would it take to make room for that this week?**
- **Lord, I don’t want to just know about You. I want to know You. Make Your face shine on me. When You say, “Seek My face,” let my heart answer, “Your face, Lord, I will seek.” Give me Your grace and Your peace today. Amen.**

DAY 5

Read Day 5 of *21 Days of Transforming Prayer*

In Day 5 of *21 Days of Transforming Prayer*, Daniel Henderson writes about people in Scripture who met God face to face and were never the same. Abraham fell on his face and received a promise. Moses spoke with God like a friend. Isaiah saw the Lord's holiness, confessed his sin, and said, "Here I am. Send me." Thomas went from doubt to worship. Paul went from persecutor to missionary. John fell at Jesus's feet like a dead man and heard him say, "Don't be afraid."

The pattern repeats: an encounter with God leads to humility, then cleansing, then a calling. Nobody walked away unchanged.

Paul says God's glory shines in the face of Jesus Christ. That's the face we seek when we pray. And if these encounters changed ordinary people so completely, we can trust that he still changes people today.

- **Which of these encounters speaks to where you are right now? What might God be calling you to after you've spent time in His presence?**

- **Jesus, You are the one whose face I seek. Like Isaiah, I need to be cleansed. Like Thomas, I need my doubts met by Your presence. Like John, I need to hear You say, "Don't be afraid." Change me as I meet with You, and send me wherever You want me to go. Amen.**

SEEK HIS FACE: FROM WORRY TO WORSHIP

JOHN 6:22-40

NOVEMBER 1, 2026

MAIN POINT

The crowd that tracks Jesus down in Capernaum isn't lying about wanting him, they genuinely do, but what they actually want is what he can do for them. Jesus won't let that slide. He tells them plainly that they're looking for him because their stomachs were filled, not because they understood the sign, and then he offers himself as the true bread from heaven, the only thing that can satisfy a hunger food was never meant to fix. Most of our prayers are shaped by the same confusion, chasing God's hand instead of his face, wanting the fix more than the Father. Transforming prayer asks a harder, better question than "what can God do for me?" It asks "do I want him?"

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

Anxiety has a way of narrowing our prayers down to a single request: fix this. Fix my finances, fix my health, fix my relationship, fix my circumstances. There's nothing wrong with bringing these things to God. But when the fix becomes the whole point of prayer, we can end up wanting God's hand a lot more than we want God himself.

Today's passage puts that exact tension on display. A crowd that Jesus fed the day before tracks him down across the lake, and Jesus immediately sees through their motives. What follows is one of his boldest invitations in all four Gospels, an offer not of another meal, but of himself.

- **When you're anxious or in need, do you tend to seek God's help more than you seek God himself? What does that usually look like in your prayers?**

- **Have you ever caught yourself wanting what God could give you more than you wanted him?**

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> Have a volunteer read John 6:22-40

"The next day, the crowd that had stayed on the other side of the sea knew there had been only one boat, and that Jesus had not boarded the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone off alone. Some other boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. When the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus.

When they found him on the other side of the sea, they asked him, 'Rabbi, when did you get here?' Jesus answered, 'Truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate the loaves and were filled. Don't work for the food that perishes but for the food that lasts for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set his seal on him.'

'What can we do to perform the works of God?' they asked. Jesus replied, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in the one he has sent.' 'What sign, then, are you going to do so that we may see it and believe you?' they asked. 'What are you going to perform? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, just as it is written: He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'

Jesus said to them, 'Truly I tell you, Moses didn't give you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.' Then they said, 'Sir, give us this bread always!'

'I am the bread of life,' Jesus told them. 'No one who comes to me will ever be hungry, and no one who believes in me will ever be thirsty again. But as I told you, you've seen me, and yet you do not believe. Everyone the Father gives me will come to me, and the one who comes to me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my will, but the will of him who sent me. This is the will of him who sent me: that I should lose none of those he has given me but raise them up on the last day. For this is my Father's will: that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.'" (John 6:22-40, CSB)

The day before this conversation, Jesus had fed a crowd of thousands from a boy's five loaves and two fish, then walked out to his disciples on the water in the middle of a storm that night. The crowd woke up the next morning, realized Jesus was gone, and pieced together that he must have somehow crossed the lake without a boat. They didn't wait around wondering. They got in boats themselves and set out to track him down in Capernaum, his home base, sure they'd find him there.

- **This crowd went to real effort, crossing the lake themselves, to find Jesus again. What does that tell you about how badly they wanted something from him?**

When they finally catch up to him, their question is almost casual: "Rabbi, when did you get here?" Jesus doesn't answer it. Instead he names exactly what's going on beneath the surface. They aren't chasing him because they understood the sign, the miracle that revealed who he actually is. They're chasing him because their stomachs were full the day before and they'd like that to happen again.

- **Jesus went straight past their small talk to their actual motive. Has God ever done that to you in prayer, cut through a polite request to what you were really after?**

Jesus tells them to stop working for food that spoils and start seeking the food that lasts for eternal life, food only he can give. Naturally, being practical people, they ask what work God requires of them, expecting a task list. Jesus flips the whole frame-work: the only “work” God asks for is belief in the one he sent. Not performance. Not earning. Trust.

- **The crowd assumed there was some job to do to earn what they wanted from God. Where in your own life have you been trying to work for something that was only ever meant to be received by faith?**

Remarkably, they respond by asking for a sign, as if the feeding of five thousand people the day before hadn't been enough. They even bring up Moses and the manna, essentially daring Jesus to top it. Jesus corrects them gently but firmly: Moses never gave the bread, God did, and God is now giving something far greater than manna, a bread that gives life to the whole world. When they ask for that bread, hoping for an ongoing supply of literal food, Jesus finally says it outright: “I am the bread of life.”

- **The crowd kept asking for bread even after Jesus offered Himself. What are some ways we do the same thing, asking God for provisions when he's really offering his presence?**

Jesus closes this section with a promise that reframes the whole conversation. He didn't come to do his own will but the Father's, and the Father's will is that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him would have eternal life. This was never really about bread. It was about whether the crowd, and whether we, are willing to want Jesus himself and not just what he can provide.

- **If seeking God's face means wanting Him more than wanting His answers, what would that actually look like in your prayer life this week?**

APPLICATION

Offer the following action steps for the application of God's Word.

- **This week, before you bring God a specific request, pause and ask yourself honestly whether you want the answer more than you want Him. Write down what you notice.**
- **Where has anxiety narrowed your prayers down to "just fix this"? What would it look like to widen that prayer to include seeking God himself, not only relief?**
- **The crowd wanted proof before they'd believe. Is there an area where you're withholding trust from God until He proves Himself again, despite what He's already done?**
- **Jesus said the only "work" God requires is belief. Is there something you've been striving to earn from God that He's actually just offering as a gift?**

PRAY

Ask God to search your prayers this week and reveal where you've been seeking his hand more than his face. Thank him that he offers himself, not just solutions to your problems. Confess any anxiety that has reduced your prayer life to a list of fixes, and ask him to widen your desire to simply want him. Pray for one another by name, that each person in your group would move from worry toward worship this week.

JOHN 6:22-40

This conversation takes place the morning after two of Jesus' most striking signs in John's Gospel, the feeding of the five thousand and his walking on the water to reach his disciples during a storm that same night. Both miracles revealed Jesus' authority, one over scarcity and one over nature itself, echoing the kind of power the Old Testament repeatedly attributes to God alone. The crowd, however, pieced together only the mechanics of Jesus' disappearance, not the meaning behind it, and set out by boat to find him again in Capernaum.

What follows is often called the Bread of Life discourse, and it unfolds in stages, each introduced by some reaction from the crowd, a question here, a complaint later in the chapter. This opening stage begins with Jesus directly naming the crowd's motive: they wanted their stomachs filled again, not the deeper reality the sign was meant to reveal. He redirects them toward "food that lasts for eternal life," language intentionally mixing the literal and the spiritual to shift their attention from physical need to something greater.

When the crowd asks what "work" God requires, they're thinking in terms of earning favor through effort, a common assumption of the day. Jesus overturns this instinct completely, defining the only required "work" as belief in the one God sent. Their subsequent request for a sign, invoking Moses and the manna in the wilderness, reveals real spiritual confusion, since Jesus had just fed thousands of people the day before. Jesus corrects the misattribution, God, not Moses, was always the source of the manna, and points them to a greater and final provision now standing in front of them.

The declaration "I am the bread of life" is the first of seven such statements in John's Gospel, each using the same emphatic construction Jesus used earlier when walking on the water. In Jewish ears, this pattern of speech carried unmistakable echoes of how God identified himself throughout the Old Testament. Jesus is not claiming to offer bread. He is claiming to be the only source capable of satisfying humanity's deepest hunger permanently, a claim that shifts this entire conversation from what Jesus can provide to who Jesus actually is.

DEVOTIONALS

**GIVE HIM YOUR BEST:
FROM FEAR TO FREEDOM**

DAY 1

Read Day 6 of *21 Days of Transforming Prayer*

In Day 6 of *21 Days of Transforming Prayer*, Daniel Henderson writes about Moses coming down the mountain with a glowing face. He had spent so long in God's presence that it left a visible mark on him. It was so bright that he had to wear a veil.

Paul picks up this story in 2 Corinthians 3. Moses' glow faded, but those who belong to Christ have something greater. We don't need a mountain or a veil. We have open access to the Lord through Jesus, and as we behold Him, we're being changed into His likeness, one degree of glory at a time.

That's what prayer is meant to do. God certainly changes circumstances when we pray, but his deeper work is changing us from the inside out.

- **Think of someone whose life clearly shows time spent with Jesus. What would it look like for your own time with him to leave a mark this week?**
- **Lord, I want to be marked by your presence. As I spend time with you, change me from the inside out. Let people see less of me and more of Jesus. Amen.**

DAY 2

Read Day 7 of *21 Days of Transforming Prayer*

In Day 7 of *21 Days of Transforming Prayer*, Daniel Henderson writes about the difference between good practices in prayer and the best ones. In Malachi's day, the people were still showing up to worship, but they were bringing God their blind and sick animals, the offerings they wouldn't miss. Everything looked fine on the surface, but God asked where the honor was.

It's easy to give God our leftovers in prayer: the last few tired minutes of the day, a quick list before we rush out the door. Henderson isn't against prayer lists. They can be helpful tools. But he warns that a list can quietly replace Scripture and the Spirit as the thing that shapes our prayers.

God isn't looking for a dutiful time slot. He's looking for a hungry heart that seeks him because he's worth it.

- **Are you giving God your best in prayer or your leftovers? What's one change that would help you bring him your first and best this week?**
- **Father, forgive me for the times I've given you my leftovers. You deserve my first and best. Give me a hungry heart that seeks you because of who you are, not out of habit or duty. Amen.**

DAY 3

Read Day 8 of *21 Days of Transforming Prayer*

In Day 8 of *21 Days of Transforming Prayer*, Daniel Henderson writes about how not all prayer requests are created equal. God invites us to ask, and he cares about our needs. But when Henderson looks at the prayers in Scripture, he notices they're usually shorter, deeper, and focused on different things than many of our modern lists.

Before Pentecost, the disciples' prayers were often self-centered. They argued about who was greatest and wanted fire called down on their enemies. After the Spirit came, they started praying for boldness to share the gospel. Paul's prayers followed the same pattern, focusing on people's growth in faith and love and on God's glory.

Our prayers tend to focus on our problems. Biblical prayers tend to focus on Christ's purposes. That doesn't mean our needs don't matter. It means they find their right place when God's kingdom comes first.

- **Look at what you usually pray about. How much of it is about your comfort, and how much is about God's kingdom?**
- **Jesus, you know everything I need before I ask. Help me to seek Your kingdom first and trust You with the rest. Shape my prayers so they sound more like Yours. Amen.**

DAY 4

Read Day 9 of *21 Days of Transforming Prayer*

In Day 9 of *21 Days of Transforming Prayer*, Daniel Henderson writes about the prayers of Jesus and Paul. Again and again, Jesus prayed with his Father's glory in mind, even when facing the cross. His soul was troubled, and he said so honestly. But his prayer landed on "Father, glorify your name."

Paul prayed the same way. Many of his prayer requests were written from prison, yet he never asked for comfort or an easy way out. He asked for boldness to preach, open doors for the gospel, and for Christ to be honored in his life, whether he lived or died.

Scripture is clear that God saved us for his glory. When we pray with that in mind, even our hardest moments become opportunities for him to be honored.

- **Think of a hard situation you're facing. How might your prayer about it change if God's glory were your first concern?**
- **Father, like Jesus, I bring You my troubled heart honestly. But more than I want relief, I want You to be glorified. Use my life, even the hard parts, to make Your name great. Amen.**

DAY 5

Read Day 10 of *21 Days of Transforming Prayer*

In Day 10 of *21 Days of Transforming Prayer*, Daniel Henderson writes about making God's glory the core motive of our prayers. If we're honest, many of our prayers are really about comfort and convenience. It's easy to treat prayer as a way to protect our own glory rather than a way for God to use us for his.

Henderson points to Jesus telling Peter that one day he would die a difficult death, a death that would glorify God. Peter's story shows that praying for God's glory is a real, daily struggle. We hold onto the things of this life with one hand while reaching for eternal things with the other.

But we're not alone in that struggle. Jesus understands our weakness, and God gives grace for everything we face, including the grace to want his glory more than our own.

- **What are you holding onto that makes it hard to pray “for Your glory”? What would it look like to loosen your grip this week?**
- **Lord, I confess that I often care more about my comfort than Your glory. Give me grace to want what You want. Whatever I do today, let it be for Your glory. Amen.**

GIVE HIM YOUR BEST: FROM FEAR TO FREEDOM

JOHN 12:1-8

NOVEMBER 8, 2026

MAIN POINT

Mary breaks open a jar of perfume worth a full year's wages and pours all of it on Jesus, wiping his feet with her own hair in front of a room full of people. It is extravagant, undignified by the standards of her culture, and utterly without calculation. Judas calls it waste. Jesus calls it exactly right. The difference between them isn't really about money, it's about what each of them is afraid of losing. Judas, gripped by fear, hoards and steals to protect himself. Mary, free of that fear, gives away her most valuable possession without a second thought. Prayer and worship that costs us nothing has usually not yet been transformed by who Jesus actually is.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

Most of us have a version of Mary's perfume jar, something valuable we're tempted to hold onto a little too tightly. Money, time, reputation, control. We tell ourselves we're being wise or careful, when really we're often just afraid of what it would cost us to let go.

Today's passage puts two very different responses to Jesus side by side in the same room. One is shaped by fear and ends in betrayal. The other is shaped by freedom and becomes one of the most remarkable acts of worship in all four Gospels. The gap between them says less about their circumstances and more about what each of them actually believed about Jesus.

- **What is something valuable, whether it's money, time, or control, that you find yourself holding onto tightly instead of offering freely to God?**

- **Have you ever given something to God that felt genuinely costly? What was that like?**

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> Have a volunteer read John 12:1-8.

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany where Lazarus was, the one Jesus had raised from the dead. So they gave a dinner for him there; Martha was serving them, and Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with him. Then Mary took a pound of perfume, pure and expensive nard, anointed Jesus's feet, and wiped his feet with her hair. So the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

Then Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (who was about to betray him), said, 'Why wasn't this perfume sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?' He didn't say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief. He was in charge of the money bag and would steal part of what was put in it.

Jesus answered, 'Leave her alone; she has kept it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.' (John 12:1-8, CSB)

Before this dinner Jerusalem had been buzzing with news of Lazarus, the man Jesus raised from the dead after four days in the tomb. That miracle had convinced many people to believe in Jesus, but it had also hardened the religious leaders' resolve to kill him, along with Lazarus himself, whose very existence was inconvenient proof of what they refused to accept. Against that backdrop of rising danger, Jesus comes to Bethany for a meal at the home of his close friends, Martha serving, Lazarus reclining at the table as living evidence of what Jesus can do, and Mary about to do something no one at that table expected.

- **Lazarus sitting at that table was a walking reminder of what Jesus had just done for this family. How might that context have shaped what Mary did next?**

Mary takes a pound of pure nard, an imported perfume worth roughly a full year's wages for an ordinary worker, and pours the entire amount on Jesus, then wipes his feet with her own hair, something respectable women simply did not do in public. The fragrance fills the whole house. This wasn't a token gesture or a careful, measured gift. It was extravagant on purpose, and everyone in the room could smell exactly how much it cost her.

- **Mary gave something whose value everyone in the room could immediately recognize. What would it look like for your worship of Jesus to be that visibly costly?**

Judas objected immediately, framing his complaint as concern for the poor; three hundred denarii could have fed a lot of people. John doesn't let the reader take that objection at face value. He tells us plainly that Judas didn't care about the poor at all, he was a thief who had been skimming from the group's money for who knows how long. Judas's real problem with Mary's gift wasn't that it was wasteful. It was that it was gone, out of his reach, something he could no longer control or quietly siphon from.

- **Judas dressed up a selfish motive in the language of concern for others. Where have you seen, or done, something similar, using a good-sounding reason to cover a fear-driven motive?**

Jesus defends Mary without hesitation. He reframes what she's done, not as waste, but as preparation for his burial, something she may have understood only partially but had gotten profoundly right. Then he adds a line that cuts straight to the heart of the contrast in the room: "You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me." This wasn't Jesus dismissing care for the poor, which Scripture commands repeatedly. It was Jesus naming that this particular moment, in His presence, before his death, called for something Mary alone in that room had the freedom to give.

- **Jesus said there was a right time for extravagant devotion to Him specifically. Are there moments in your life right now that call for that kind of costly, focused worship rather than caution?**

The difference between Mary and Judas isn't ultimately about generosity versus greed, though it includes that. It's about fear versus freedom. Judas, driven by fear of scarcity, had to hoard and steal to feel secure. Mary, apparently free of that fear, could pour out her most valuable possession without flinching, because she trusted that Jesus himself was worth more than what she gave up.

- **What fear tends to keep you from giving your best to God, whether that's fear of not having enough, looking foolish, or losing control?**

APPLICATION

Offer the following action steps for the application of God's Word.

- **Identify one thing you're holding onto out of fear rather than freedom. What would it look like to loosen your grip on it this week as an act of worship?**
- **Judas dressed up a selfish motive in generous-sounding language. Is there an area of your life where you've done the same thing? Ask God to show you honestly.**
- **Mary's gift was extravagant and visible, not private and cautious. Where might God be inviting you to worship Him more openly or generously than feels comfortable?**
- **Jesus said some moments call for costly, focused devotion to Him. Is there a specific moment right now where God is asking for your best, not your leftovers?**

PRAY

Ask God to reveal anything you've been holding onto out of fear rather than offering freely out of love for him. Confess any Judas-like tendency to disguise a selfish motive as something noble. Thank Jesus that he is worth more than anything you could give up for him, and ask for Mary's kind of freedom, the freedom to give extravagantly without calculating the cost. Pray for each other by name, that fear would loosen its grip and worship would take its place.

JOHN 12:1-8

This scene takes place six days before the Passover at which Jesus would be crucified, and it follows directly on the heels of Lazarus's resurrection in the previous chapter, an event that had simultaneously convinced many in Jerusalem to believe in Jesus and hardened the religious leaders' determination to kill him. John notes that a formal arrest warrant for Jesus was already circulating, which makes this quiet dinner in Bethany, among close friends, a striking contrast to the danger closing in around him. Martha, Mary, and Lazarus host the meal, likely alongside Simon the leper, in whose home the Synoptic Gospels place this same event.

Mary's gift is remarkable in its scale. A pound of pure nard, an aromatic oil imported from the roots of a plant native to India, would have cost roughly a year's wages for a common laborer, making this one of the most costly single acts of devotion recorded anywhere in the Gospels. That she anointed Jesus's feet, and then wiped them with her unbound hair, an act of humility bordering on scandal in her culture, only deepens the picture of total, uncalculated devotion. This is the third time John's Gospel shows us Mary of Bethany, sitting at Jesus's feet for instruction, falling at his feet in grief over her brother, and now anointing his feet in worship.

Judas's objection is framed as compassion for the poor but exposed by John as cover for theft. As the group's treasurer, Judas had access to their shared funds and had apparently been stealing from them for some time. His discomfort with Mary's extravagance reveals something important: real worship costs the worshipper something, and people whose hearts are governed by fear and self-interest will often find that cost intolerable, especially when it's someone else's freely given sacrifice highlighting their own stinginess.

Jesus's response reframes Mary's act as an anointing for his burial, language that anticipates his death just days away, likely beyond what Mary herself fully understood in the moment. His statement that "you do not always have me" is not a dismissal of care for the poor, which he and the entire biblical witness consistently commands, but a recognition that his physical presence among his disciples was drawing to a close, and this particular moment called for a particular kind of devotion that would not come again.

DEVOTIONALS

DRAW NEAR: FROM ISOLATION TO INTIMACY

DAY 1

Read Day 11 of *21 Days of Transforming Prayer*

In Day 11 of *21 Days of Transforming Prayer*, Daniel Henderson writes about how abiding in Christ shapes what we ask for. It's easy to rush into God's presence, dump our worries, and rush back out. When we do that, we do all the talking and God just listens.

Henderson's practice for years has been to begin every prayer time with an open Bible. When Scripture sets the agenda, God gets the first word. We start to pray about the same needs, but from his perspective instead of ours.

Jesus' promise in John 15 comes with a condition: his words remaining in us. When his Word fills our minds, our prayers get deeper, more fervent, and more aligned with his will.

- **Try starting your prayer time tomorrow with a passage of Scripture before you say anything. What changes when God speaks first?**
- **Jesus, I want to remain in You. Let your words fill my mind and shape my prayers. Before I speak, help me listen. Amen.**

DAY 2

Read Day 12 of *21 Days of Transforming Prayer*

In Day 12 of *21 Days of Transforming Prayer*, Daniel Henderson writes about the Holy Spirit as our personal tutor in prayer. God knows we can't pray well on our own, so he has given us his Spirit, who lives in us and helps us every moment.

Henderson warns against two extremes: churches that barely acknowledge the Spirit and churches that credit him with strange behavior he has nothing to do with. Praying in the Spirit simply means depending on him, being guided and empowered by him as we pray.

The Spirit and the Word work together. As we fill our minds with Scripture, the Spirit uses it to stir our worship and direct our requests. We don't have to figure out prayer on our own.

- **Before you pray today, ask the Holy Spirit to lead you. Then pay attention to what He brings to mind.**
- **Holy Spirit, I don't always know what to pray. Thank You for helping me in my weakness. Teach me, lead me, and pray through me according to the Father's will. Amen.**

DAY 3

Read Day 13 of *21 Days of Transforming Prayer*

In Day 13 of *21 Days of Transforming Prayer*, Daniel Henderson writes about what it really means to pray in Jesus' name. Most of us tack those words onto the end of our prayers almost automatically. But Jesus' name isn't a password. It represents who he is.

Praying in Jesus' name means praying for what Jesus would pray for. It means seeking God's glory, resting on what Jesus has done for us, living in obedience to him, and asking according to God's will. When we pray that way, Jesus promises the Father will be glorified, we'll bear lasting fruit, and our joy will be full.

Henderson says this has changed how he starts his prayers, not just how he ends them. When we begin by looking to Jesus, his name shapes everything that follows.

- **Before you close your next prayer “in Jesus’ name,” pause and ask: Is this what Jesus would pray?**
- **Jesus, Your name is above every name. Teach me to pray the way You would, for the Father’s glory. Let my prayers begin and end with You. Amen.**

DAY 4

Read Day 14 of *21 Days of Transforming Prayer*

In Day 14 of *21 Days of Transforming Prayer*, Daniel Henderson writes about how seeing who God is always calls for a response. Romans spends eleven chapters describing God's mercy, and then comes the turn: in light of all that, give yourself completely to him.

Prayer works the same way. When we begin by seeking God's face, we can't stay the same. Henderson names four responses: faith, because we're reminded that he is real and rewards those who seek him; confession, because his holiness exposes our sin; surrender, because knowing him leads us to want his will; and readiness for spiritual battle, because his Word equips us to stand.

He is worthy, and we are needy. When those two truths meet, transformation happens.

- **Which of these responses is God calling you to today: faith, confession, surrender, or readiness?**
- **Lord, when I see who You are, I see how much I need You. I give myself to You as a living sacrifice. Build my faith, cleanse my heart, align my will with Yours, and prepare me for what's ahead. Amen.**

DAY 5

Read Day 15 of *21 Days of Transforming Prayer*

In Day 15 of *21 Days of Transforming Prayer*, Daniel Henderson writes about how Jesus corrected both the motives and methods of prayer. Some people prayed to be seen and admired. Others repeated words over and over, as if God needed to be convinced.

Henderson admits that our own motives can drift too. We might pray out of guilt, to look spiritual to others, to grow our ministry, or to try to get God to do what we want. But the only motive that lasts is simple: God is worthy to be sought. Whether prayer feels exciting or dull, and whether answers are clear or not, he is still worth seeking.

And we are needy. Those two truths together keep us coming back to him for the rest of our lives.

- **Be honest: what motivates most of your prayers? What would it look like to pray simply because God is worthy?**
- **Father, You already know what I need. Forgive me for praying to impress or to get my way. I come to You because You are worthy and because I need You. Amen.**

DRAW NEAR: FROM ISOLATION TO INTIMACY

JOHN 7:37-39; JOHN 15:26-16:15

NOVEMBER 15, 2026

MAIN POINT

Most of us assume that nearness to Jesus would have been easier if we could have walked beside him the way the disciples did, heard his voice, watched him heal the sick with our own eyes. Jesus says otherwise. He tells his disciples plainly that it is actually to their advantage that he goes away, because his physical presence, limited to one place at a time, will be replaced by the Spirit's presence, which can dwell inside every believer everywhere at once. Isolation isn't cured by proximity to a person. It's cured by the Spirit of God taking up permanent residence within us, closer than physical nearness could ever manage.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

Loneliness rarely responds to information. Knowing facts about someone doesn't make you feel close to them, and knowing facts about God doesn't automatically make you feel near to him either. What we're usually longing for isn't more knowledge but real presence, someone who is actually with us, not just aware of us from a distance.

Today's passages sit on either side of the cross, one during a festival, one the night before Jesus' arrest, and both point toward the same surprising answer to our loneliness. God's plan was never to leave us admiring Jesus from across the centuries. It was to move in.

- **Have you ever felt like you know a lot about God without feeling close to Him? What do you think creates that gap?**
- **What's the difference, in your experience, between believing God is present and actually feeling His presence?**

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> Have a volunteer read John 7:37-39.

On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood up and cried out, 'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. The one who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, will have streams of living water flow from deep within him.' He said this about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were going to receive, for the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet been glorified. (John 7:37-39, CSB)

This moment happens during the Feast of Tabernacles, a week-long festival that included a daily ritual where a priest carried water from the pool of Siloam and poured it out at the temple altar, recalling God's provision of water in the wilderness and anticipating his future outpouring of blessing. On the festival's last and greatest day, likely right after that water ceremony had just taken place, Jesus stood up in the temple courts, an unusual posture since rabbis normally taught seated, and cried out an invitation that would have landed with striking force given what everyone had just watched: if anyone is thirsty, come to him.

- **Jesus chose the most dramatic possible moment, right after a public ritual about water, to make this offer. Why might timing like that matter for how the crowd would have understood Him?**

John makes sure we don't miss what Jesus meant. This "living water" wasn't a metaphor for information or teaching, it was a direct reference to the Holy Spirit, who would be given to believers after Jesus was "glorified," meaning after his death, resurrection, and ascension. Jesus was promising something that hadn't happened yet in full, but the invitation itself, "let him come to me and drink," was open right then to anyone thirsty enough to receive it.

- **What does it look like practically to come to Jesus “thirsty,” the way this verse describes, rather than approaching Him out of routine or obligation?**

> Have a volunteer read John 15:26-16:15.

‘When the Counselor comes, the one I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, he will testify about me. You also will testify, because you have been with me from the beginning.

‘I have told you these things to keep you from stumbling. They will ban you from the synagogues. In fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God. They will do these things because they haven’t known the Father or me. But I have told you these things so that when their time comes you will remember I told them to you. I didn’t tell you these things from the beginning, because I was with you.

‘Now I am going away to him who sent me, and not one of you asks me, “Where are you going?” Instead, sorrow has filled your heart because I have said these things to you. Nevertheless, I am telling you the truth. It is for your benefit that I go away, because if I don’t go away the Counselor will not come to you. If I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment: about sin, because they do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will no longer see me; and about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.

‘I still have many things to tell you, but you can’t bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth. For he will not speak on his own, but he will speak whatever he hears. He will also declare to you what is to come. He will glorify me, because he will take from what is mine and declare it to you. Everything the Father has is mine. This is why I told you that he takes from what is mine and will declare it to you.’

(John 15:26-16:15, CSB)

This conversation takes place in the upper room, hours before Jesus' arrest, after he had already washed his disciples' feet and told them plainly that he was leaving. Their grief was real and immediate, they had left everything to follow this man for three years, and now he was telling them he was going away. Into that grief, Jesus says something that must have sounded almost impossible to believe in the moment: it is actually better for them that he leaves.

- **The disciples were grieving Jesus' departure without yet understanding what it would make possible. Have you ever grieved a loss before you could see what God was doing through it?**

Jesus explains why. If he doesn't go, the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, cannot come. His physical presence, real and precious as it was, could only be in one place with a limited number of people at a time. The Spirit's presence would have no such limits, dwelling within every believer, everywhere, all at once. What looked like loss to the disciples was actually the doorway to an intimacy with God that physical proximity to Jesus, even for those original twelve, could never have provided.

- **Jesus reframes His departure as an upgrade, not a loss. Is there a loss or ending in your own life that God might be using to bring you into something deeper, even if it doesn't feel that way yet?**

Jesus then describes what this Counselor will do, testifying about Jesus, convicting the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and guiding believers into all truth. This is not a vague spiritual presence. It's an active, personal ministry, someone who speaks, guides, and reveals, taking what belongs to Jesus and making it known. The isolation the disciples were about to feel when Jesus left their sight was never meant to last, because the Spirit's arrival would mean God himself taking up residence within them.

- **Knowing the Spirit's role includes guiding you into truth and testifying about Jesus within you, how does that change the way you think about feeling distant from God?**

APPLICATION

Offer the following action steps for the application of God's Word.

- **Jesus said "let anyone who is thirsty come to me." What does genuine spiritual thirst look like in your life right now, and how are you responding to it?**
- **Where have you assumed that feeling close to God requires something you don't have, like more knowledge or a more dramatic experience, rather than simply drawing near to the Spirit already within you?**
- **Jesus reframed a painful departure as something ultimately good. What current loss or disappointment might you need to bring to God and ask him to reframe?**
- **This week, try setting aside a few quiet minutes to simply acknowledge the Spirit's presence within you, without an agenda or request. What happens when you do that?**

PRAY

Thank God that he did not leave you to admire Jesus from a distance but chose to dwell within you by his Spirit. Confess any isolation or loneliness you've been carrying as though God were far away, and ask him to make his nearness real to you again. Pray for the Spirit to guide you into truth this week, especially in an area where you've felt confused or distant from him. Ask that this group would grow in genuine intimacy with God together, not just knowledge about him.

JOHN 7:37-39

This invitation comes during the Feast of Tabernacles, one of Israel's three major pilgrimage festivals, which included a daily water-pouring ceremony recalling God's provision in the wilderness and carrying strong messianic expectation for the age to come. Jesus' choice to stand, an unusual posture for a teacher of his day, along with the timing on the festival's climactic final day, gave his words maximum public weight. His invitation, addressed to "anyone" who is thirsty, echoes his earlier conversation with the Samaritan woman about living water, and claims that believing in him results in "streams of living water" flowing from within the believer, not merely satisfying personal thirst but overflowing outward.

John clarifies that this promise refers specifically to the Holy Spirit, who would not be given in this fuller sense until after Jesus was "glorified," a term John consistently uses to describe the unified reality of Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension. This means Jesus' invitation at the festival was forward-looking, a genuine offer of salvation in the present combined with a promise of the Spirit's fuller outpouring still to come, which Scripture elsewhere identifies with the day of Pentecost.

JOHN 15:26-16:15

This passage belongs to Jesus' extended teaching in the upper room on the night of his betrayal, following his washing of the disciples' feet and his announcement that he would soon depart. The disciples' sorrow at this news was genuine and understandable, having left everything to follow Jesus for three years, they now faced the loss of his physical presence entirely. Jesus' response reframes their loss as necessary and even advantageous, since his departure was the precondition for the Spirit's coming.

The Spirit is described here using the title Counselor, a word carrying the sense of one called alongside to help, defend, and advocate. His ministry includes bearing witness to Jesus, convicting the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment, and guiding believers into truth they could not yet bear to hear directly from Jesus himself. Unlike Jesus' physical presence, limited by time and geography, the Spirit's indwelling presence would extend to every believer without limitation, marking a genuine advance in intimacy with God rather than a diminishment of it. The Spirit does not speak independently but communicates what he receives from the Father and the Son, continuing to reveal and glorify Jesus long after his physical departure from the disciples' sight.

DEVOTIONALS

PRAY FOR IMPACT: FROM INDIFFERENCE TO KINGDOM PURPOSE

DAY 1

Read Day 16 of *21 Days of Transforming Prayer*

In Day 16 of *21 Days of Transforming Prayer*, Daniel Henderson writes about a simple way to pray using the Lord's Prayer as a guide. Drawing on his background in music, he calls it the 4/4 pattern, modeled on a conductor's four-beat motion.

It starts with **Reverence**, focusing on who God is. Next comes **Response**, surrendering to his kingdom and will. Then **Requests**, trusting him for our needs and relationships. Then **Readiness**, asking for strength against temptation and the battles ahead. Finally, we return to reverence, ending the same way we began: with praise.

The Lord's Prayer has two halves. The first is about God's glory; the second is about our needs. He is worthy, and we are needy. This pattern keeps both in their right order.

- **Try praying through the four steps once this week: reverence, response, requests, and readiness. Which step comes most naturally? Which one do you usually skip?**
- **Father, your name is holy. Let your kingdom come in my life. Provide what I need today, forgive me as I forgive others, and keep me from temptation. Yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

DAY 2

Read Day 17 of *21 Days of Transforming Prayer*

In Day 17 of *21 Days of Transforming Prayer*, Daniel Henderson writes about how to put the 4/4 pattern into practice. Many people wonder how anyone could pray for hours without running out of things to say. His answer is that when Scripture and the Spirit lead, the prayer time never runs dry.

The pattern works with a simple set of questions as you read a passage. Who is God? (reverence) How should I respond? (response) What do I pray about? (requests) Where do I go from here? (readiness) Then you end where you began, praising him for who he is.

A psalm is a great place to start. Read it slowly, let it show you something about God, and let your prayers grow from what you see.

- **Pick a psalm this week and pray through it using the four questions.**
- **Lord, open my eyes to see wonderful things in your Word. Show me who you are, how I should respond, what to ask for, and how to be ready for what's ahead. Amen.**

DAY 3

Read Day 18 of *21 Days of Transforming Prayer*

In Day 18 of *21 Days of Transforming Prayer*, Daniel Henderson writes about using 1 Peter 5 as an example of the 4/4 pattern. The chapter is full of truths about God: he is the Chief Shepherd, he gives grace to the humble, his hand is mighty, he cares for us, and he restores us after suffering.

Each truth becomes a prayer. We praise him for who he is. We surrender our pride and self-reliance to his mighty hand. We cast our worries on him, and we pray for others who are suffering. We ask for alertness and strength to resist the enemy. Then we close with praise.

Henderson is clear that these are just starting points. The goal isn't to master a technique but to let the Word and the Spirit lead us into a life of prayer.

- **Read 1 Peter 5 and choose one truth about God to pray through today. What worry do you need to hand over to him?**
- **Mighty God, I humble myself under your hand. I give you my worries because you care for me. Make me alert, strengthen my faith, and keep me standing firm. To you be the power forever. Amen.**

DAY 4

Read Day 19 of *21 Days of Transforming Prayer*

In Day 19 of *21 Days of Transforming Prayer*, Daniel Henderson writes about why we need both private and group prayer. Asking which one matters more is like asking which leg matters more for walking. We need both.

The early church was born in a prayer meeting and faced every crisis together on their knees. Even the Lord's Prayer is written in the plural: our Father, give us, forgive us. Jesus assumed his followers would pray together.

Henderson imagines what the enemy would do to stop transforming prayer: keep believers busy, isolated, and bored with prayer. But Jesus wants his house to be a house of prayer, and many of us learn to pray best by praying alongside others.

- **Who could you pray with this week? Consider joining a prayer gathering or asking a friend or your group to pray together.**
- **Father, thank you for not asking me to do this alone. Draw your people together in prayer. Make our church a house of prayer, and give me the courage to pray with others. Amen.**

DAY 5

Read Days 20 and 21 in *21 Days of Transforming Prayer*

In Days 20 and 21 of *21 Days of Transforming Prayer*, Daniel Henderson writes about the privileges, possibilities, and provision God gives us in prayer. In prayer, we can talk honestly with the God who understands us completely. We can trade our anxiety for peace, find wisdom when we're confused, and receive grace to become more like Jesus even when our problems remain.

Prayer also opens up possibilities. It unites believers, strengthens families, and gives boldness for sharing the gospel. Throughout history, it has been the starting point for revival.

And none of this is possible without what Jesus has done. He gave his life so we could come to God. The temple curtain was torn in two. Jesus now intercedes for us. The way into God's presence is wide open, and we're invited to come boldly.

- **Which of these privileges do you need most right now: peace, wisdom, help, or intimacy with God? Come to him boldly with it today.**
- **Jesus, thank You for opening the way to the Father. Because of You, I can come boldly to God's throne. I come now for mercy and grace in my time of need. Amen.**

PRAY FOR IMPACT: FROM INDIFFERENCE TO KINGDOM PURPOSE

JOHN 17:20-26

NOVEMBER 22, 2026

MAIN POINT

In the last moments before his arrest, Jesus prays for his eleven remaining disciples, and then he does something remarkable: he keeps praying, this time for everyone who would ever believe in him because of their witness, a category that includes every believer across every century since, including us. What he asks for isn't comfort or ease. He asks for unity, a unity so real and visible that it would cause the watching world to believe the Father sent him. Prayer that has been transformed stops circling our own concerns and starts reaching, the way Jesus' prayer did, toward the impact God wants to have on people we may never meet.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

It's easy for prayer to become a closed loop, our needs, our family, our circumstances, repeated back to God week after week. None of that is wrong. But somewhere along the way, many of us stop praying for anything bigger than our own lives, and our prayer life quietly shrinks down to indifference about anyone outside our own concerns.

Today's passage shows us Jesus doing the opposite in the most important prayer he ever prayed. With his arrest hours away, he spends part of his final recorded prayer thinking not about himself, and not only about the men in the room with him, but about every person who would ever come to faith because of them. That prayer reached all the way to us.

- **Would you describe your prayer life as mostly focused on your own needs, or does it regularly reach toward people and purposes beyond yourself?**

- **Has anyone ever told you they were praying for something specific about your impact on others, not just your comfort? What was that like to hear?**

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> Have a volunteer read John 17:20-26.

'I pray not only for these, but also for those who believe in me through their word. May they all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us, so that the world may believe you sent me. I have given them the glory you have given me. May they be one as we are one. I am in them and you are in me, so that they may be made completely one, that the world may know you sent me and have loved them as you have loved me.'

'Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, so that they may see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. Righteous Father, the world has not known you. However, I have known you, and they have known that you sent me. I made your name known to them and will continue to make it known, so that the love you have loved me with may be in them and I may be in them.'
(John 17:20-26, CSB)

This prayer comes at the very end of the upper room discourse, the same night we've been walking through the past two weeks. Jesus has already washed his disciples' feet, warned them of his departure, and promised them the Counselor. Now, before walking out to the garden where he would be arrested, he prays out loud in front of them, first for himself, then specifically for the eleven men in the room. Only in these final verses does his prayer widen even further, reaching past the people he could see to everyone who would ever believe because of their testimony.

- **Jesus prayed for people he had never personally met, based only on the fact that they would come to believe through the disciples' witness. What does it mean to you that his prayer that night was, in part, a prayer for you specifically?**

The request Jesus makes for these future believers is strikingly specific: unity. Not comfort, not success, not protection from hardship, but oneness, patterned after the very oneness between the Father and the Son. And notice the stated purpose behind that request, repeated twice in these verses, “so that the world may believe” and “so that the world may know.” This unity was never meant to be a private comfort for believers. It was meant to be visible evidence to a watching world.

- **Jesus tied the believability of the gospel, in part, to the visible unity of believers. How seriously do we tend to take that connection in how we treat other Christians, especially ones we disagree with?**

Jesus goes on to say he has given these future believers the same glory the Father gave him, so that they may be “completely one.” This isn’t political or institutional unity, forced agreement on every preference or opinion. It’s a deep, shared reality rooted in the indwelling presence of Christ himself, “I in them and you in me,” a unity that flows out of genuine relationship with God rather than surface-level cooperation.

- **What’s the difference between the kind of forced, surface-level unity the world often settles for and the deep, Christ-rooted unity Jesus is praying for here?**

Jesus then turns from unity to a request about the future, that these believers would one day be with him and see his glory, glory given to him by the Father's love before the world even existed. This is a prayer that reaches past this present life entirely, anchoring present-day unity and mission in the certain hope of eternity with Christ.

- **Knowing that Jesus prayed for you to see his glory in eternity, how does that shape the way you view whatever hardship or indifference has crept into your faith lately?**

The prayer closes with Jesus committing to keep making the Father's name known, so that the same love the Father has for Jesus would be in believers, and so that Christ himself would be in them. This is the "so that" that runs through the whole prayer. Everything Jesus asks for, unity, glory, presence, has a purpose beyond the believer's own comfort: that God's love and God's own Son would be known, both in us and through us, to a watching world.

- **If every prayer you prayed this week ended with an honest "so that," what would most of your prayers actually be for, and is that the kind of purpose Jesus modeled here?**

APPLICATION

Offer the following action steps for the application of God's Word.

- **This week, try adding a “so that” to your prayers, asking not just for something to happen, but naming the kingdom purpose behind the request.**
- **Jesus prayed for unity that the world would believe because of it. Is there a relationship with another believer where disunity is currently undermining your witness? What would a step toward reconciliation look like?**
- **Where has your prayer life shrunk down to only your own needs and concerns? Name one person or situation beyond your immediate life to start praying for regularly.**
- **Jesus prayed for people he would never meet in this life, people whose faith would come only through the disciples' witness. Who is someone whose future faith you could commit to praying for now?**

PRAY

Thank Jesus that his final prayer before the cross included you by name, even though you were centuries away from being born. Ask God to reveal any indifference that has crept into your prayer life, where your requests have grown small and self-focused. Pray specifically for unity among believers in your own church and community, that it would be visible enough to cause others to believe. Close by praying for someone who doesn't yet know Christ, asking that they would one day believe through your witness the way future believers came to believe through the disciples'.

JOHN 17:20-26

This passage concludes what is often called Jesus' high priestly prayer, the longest single prayer of Jesus recorded in the Gospels, prayed aloud in front of his disciples on the night of his arrest. The prayer moves in three clear stages: Jesus first prays for himself, asking to be glorified so that he might glorify the Father, then prays specifically for the eleven remaining disciples, asking for their protection, joy, and sanctification, and finally, in these closing verses, extends his prayer to include every future believer who would come to faith through the disciples' testimony, a category spanning every generation of the church since, including believers today.

The request for unity is the clear center of this section, appearing three times in various forms. This unity is explicitly relational and spiritual, not institutional, patterned after the eternal unity between the Father and the Son, and made possible only through Christ's indwelling presence in believers. Its stated purpose, appearing twice, is evangelistic: the credibility of the gospel message to a watching world is tied, in part, to the visible love and oneness among Christ's followers. Disunity among believers was never merely an internal church problem in Jesus' eyes. It actively works against the very mission he prayed for that night.

The prayer's final movement turns toward the future, Jesus' desire that believers would ultimately be with him and behold his glory, the glory given to him by the Father's love before the world's creation. This request grounds present unity and mission in the certain hope of future glory, an eternal perspective that keeps present hardship or indifference from having the final word. Jesus closes by affirming his ongoing commitment to make the Father's name known, so that the same love the Father has for the Son might dwell within believers, and so that Christ himself might remain in them, a fitting close not only to this prayer but to the entire upper room discourse that began with washing feet and ends here, with Jesus praying for a love and unity that would reach every person who would ever believe because of it.

