

# LIVING STONES DISCIPLESHIP GROUP



SECOND SEMESTER  
UNIT 3



"[Y]ou yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

1Peter 2:5

# UNIT 3:

## Prayer & Meditation



### IN THIS SESSION

:: What is Prayer?

:: How do I pray?

:: What is biblical meditation?

:: Some common questions about prayer

# UNIT 3 // Prayer & Fasting

## // OPENING SCRIPTURE

"And this is the confidence that we have toward Him, that if we ask anything according to His will He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of Him."

1John 5:14-15, ESV

## // OPENING PRAYER

## // FOLLOW-UP FROM PREVIOUS UNIT

Memory Verse :: 1Peter 1:15-16

Homework :: Did everyone in the group complete this unit's work and activities (if applicable)?

# UNIT 3: Prayer & Fasting

## // What is Prayer? And How Do I Pray?

:: Read **Matthew 6:5-13**. In teaching us how to pray, Jesus teaches us a great deal about what prayer is. Basically, prayer is personal communication with God. It includes requests for ourselves, requests for others, confession of sins, praise and thanksgiving, and much more.

:: Jesus tells us to address our prayers to “**Our Father in Heaven...**” This tells us much about prayer. For one thing, prayer is *personal*. It is addressed to our “Father”, indicating that God is loving and cares about our needs. It is based on a kind of parent-child relationship. This also tells us God is not equal to us. We are human; He is God. We are on earth; He is in heaven. Prayer is an exercise in humility.

:: Look carefully at verse 9. What is the very first thing Jesus tells us to pray for? Look up the word “hallow” in a dictionary. What does it mean?

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:: The very first petition of Jesus’ model prayer is that God’s name would be honored and revered! This is no small detail. The goal of all prayer is the glory of God in our lives, and in the world. How often do we approach God with only our needs in mind? Yet, Jesus says, the primary thing we ought to pray for God’s name to be revered, honored, and treasured above all things. Whatever else prayer is, it is fundamentally about acknowledging God’s worth.

:: The second thing Jesus tells us to pray for is, “**Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven**”. God’s kingdom includes His rule and reign. We are acknowledging that His priorities supersede our own. This is how Jesus prayed before His crucifixion. Look up **Luke 22:41-42** and finish Jesus’ prayer, “**Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my**

\_\_\_\_\_, **but** \_\_\_\_\_ **be done.**”

:: By acknowledging God's priorities, we pray His will be done in our lives. List some specific things in your life (or in your family) that you would like to see God's will accomplished.

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:: The third request: "**Give us this day our daily bread**". We acknowledge God's provision. He is a faithful provider. This request is recognizing our dependence on Him for our daily needs. We don't trust in ourselves to provide for our needs, we trust in God alone. Why do you suppose Jesus tells us to ask for our "**daily**" bread? Why daily?

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:: Next, we pray: "**Forgive us our debts as we forgive those who trespass against us.**" Here Jesus teaches us to acknowledge our sin and our need for forgiveness. This sentence teaches us something interesting about sin. Jesus calls sin "debt". The word He uses means "*something owed*". Lookup **Romans 6:23**. According to this verse, what is owed from sin? \_\_\_\_\_

:: Read **Colossians 2:13-14**. Think about what this passage is saying about your sin 'debt' to God. What stands out to you about this passage, and why?

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:: Forgiveness is granted when we confess our sins and trust in Jesus Christ. In light of God forgiving us, what does the second half of Matthew 6:12 tell us we must do to others? How do you suppose these are related?

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:: Last, Jesus tells us to pray “**lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**” Here we acknowledge our utter dependance on His power. Jesus said, the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. Unless God carries us through temptation and delivers us from evil, we have no hope of following Jesus. Write down **2Thessalonians 3:3** in the space below.

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:: Let’s put it all together. Following what we’ve learned from Jesus’ model prayer, write a personal prayer in your own words below... *[There’s no right or wrong way, just be sure to include all the elements of Jesus’ model.]*

**“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name...**

*[acknowledge God’s worth]*

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**Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**

*[acknowledge God’s priorities]*

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**Give us this day our daily bread,**

*[acknowledge God’s provision]*

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**and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.**

*[acknowledge your sins]*

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**And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”**

*[acknowledge your dependance]*

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“Prayer is both conversation and encounter with God. . . . We must know the awe of praising his glory, the intimacy of finding his grace, and the struggle of asking his help, all of which can lead us to know the spiritual reality of his presence.”

- Tim Keller

## // Prayer and Meditation

:: Meditation is biblical. Throughout the book of Psalms, God's people meditate on His word. Prayer and meditation go together. Biblical meditation is not the same as Eastern forms of meditations. Non-Christian forms of meditation focus on emptying the mind. This is usually done by relaxed breathing, mental focusing, or repeating words/mantras. Biblical meditation, on the other hand, is about filling the mind with God's Word. Psalm 119:97, **"Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day."**

:: Martin Luther recommended the practice of biblical meditation to prepare for prayer. His method was to begin with one commandment from Scripture. Meditate on it in four steps:

1. Think about how it applies to your life. What does this commandment want you to believe or do?
2. Thank God for the commandment. Thank Him for revealing His will to you. Praise Him for His compassion in teaching you His truth.
3. Confess your sin. Think about all the ways you've broken this commandment. Confess all the ways you've provoked His wrath and ask for mercy and forgiveness.
4. Pray for help. Ask God to keep you from breaking this commandment again. Ask Him to keep you from forgetting His word and being ungrateful for His mercy. Cling to Him.

:: Let's practice Luther's four-step model for biblical meditation on a passage from Matthew 6. Read Matthew 6:25-33. Meditate on Jesus' commandment in verse 33, **"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."**

1. How does this apply to your life? What is this commandment asking you to believe about God and do with that knowledge?

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2. Thank God for revealing His will. Praise Him for teaching this truth.

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3. Think about and confess all the ways you've broken this commandment.

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4. Pray for God's help to keep you from breaking this command again.

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:: One more practice Luther recommended was personalizing biblical prayers. There are a handful of passages of the Bible which can easily be personalized into prayers. For example, Colossians 1:9-10 says, **“And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.”** Personalizing it may look something like this:

*“Father I pray that I might be filled with the knowledge of your will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding so that I can walk in a manner worthy of you, fully pleasing to You, bearing fruit in every good work and increase in the knowledge of You.”*

:: Personalize Ephesians 3:16-18 in the same way below:

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“And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.”

1John 5:14-15



## // Common Questions About Prayer

*Below are some commonly asked questions about prayer. Space is left at the bottom of page 10 for any questions you may like to ask your group.*

**Q:** *Why doesn't God answer my prayers?*

**A:** The Bible doesn't promise all our prayers will be answered. God hears our prayers, but sometimes He doesn't answer them in the way we would like. One reason could be that we are praying for the wrong reasons. James 4:3, **"You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions."** God is good and will not give us anything that would be harmful to us. If the answer would hurt us, He won't grant it. Another reason could be God has other plans. He sometimes delays an answer to prayer to produce patience, endurance, trust, and God-glorifying faith, all of which carry an eternal reward. Interestingly, in none of the Apostle Paul's prayers for his friends does he ask for a change in their circumstances.

**Q:** *Does prayer change God's mind?*

**A:** Ephesians 1:11 says God **"works all things according to the counsel of His will"**. This means, God does nothing outside of the counsel of His will. Therefore, nothing "changes God's mind". But there are certainly instances in Scripture where God responds to the prayers of His people. Perhaps the best way to think about it is that God ordains some event, moves on His people to pray to that end, and then does it. However it works, we can be sure that God is not manipulated by anyone regardless of how long and loud they pray.

**Q:** *Does it matter if many people pray for something? Is prayer more effective when more people pray?*

**A:** Paul tells the Corinthians to help him in prayer so the answer would be **"granted us through the prayers of many."** (2Cor. 1:11) In the book of Revelation, the Apostle John sees a bowl filled with the prayers of the saints. When the bowl is filled, it is poured out on the earth, in answer to prayer. So, from these texts, the answer seems to be yes. God sometimes chooses to answer prayer in response to many, and other times in response to one.

**Q:** Do I have to pray “in Jesus’ name”?

**A:** Yes in one sense. No in another. To pray in Jesus name means to come to God trusting in Christ for salvation and acceptance and not relying on your own credibility or record of good deeds. So, in that sense all prayer is in Jesus’ name. However, the phrase “in Jesus’ name” is not an incantation. We must not think that our prayers are only effective if we have enunciated those words.

**Q:** *How much faith do I need before God will answer my prayer?*

**A:** Faith is not a matter of quantity. It is based on the object of the faith. Jesus said a little faith in God is all that is necessary to move mountains.

**Q:** *Can I pray directly to Jesus? How about the Holy Spirit?*

**A:** Almost every prayer in the Bible is directed to God, the Father. Only a couple times is a prayer made directly to the Lord Jesus. Nowhere is a prayer made directly to the Holy Spirit. However, the Triune God is One. So, it is not wrong to pray to the Spirit or the Son. However, based on Scripture, we should pray to the Father, in the name of the Son, through the power of the Spirit.

**Q:** *Can Christians pray imprecatory prayers?*

**A:** If the answer is yes, it should be a very slow and careful yes. Christians ought to default to the Lord Jesus’ command to “**love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you**” (Mt 5:44). There may be a situation in which the need arises to pray imprecatory psalms on some evil force that is hindering the cause of the gospel. But, ultimately we are not sovereign and do not see what God sees. Therefore, it ought to be considered carefully.

**Q:** \_\_\_\_\_

**A:** \_\_\_\_\_

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# UNIT 3: Prayer & Fasting

## PRAYER REQUESTS // PRAISE REPORTS

Go around the room and have each person share a prayer request and/or a praise report. Members should commit to praying for these requests.

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## ACTIVITY

Use Martin Luther's bible meditation method (see page 7) on the following verses: Ephesians 4:32; Hebrews 13:5; Ephesians 4:29. Share your experience with your group next session.

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# UNIT 3: Prayer & Fasting

## HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

:: Memorize the following verse(s):

**“And this is the confidence that we have toward Him, that if we ask anything according to His will He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of Him.”**

1John 5:14-15, ESV

:: Complete the Unit 3 worksheets and activities (when applicable).

:: Pray for the needs of your brothers/sisters in your group.

:: Ensure you are able to attend the next session.