

Leader's Guide

JESUS TEACHES US... ABOUT LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

January 21, 2007
John 16:23-33

LEADER'S GUIDE
for small group
discussion prepared
to aid you in digging
deeper and taking to
heart what we are
exploring on
Sunday mornings.



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Overview

Although we all do it, we aren't always comfortable talking about it. We pray. We're not sure we actually "get answers;" we often wonder what really happens when we pray. So, let's talk with Jesus about that!

Walk it through

Throughout the Upper Room Discourse, Jesus speaks about the place of prayer in the lives of His followers. Do a quick "survey" of what He says by reading the passages noted in the discussion guide.

What is common throughout Jesus words about prayer? A couple of things stand out: (1) Prayer apparently "works;" God answers (in the affirmative!) the prayers prayed by the followers of Jesus; and (2) the prayer that "works" is prayer offered "in Jesus' name."

This means that Jesus *is not* telling His followers that the Father is like some glorified jackpot and that by pulling the handle in prayer, we get whatever our little (often selfish!) hearts desire. What Jesus *is* saying is that when our lives are in line with Him and we are prizing what He prizes and living for what He is living for, *then* when we ask *in that spirit* the Father hears and answers.

Praying in Jesus' name does not mean tacking "in Jesus' name" on to the end of our prayers. It means to pray as if Jesus Himself were praying, to ask the Father for the things that are on Jesus' heart, to align our requests with Jesus' passions and desires. And, when we do that, it is no surprise that we receive affirmative answers. The challenge isn't in the praying—it is in praying "in Jesus' name."

If we only began to pray (and live!) "in Jesus' name," we would experience the kind of life of peace and joy (John 15:11; 16:33) Jesus wants for us.

Discussion Guide

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Thinking it through . . .

Let's start off with a challenging "theological" question: *What happens when you pray?* Does anything really occur because you prayed?

Although prayer is certainly an integral part of the lives of the followers of Jesus, for many of us it seems as if we don't really know how to think about prayer. But Jesus wants us to be clear. Read the following passages and take note of what Jesus says about praying:
John 14:13-14; 15:7-11; 15:12-17; 16:23-24

What common threads are found in these passages? What big idea is Jesus telling us in all that He says about prayer here?

Is Jesus giving His followers *carte blanche*, as if they can have their every whim? Why or why not?

How does the idea of praying "in Jesus' name" shape this praying?

After talking about abiding and prayer in John 15, Jesus explains why He "said these things" (15:11). After talking about loving Him and prayer in John 16, Jesus explains why He "said these things" (16:33). What is the connection?

What difference does this make?

Apparently, prayer should not only change things around us, but should be the root and foundation for our joy and peace. So, how goes it in your life? Are you experiencing what Jesus offers?