

"TEACH US TO PRAY"

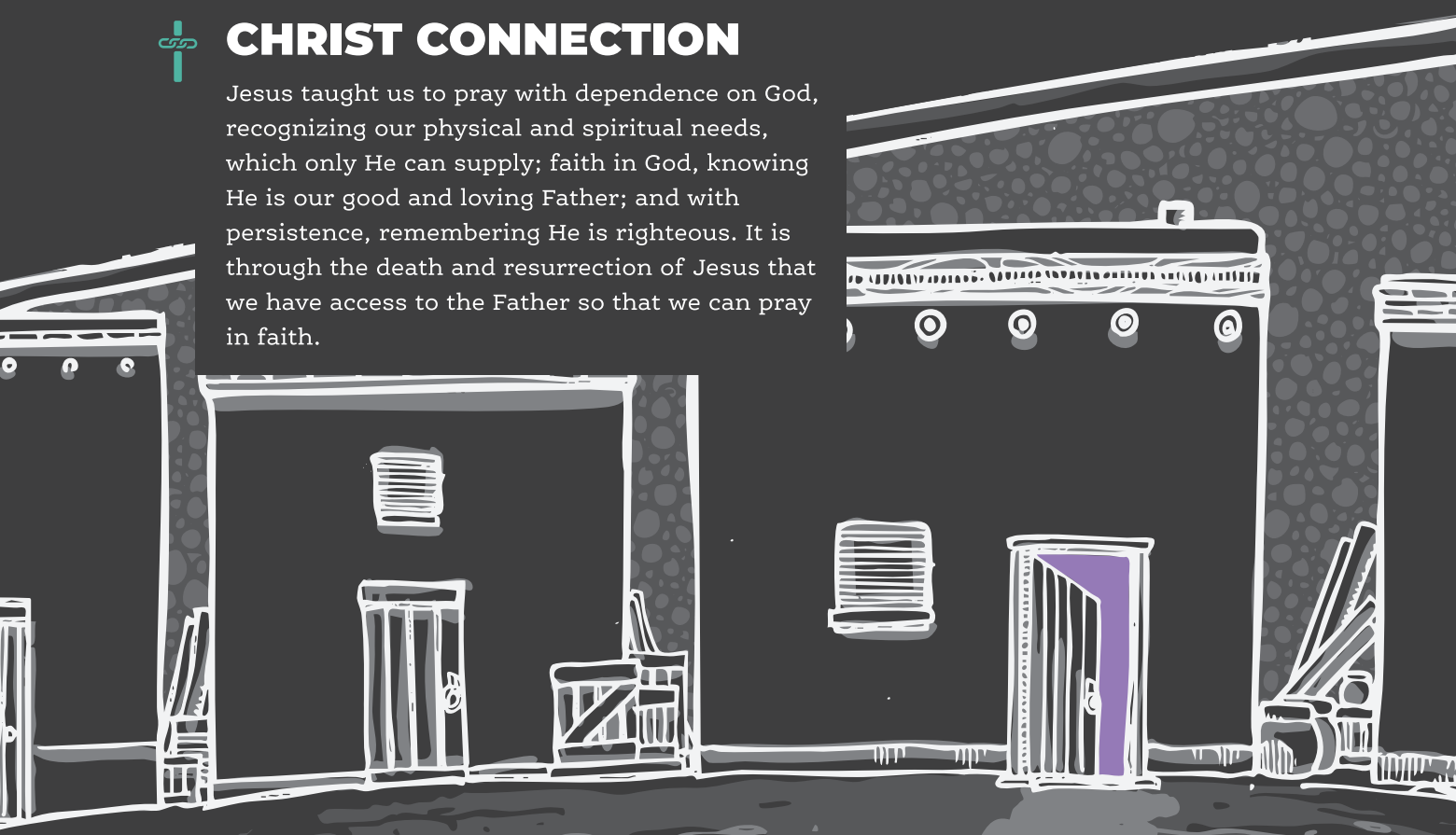
MAIN POINT.

We can imitate Jesus and pray honestly and faithfully, fully depending on God.



CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus taught us to pray with dependence on God, recognizing our physical and spiritual needs, which only He can supply; faith in God, knowing He is our good and loving Father; and with persistence, remembering He is righteous. It is through the death and resurrection of Jesus that we have access to the Father so that we can pray in faith.



LEARNING TO PRAY

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to read all of the content on the timeline as you prepare to teach.

Luke 11

WE CAN APPROACH GOD

LUKE 11:1-4

1 He was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John also taught his disciples." 2 He said to them, "Whenever you pray, say, Father, your name be honored as holy. Your kingdom come. 3 Give us each day our daily bread. 4 And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone in debt to us. And do not bring us into temptation."

GOD LISTENS AS OUR GOOD FATHER

LUKE 11:5-13

5 He also said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend and goes to him at midnight and says to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, 6 because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I don't have anything to offer him.' 7 Then he will answer from inside and say, 'Don't bother me! The door is already locked, and my children and I have gone to bed. I can't get up to give you anything.' 8 I tell you, even though he won't get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his friend's shameless boldness, he will get up and give him as much as he needs. 9 So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened to you. 10 For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. 11 What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead of a fish? 12 Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? 13 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?"

BEFORE YOU TEACH

MAIN POINT.

We can imitate Jesus and pray honestly and faithfully, fully depending on God.

Leaders: What a privilege to teach students how to pray—how to come before our holy God, who cares and listens to their needs and who speaks to them in return, when they listen for His voice.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

WE CAN APPROACH GOD

LUKE 11:1

“Jesus ‘was praying in a certain place’ (v. 1). A disciple saw him and asked, ‘Lord, teach us to pray’ (v. 1). That request means prayer is not something learned automatically. Prayer is not natural. Effective prayer has to be taught and learned. There’s no shame in not knowing how to pray or feeling uncomfortable in prayer. There’s only shame if we don’t ask to be taught and as a result spend years of our Christian lives ineffective in prayer.”¹¹

LUKE 11:2

“By calling on God as Father, Jesus intended to teach his followers to regard their heavenly Father in a close, intimate way, as one who knew, loved, and cared for them (Ps. 103:13; Mal. 3:17; 1 Pet. 5:7).”¹²

LUKE 11:2

“It was unusual for Jews to refer to God as ‘Father.’ Such an address would seem too personal and familiar.”¹³

GOD LISTENS AS OUR GOOD FATHER

LUKE 11:9-10

“‘Ask’ . . . ‘seek’ . . . ‘knock’ refer to prayer and reflect the persistence theme emphasized in the story of vv. 5-8. The assurance that ‘everyone who asks receives’ does not mean that every prayer is answered as we want it to be. Rather, it means that if we persist in prayer, our prayers will eventually be answered according to God’s best for us.”¹⁴

CONTEXT

Disciples in Jesus's day would've often expected, even requested, their rabbis or leaders to teach them how to pray. Knowing that John the Baptist had instructed his disciples on prayer, Jesus's disciples wanted to hear what their teacher had to say. So, the disciples' question wouldn't have been unusual. The questioner could've been seeking specific words as an example (which is what Jesus gave here), a pattern for all prayers (which is how the Model Prayer is set up in Matt. 6), or general information on the topic of prayer. This prayer in Luke 11 may sound familiar because Jesus taught a similar prayer in Matthew 6:9-13. This is the prayer we're more familiar with, sometimes called "the Model Prayer" or "the Lord's Prayer." Though scholars disagree about whether this is the same teaching, just described differently by two different Gospel writers, some believe the most likely scenario is that Jesus taught the same prayer multiple times, since He wanted His disciples to be familiar with the pattern. Using this prayer as a pattern (to move from praising God to making our own requests) and praying the specific words are acceptable ways we can apply Jesus's teaching here.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION

Prayer and Providence

If God is in control and already knows the future, why pray? The Bible teaches that although God has a plan for this world that He promises to fulfill, prayer is often the means God uses to accomplish His divine purpose. Even though God knows the end result, the means that lead to that end result will be accomplished through prayer. In this sense, it is true that "prayer changes things," and it is also true that God uses prayer to change our hearts so that our will lines up with His.

LEADERS' PRAYER

FATHER, YOU ARE GOOD AND YOU WANT TO HEAR OUR HEARTS. TEACH US TO PRAY SO THAT WE MAY TEACH OUR STUDENTS TO PRAY EFFECTIVELY AND PERSISTENTLY. ENCOURAGE OUR HEARTS NOT TO GIVE UP BUT TO KEEP PRAYING FOR STUDENTS WHO DON'T KNOW YOU OR HAVE WALKED AWAY FROM YOU.



KICK STARTER

DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know the book of Psalms is made up of prayers and songs to God? The Israelites used these to worship God, and they can guide our prayers and worship too!

These optional activities are designed to help your students interact. You'll find a Discussion Activity and a Cultural Connection, which touches on a relevant topic in today's teen culture. Each group is different, so adapt these activities to fit your group's needs. The goal is for students to connect more to the lesson as they connect to the topic and to one another.

1

FATHER, MAY I?

SUPPLIES LIST: NONE

Designate a “start line” and a “finish line” (about 10 to 15 feet apart) in your group's area. You (the leader) are the “Mother” or “Father” (representing God). The students are the “Followers” (representing us). Say: “Today, we're going to play a game of ‘Mother (or Father), May I?’ Your goal is to reach the finish line. The only way to move is by asking a clear question about moving (e.g., ‘Mother/Father, may I take three giant steps?’). In this game, however, when you ask me, the answer is always ‘YES.’ Every time. No matter how many times you ask.”

Start the game. Students must take turns asking you for steps. Every time they ask, give an immediate and clear “Yes, you may!” Watch how quickly they reach the finish line because they know the answer is guaranteed. (Some will figure out they can finish the game with one question, and that's okay.) Ask: “In the real game of ‘Mother May I?’, the Mother often says ‘No’ or gives you a weird step you didn't ask for. What was the biggest difference in this game?”

Say: “In our game, the answer was always ‘Yes’ because we set up the rules that way. In real prayer, God always hears us and always responds, but sometimes His answer is ‘No’ or ‘Wait’ because He knows what is truly best for us. God's response is rooted in perfect love, even if we don't understand it right away. The point is that we don't have to worry. We can approach God truthfully and faithfully, fully depending on Him, because He promises to listen and give us exactly what we need.

2

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Sometimes, our most honest prayers are questions. Yet, some of us hesitate to come to God with our questions and requests. Isn't it wrong to question God? Yes, but questioning God and asking God questions are two totally different things. Questioning God's character or motives implies we think we know better or could do better; questioning His character stems from unbelief. Asking a question implies we want to know and understand God better. So, don't be afraid to ask God hard questions—He can handle them. He even encourages us to come to Him with our biggest hurts and doubts. He is the source of all things, including knowledge and comfort. But here's the key: Praying honestly doesn't mean praying irreverently, or disrespectfully. Even when we're hurting or confused, we need to remember who we're talking to: our good, holy, and sovereign (in control of all things and all people) God. He deserves our humility, respect, and trust—no matter what.

DISCUSSION

MAIN POINT.

We can imitate Jesus and pray honestly and faithfully, fully depending on God.

WE CAN APPROACH GOD

READ LUKE 11:1-4



WHY DO YOU THINK THE DISCIPLES ASKED JESUS TO TEACH THEM HOW TO PRAY? WHEN HAVE YOU STRUGGLED WITH KNOWING HOW TO PRAY OR IF YOU'RE DOING IT RIGHT?

Leaders: Share context on model prayers. We overcomplicate it, but the truth is that prayer is simply talking with God—our good, faithful, and loving Father who wants to hear from us. Instead of avoiding prayer, especially praying aloud, you can think of it as sitting down with the One who loves you unconditionally and telling Him exactly what's on your heart. **For times you feel overwhelmed or confused, Jesus gave you a model: Start by honoring God, then pray for the good of His people, and then ask God to meet physical and spiritual needs.**

WHERE DOES JESUS TEACH US TO FOCUS OUR PRAYERS? IS IT OKAY TO ASK FOR OUR WANTS OR NEEDS? WHY OR WHY NOT?

Jesus tells us to put God first in our hearts and to trust Him to provide for all of our needs (Matt. 6:33). What we put first in our hearts, we put first in our words. So, in our prayers, we focus first on praising God and seeking His will for our lives. But then Jesus teaches us to ask God to meet our physical and spiritual needs, big and small. **Because Jesus restored our relationship with God, we can ask Him directly for what we need and be confident that He will provide.**

WHY DOES THE WAY WE SPEAK TO GOD MATTER WHEN WE PRAY?

Prayer is talking with God, and when we pray, we should keep in mind who God is. While God is loving, compassionate, and merciful, He is also all-powerful (omnipotent), just, and holy. And only because of Jesus can we come to Him in prayer. Our words and attitude before God should be respectful and humble, but prayer is also personal. This is why Jesus taught His disciples to address God as Father. Not only does this name remind believers we're part of God's family, but it also reassures us that God is not some far off, uncaring being who's constantly disappointed in us and waiting for us to mess up. **No, He is our good and loving Father, who invites us to come near with boldness and confidence, resting in His presence and asking for whatever we need (Heb. 4:16), while also respecting His holiness.**

GOD LISTENS AS OUR GOOD FATHER

READ LUKE 11:5-13



WHEN HAVE YOU SERVED OR GIVEN ONLY BECAUSE YOU WERE EXPECTED TO? HOW IS THE WAY GOD GIVES TO US DIFFERENT?

The man in Jesus's story would've given out of a sense of honor and because his friend kept knocking, not necessarily because he wanted to. If a man would do that for a friend, how much more would God do for His children—children He loves and sent His own Son to die for? **God wants to give us good things because He is a good Father. And He promises that we'll find Him when we seek Him (Jer. 29:13).** So, don't hesitate. Ask God for whatever you need, and keep asking without shame or fear, trusting that He hears you and will answer in His perfect timing and according to His perfect plan.



HAVE YOU EVER ASKED FOR SOMETHING OVER AND OVER? WHAT DO YOU THINK ASKING FOR SOMETHING WITH "SHAMELESS BOLDNESS" MEANS (V. 8)?

Sometimes we don't ask for what we need because we feel ashamed—from not having what others have or from not being able to do something on our own. But God invites us to set aside any fear, shame, or doubt and come before Him with boldness (Heb. 4:16); He promises to meet our needs (Matt. 6:25-34). So, we can approach Him with confidence, again and again, asking, seeking, and knocking until He opens the door to answered prayer—even if He doesn't answer the way we hoped or expected. God never gets tired of hearing from us, and praying persistently benefits us in so many ways. **Every time we ask God for what we need, we get to know Him more, and we confirm our trust in Him to provide. And every answered prayer, even the one answered with a solid "no," helps our faith grow.**



WHY DO WE STRUGGLE TO TRUST GOD LISTENS TO OUR PRAYERS AND THAT HIS ANSWERS ARE ENOUGH?

We can trust God listens to us and answers our prayers because He said so. **While it can be hard to trust when God doesn't answer the way we want, His "no" is still sufficient because God Himself and His plan for our lives is a much greater "yes."** He is more than able to meet all our needs. But God, our good and loving Father, has given us abundantly more than we could ask for or imagine: He sealed His promises to believers with the blood of His Son, poured out for our sins, and then with the gift of the Holy Spirit, who lives within us and helps us live life God's way. God's answers are enough, because ultimately, He has answered with Himself!

WRAP-UP



WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN AFRAID TO PRAY FOR WITH "SHAMELESS BOLDNESS"? HOW CAN YOU PRAY BOLDLY?

We live in a world of weak commitments, of "maybe" and "almost." All too often, these words also describe our relationship with God and our prayers. But we can't halfway follow Jesus—that's impossible. The call to follow Jesus is a call to be all in. Our prayers should be all in, too. So, that thing you're afraid to ask for? **Request it, trusting in God's power to provide anything, trusting that He will only answer "yes" to what's best for you and to what's part of His perfect plan.** That person you think will never come to know Jesus? Cry out to God on his or her behalf each day, trusting He knows the best way to convict people and draw them to Himself. That relationship you worry will never be restored? Ask God to soften the person's heart—and to soften yours. God is a God of peace and restoration, even when it seems impossible. **Pray boldly, pray persistently, and watch and see how God will move.**