THIS IS
JESUS

UNIT ONE: THE MESSIAH NAMED JESUS
PART 3: THE MESSIAH IS CALLING

Lesson 3: A Call to Pray

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO LEARN: That the Lord's prayer offers a perfect blueprint of how followers of Jesus can approach prayer.

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO DO WITH WHAT THEY'VE LEARNED: To answer the call to prayer by practicing the blueprint of the Lord's Prayer and living out the principles found within it.

SCRIPTURE FOCUS: Matthew 6:5-15

KEY TAKEAWAY: The Lord's Prayer is a perfect blueprint that we can use when communicating with God.

OVERVIEW:

The passage commonly known as the "Lord's Prayer" is a blueprint Jesus used to teach His disciples how to pray. This prayer actually emphasizes important elements of a prayer life: praising God for who He is, thankfulness for what He has done, personal requests for daily needs, and requests on behalf of others. As we learn to pray following the blueprint Jesus gave us, we will begin to experience the fullness of life God intends for His children.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO:

Each *This Is Jesus* lesson comes with a Teacher Prep Video. These short videos are designed to help you grasp the lesson's main point as you prepare to teach.



BIBLE BACKGROUND

The Bible Background is designed to help you provide some context for the Scripture you'll be studying. *The Details* give you background info for each book. *The Setting* informs you of what's happening in and around the passage. *The Main Point* gives you an overview of how the passage will be used in the lesson.

- **WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "CONTEXT"?** In every YM360 Bible Study lesson, you'll notice we make a point to encourage you to provide the context for the passages you study. By "context," we mean, at the very least, helping students know *who* wrote the book, *when* it was written, and *why* it was written.
- **WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?** When we teach the Bible without giving context, students don't get a "big picture" understanding of the story of the Bible. But this view is vital to grasping the story of God's plan of redemption for humankind. As you teach, use the *Bible Background* to help summarize the context.

THE DETAILS

Matthew

- *Author*: Matthew, a former tax collector, was a disciple of Jesus and a firsthand witness to the stories he relates in his gospel.
- *Time frame:* Most people hold to Matthew's gospel being written in the late 50's or 60's A.D., though there are some who think it was written after the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D.
- *Purpose:* Matthew was writing to a primarily Jewish audience to convince them that Jesus was indeed the long-awaited Messiah. But he was probably aware of a Gentile audience, as his gospel makes the case that the saving truth of Christ is for all nations.

THE SETTING

In Matthew 6, Jesus teaches His disciples how to pray. Prayer is an important aspect of the Christian life, but it is not exclusive to Christianity today, nor was it exclusive to Judaism in Jesus' day. Things like meditation, scripture study, and fasting were (and still are) practiced in other religious contexts. Because there were many other 'examples' of prayer, Jesus ensured that His followers knew the correct and God-honoring way to pray. Jesus opens the prayer by saying, "This is how you should pray." But He is not simply giving us words that are the only ones we should speak to God. We might better understand Jesus to say, "Pray in this way." Jesus was giving His followers a pattern or blueprint for their prayers.

THE MAIN POINT

Many people think prayer is useless. They believe that God, if He even exists, usually does what He wants, so our pleas to Him fall on deaf ears. Others think of praying only in times of extreme difficulty when they are at "the end of their rope." Still others see prayer as only asking God for things (often times, things they don't really need). When Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He told them to first begin by focusing on God, His holiness, His rule, and His will. Jesus also emphasized in the blueprint for prayer that His followers should acknowledge God as Father. He wants His children to come to Him and lovingly watches over us. He not only instructs us on how to pray, but also invites us to pray often.

LESSON PLAN

The Lesson Plan contains three elements: an introductory activity called *The Lead In;* the Bible Study section called *The Main Event;* and an application-focused segment called *The Last Word.*

THE LEAD IN

- *Goal:* To introduce the idea of communication and potential roadblocks that make it difficult.
- *Set-Up:* Make sure you have paper cups, paperclips, string cut into six-foot lengths (any kind will do), a few scissors, hole punchers, and tape lying out for students to use.

FIRST, make sure you have paper cups, paperclips, string (any kind will do), a few scissors, hole punchers, and tape lying out for students to use. This will need to be set up before they walk in. As students arrive, pair them up (or wait until everyone arrives and allow them to pair up themselves).

THEN, instruct students to make a phone system with their partner. Ultimately, they will have the freedom to use the supplies how they see fit. However, if your group needs instruction, try this: *Instruct them to punch a small hole in the bottom of each paper cup. String the fishing line through the hole in each cup from the outside in. Secure the fishing line by tying the line inside the cup to the paper clip.*

When the designs are completed, arrange obstacles (tables, chairs, and people) and run the strings connecting the cups around, under, and through the obstacles in the way. Tell the pairs to talk and listen to each other through their phone system. (*It will not work.*)

NEXT, **ask:**

- **Do you ever experience obstacles when you try to talk to God? What are some of those obstacles?**
    - *Answers will vary.*

FINALLY, explain to students that today, using the Lord's Prayer as a blueprint, they will experience various ways that they can approach God through prayer while avoiding the obstacles that sometimes get in the way.

Make sure there are no questions, and then transition to The Main Event.

THE MAIN EVENT

- *Goal:* To help students understand the layout of the Lord's Prayer and how we are called to communicate with God.
- *Set-Up:* Make sure students have a Bible or Bible App.

FIRST, begin the Main Event by asking the following questions and allowing students to discuss and reflect:

- **When do you pray? Once a day? Once a week? All day long?**
    - *Answers will vary.*
- **Where do you pray? In your room? On the bus? In your car?**
    - *Answers will vary.*
- **What do you pray for? Money? Health? Others?**
    - *Answers will vary.*

THEN, **ask students:**

- **You have shared with the class when you pray, where you pray, and what you pray for. But I haven't asked you why you pray? So why do you pray?**
    - *Answers will vary.*

NEXT, briefly explain that praying to God can feel very daunting. Jesus knew that we needed a good blueprint for how to pray. There were a lot of different ways of praying on display around Jesus' disciples, just as there are many different ways that we see prayer displayed in the world today. Jesus began with a warning to His followers, so that they would not follow these insincere and uninspired ways of prayer. Read or have a student read Matthew 9:5-8.

Say something like:

- **Jesus warned against endless babble in prayer. Some people thought a lot of words or a certain formula would make a person's prayers more pleasing to God or would earn a better response to the prayer. And we can fall into this trap too, can't we? If we have prayed to God for a certain outcome, and it's been a while, we might grow anxious and wonder, "Did I mess that up? Should I have spent more time in prayer, or come up with a special way of asking?" However, Jesus didn't want us to view a successful prayer life as one that "got results." That makes prayer about us, and whether or not we are more worthy than others to have our prayers answered.**

THEN, **ask students:**

- **We are about to read Jesus' example of prayer. This is often called the Lord's Prayer, because it is our Lord Jesus who gave us this perfect blueprint for prayer. How many of you have heard and prayed the Lord's Prayer before?**
    - *Answers will be shown by a show of hands.*

Read or have a student read Matthew 6:9-15. Instruct students to take a moment and examine the beginning of the prayer. **Ask:**

- **Can anyone tell me what the word hallowed means?**
    - *Answer:* Hallowed means 'holy.'

Briefly explain that Jesus begins the Lord's prayer with an acknowledgement of God the Father's holiness and location (in Heaven). **Say something like:**

- **Jesus taught His disciples to address God as "Father." The Aramaic word for "Father," which is Abba, is not a formal term but is a highly personal word, full of warmth and affection, similar to our word "Dad." God longs for His children to call Him their Father through faith in His Son, Jesus. In the opening line of this blueprint for prayer, we already witness a calling to intimate prayer. God is holy, or hallowed, which would typically communicate that you can't go near Him if you are unholy. But by adding in that term "Father," Jesus is letting us know that we can approach God with a familiarity that we might have with an earthly father.**

NEXT, instruct students to take another look at verse 10. Explain that this portion of the prayer is meant to help us align our desires with what God is doing. Jesus then taught that we should pray for the coming of God's Kingdom. This Kingdom refers to His rule throughout the earth and His authority over every person. The coming of God's Kingdom was a common element in Jesus' teaching. **Say something like:**

- **God's will is carried out when His Kingdom comes. God's "will" refers to His desires, demands, and plans. For God's will to be "done on earth" means that humans have to set aside their wills, or the things they want, so that something far better can be accomplished. To pray for God's will to be accomplished on earth, we must be willing to do God's will as He has already revealed it to us in His Word. Imagine what could happen on earth if God's children willingly carried out all we already know to do from Scripture!**

THEN, **ask students:**

- **As we move on to the next portion of this prayer, what do you think Jesus means by asking God for our daily bread?**
    - *Answer:* Bread is generally understood as our food/sustenance.

Remind students that everyone needs food to live. If Jesus is inviting everyone to pray, He is also inviting everyone to ask God for their daily sustenance (whatever 'bread' they might need). **Say something like:**

- **If you have never been hungry, or you don't like bread all that much, it can be a little difficult to understand the promise God is making in this verse. He is saying, "I care about your provision. I know your daily needs." Bread may seem like a very basic thing for God to provide, but that's not the point being made here. God isn't saying, "Be happy you have bread- it's better than nothing." Bread was often the centerpiece of the meal during restaurant and were given rolls or biscuits at the beginning of the meal. To have bread meant to have a meal. Think about a time when you went to a restaurant and were given rolls or biscuits at the beginning of the meal. The bread brought to you is a part of the meal. To ask God for our daily bread isn't just to ask Him for literal bread. It's putting our faith in Him that He will provide for all of our needs.**

NEXT, read or have a student read verse 12 again. **Ask students:**

- **Have any of you ever lent something to a friend and never gotten it back?**
    - *Answers will vary.* Odds are, someone has given out a pencil, a sweatshirt, or something like that and never gotten it back.

- **How did that impact your relationship with your friend?**
    - *Answers will vary.*

Say something like:

- **The word "forgive" carries the idea of canceling a debt that one owes. Debt between friends, or between any two people for that matter, does damage to the relationship. Asking God to "forgive us our debts" is a request for His grace. The word debt refers to a sin. Since we are all descendants of Adam and Eve, whose sin led to the sin curse on humanity, we all have a debt that we cannot repay. Even if you set out to live perfectly from now until the day you die, it would never be enough to overcome the debt that sin has put between you and God. That's why we ask for His forgiveness, and why the Gospel of Jesus is such Good News. It is a reminder that our debt is forgiven!**

Ask students:

- **What do you think about the inclusion that you and I should also forgive those who have a debt to us?**
    - *Answers will vary.*

Explain that Jesus' words emphasize that we who have been forgiven must also be forgiving. It can be really difficult to forgive others, especially when our forgiveness might not make a difference in their behavior at all. Remind students of the friend that they lent something to, who didn't give it back. Forgiving the friend might mean that we never see the thing we gave them again. Now, of course, we might not lend them other things in the future. But the cost of a lost object might be worth saving that relationship. Or it might be the way that we demonstrate the character of God in our own lives. Before moving to verse 13, briefly remind students of Jesus' words in verses 14-15.

THEN, read or have a student read verse 13. **Ask students:**

- **Why do you think that Jesus calls us to pray this last verse?**

- *Answers will vary.*

Explain to students that in the model prayer, the word probably refers to temptation to sin. A better understanding of the word "lead" would be, "Do not allow us to be led." Here, the petition is that God would keep us from being enticed by temptation and falling prey to it. Believers are prone to sin. We can easily give in to it if God doesn't protect us from such evil.

FINALLY, **say something like:**

- **The Lord's Prayer isn't just something you say in church; it is a practical blueprint for communicating with God. Jesus has given us this blueprint for communication, and with that is the invitation to use it! Let's follow that blueprint and recite the Lord's Prayer together.**

Allow for questions, and then transition into The Last Word.

THE LAST WORD

- *Goal:* To help students apply the blueprint of the Lord's Prayer in their own prayer life.
- *Set-Up:* Make sure you have enough paper and pens for each student.

FIRST, remind students of the questions you asked at the beginning of the Main Event. Explain that we often pray for a variety of reasons: to communicate intimately with God, to bring our concerns before Him, to adjust our will to His, and to foster growth in our relationship with God. **Say something like:**

- **The Lord's Prayer works as a blueprint for our prayer, but Jesus is not giving us the only words we should use when speaking with God. As I pass out the paper and pens, I want you to keep your Bible open to Matthew 6. To end our time, we are going to write out our own "version" of the Lord's Prayer. You can be as creative and personal as you want to be, just make sure you follow the same general pattern that Jesus has given us.**

THEN, pass out paper and pens to students. Allow them some time to write out their own version of the Lord's Prayer. To help students out, it may be beneficial to **ask the following questions as they work:**

- **Does anyone want to share how they are capturing the meaning behind verse 10, while also making it their own?**
- **Instead of using the term daily bread, how are you letting God know that you trust him to provide for your needs?**
- **What portions of the Lord's Prayer have you kept 'as is,' and why?**

FINALLY, ask if anyone would like to share their version of the Lord's Prayer. Encourage students to take a picture of this paper with their phone (as well as take the paper home) so that they can practice praying this prayer every day. **Say something like:**

- **Jesus encouraged us to approach prayer the way that we would when we talk to an abba, or father. He is calling for us to have an active and prolific prayer life. Take some time each day this week to pray. Use the prayer that you just wrote as a jumping-off point!**

Allow Time For Any Closing Thoughts Or Questions From Your Students. Before Leaving, Close With A Prayer.

- Don't forget to remind students about their devotions this week. If you're posting them on Social Media or some other means of electronic distribution, make sure you inform students of when they will be receiving them.