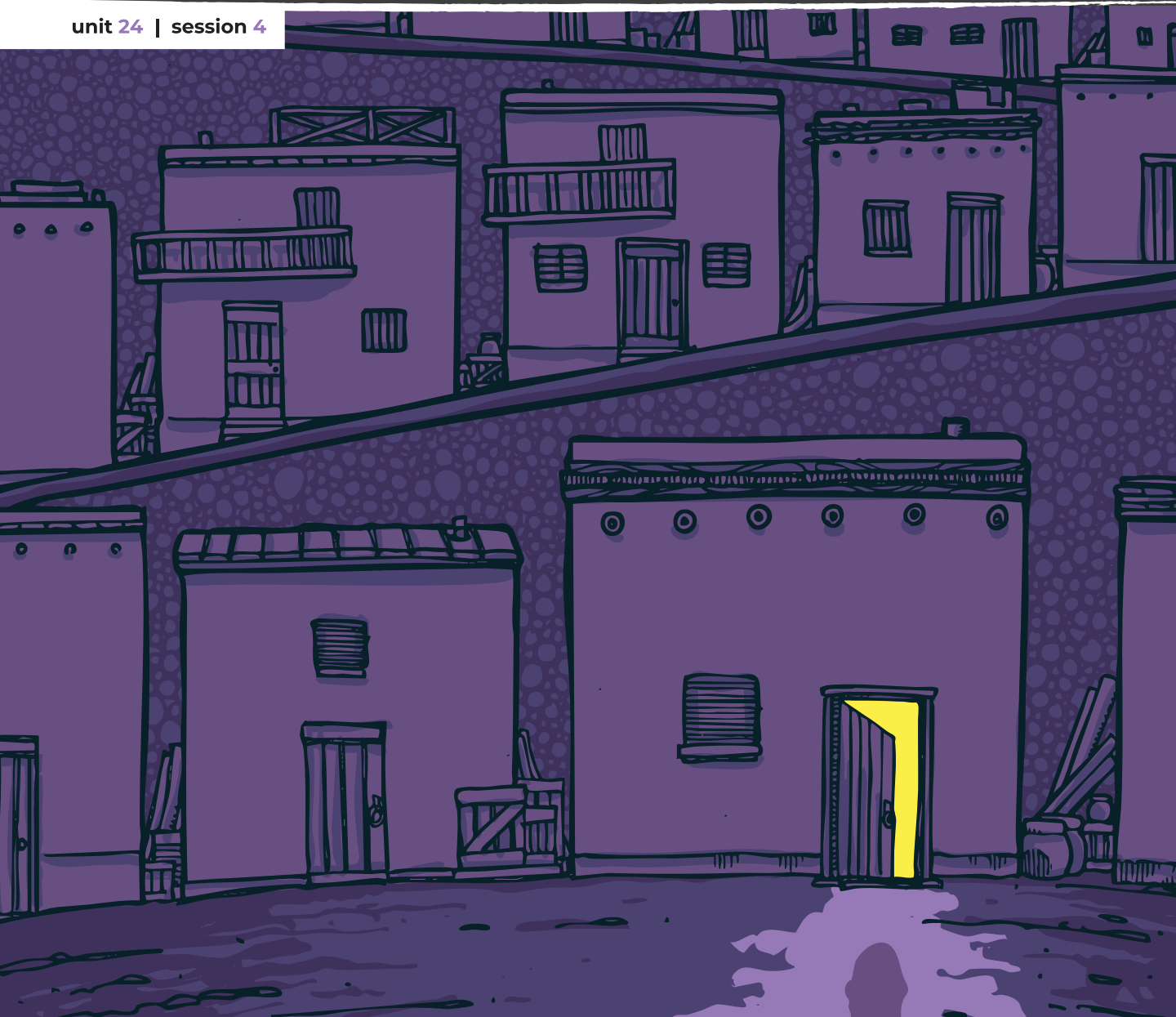


"TEACH US *TO PRAY*"

unit 24 | session 4



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 dig in and read all of the content on this timeline.

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?"

MAIN POINT.

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



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.

DISCUSSION

WE CAN APPROACH GOD

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?
- Where does Jesus teach us to focus our prayers? Is it okay to ask for our wants or needs? Why or why not?
- Why does the way we speak to God matter when we pray?

GOD LISTENS AS OUR GOOD FATHER

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?
- Have you ever asked for something over and over? What do you think asking for something with “shameless boldness” means (v. 8)?
- Why do we struggle to trust God listens to our prayers and that His answers are enough?



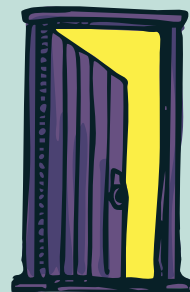
WHAT HAVE YOU PRAYED FOR HESITANTLY INSTEAD OF WITH “SHAMELESS BOLDNESS”? HOW CAN YOU PRAY HONESTLY INSTEAD?

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.



DAY ONE



JEREMIAH 29:12-14a

Puzzles are meant to be, well, puzzling. Shapes and colors grow more complex as the piece count rises. Depending on what type of puzzler you are, maybe you decide to put together little sections of the puzzle off to the side; maybe you start with all the edge pieces and fill in the inside later; or maybe you work from the top to the bottom. Regardless, you'll likely come to a point where your eyes hyperfocus on that one piece you haven't been able to place yet, and you don't give up until you find it, ignoring all the other pieces still waiting to be placed.

If we focus on the wrong things, this kind of commitment can be detrimental. But faith and godliness require our wholehearted focus—being all in, in every area of our lives. God called His people to this kind of pursuit when they were in exile. He invited them not to fix their attention on their circumstances and struggles but on Him, on His faithfulness, and on His promise to bring them home and reestablish their kingdom. Even though their situation seemed bleak and they might've wondered where God was in all of it, He promised, “I’m still your good and perfect God. I’m still here, and I see you.”

No matter where we find ourselves—in seasons of joy or struggle—we can find great comfort in these words. When we go looking for God and set our hearts on building a deeper relationship with Him, we will find everything we need. So, it's not just that we can come before God with our needs but that He invites us to do so and promises to listen to us when we do.

- **HOW DOES THIS PASSAGE ENCOURAGE YOU TO COME BEFORE GOD WITH YOUR HONEST PRAYERS?**
- **WHAT COULD IT LOOK LIKE FOR YOU TO PURSUE GOD WITH YOUR WHOLE HEART WHEREVER YOU ARE RIGHT NOW?**

PRAY

**GOD, THANK YOU FOR INVITING ME TO SEEK YOU
WITH MY HEART AND MY WORDS. COMFORT ME
WITH THE REMINDER THAT YOU WANT ME TO FIND
YOU, AND IN DOING SO, FIND THE COMFORT AND
HOPE I DESPERATELY NEED.**



DAY TWO

EPHESIANS 2:13-22

A theory called “six degrees of separation” suggests a chain of only six social connections separates any two people in the world. In other words, a famous person could be a friend of your best friend’s older brother’s neighbor’s sister’s dog walker. Not complicated at all, right?

Originally, only one degree of separation existed between God and people; Adam and Eve walked with Him in the garden of Eden! But after sin entered the world, God chose specific people to be mediators—those who go between two parties—between Himself and His people. These mediators were people like Moses, King David, and the prophet Elijah. After the Exodus, God also set up the office of priest. Priests were set apart by God to do God’s work. They interceded for God’s people, made offerings for them, and made sacrifices for their sins. The only access God’s people had to Him came through other imperfect humans.

Then, Jesus came. Jesus has always been God’s plan to restore our relationship with Him. Jesus is our perfect High Priest (Heb. 4:14-16), who erases the need for any other go-betweens. Through His blood on the cross, the Bible says believers were “brought near” to God (Eph. 2:13). Put simply, our direct access to God has been restored through Jesus’s blood and the presence of the Holy Spirit—the very Spirit of God—within us. Nothing separates us from Jesus (Rom. 8:31-39), so we can pray with boldness, expecting to receive the mercy and grace we need (Heb. 4:16).

- **IN YOUR OWN WORDS, WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE BROUGHT NEAR TO GOD?**
- **WHY DO WE NEED TO REMEMBER THAT NOTHING CAN SEPARATE US FROM GOD? HOW SHOULD THAT INFLUENCE OUR PRAYERS?**

PRAY

**LORD JESUS, THANK YOU FOR RESTORING OUR
RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD THROUGH YOUR PERFECT
SACRIFICE ON THE CROSS. SHOW ME HOW TO PRAY
WITH BOLDNESS, KNOWING I HAVE DIRECT ACCESS
TO GOD THROUGH YOU.**



DAY THREE

PHILIPPIANS 4:5b; JAMES 4:8-10

Whether you're an athlete, performer, or volunteer, you've probably heard the phrase: "Alright everybody, circle up." This phrase calls the team to gather around the leader, close enough to hear any last-minute instructions or encouraging words that person has before sending the team out to play the game, perform, or start the event. Closeness allows us to hear better and be heard more clearly, and this is just as true in our relationships as it is in these team meetings.

Closeness with God is vital to our faith. Although God is always near to us, sometimes unconfessed sin gets in the way. That's not to say our sin can separate us from God once we're saved—nothing can separate believers from God. Once we're in Christ, we're covered fully and finally by His blood and righteousness (Rom. 5:9). Instead, think of this sin like sand caught up in your shoes after a day at the beach: It doesn't keep you from walking, but it sure makes walking a lot less comfortable. Similarly, our sin affects our closeness with God, creating a distance in our relationship with Him.

So, when Scripture tells us to draw near to God, part of drawing near means confessing any sin that might be keeping us from having—or even wanting—that close relationship with Him. Drawing near to God also means spending regular time in His Word and in prayer. When we humble ourselves before God in this way, honestly confessing our sins and depending on Him to meet our every need, He meets us right then and there with His presence and provision.

- **EXAMINE YOUR HEART. WHAT SIN IS AFFECTING YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD RIGHT NOW?**
- **HOW WILL YOU DRAW NEAR TO GOD THIS WEEK? WHY IS IT GOOD TO REMEMBER THAT HE IS ALWAYS NEAR AND MEETS YOU WHERE YOU ARE?**

PRAY

GOD, YOU ARE GOOD, COMPASSIONATE, AND HOLY.
I WANT TO REMEMBER ALL THAT YOU ARE WHEN
I COME TO YOU. I CONFESS THAT I (DESCRIBE A
SPECIFIC SIN) AND RECEIVE YOUR FORGIVENESS.
THANK YOU FOR BEING NEAR TO ME, ALWAYS.



DAY FOUR

PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

If you're upset, frustrated, anxious, or sad, the last thing you likely want to hear is the advice to just "calm down." When people say this, you may not only feel like they're dismissing your feelings or not caring about what you're going through, but you're also left with more questions—"How do I calm down?" or "Should I not care about what I'm experiencing?" The reality is that telling someone to calm down—even yourself— isn't the best way to ease worry or anxiety. Doing so places all the power in our hands. Although the responsibility to choose our thoughts and actions lies with us, the power to change does not.

When you read the first command in Philippians 4:6, you might feel a little like you're being told to calm down. Far from being dismissive or uncaring, though, Paul's instruction not to worry is followed up with support. He gives us the best how-to for getting rid of anxiety: prayer and gratitude. When we pray, we don't stop caring about what happens and give up (for example, you'd still apologize to the friend you hurt but trust God with healing the relationship), but we stop worrying because we know the outcome rests in the hands of the One who created us, knows every one of our days, loves us more than we could ever imagine, and wants what's best for us. To pray "with thanksgiving" (v. 6), then, means to pray with the confidence of someone who lives as if God has already answered. Even if He doesn't answer our specific petitions or requests in the way we hope or expect, we can always trust Him to answer with what's best and to give us a peace beyond our understanding. Through His presence, we can live boldly and confidently—no matter what.

- **WHAT STEPS DOES PAUL SAY TO TAKE IN VERSE 6?**
- **HOW DO THESE VERSES ENCOURAGE YOU TO COME TO GOD FIRST WHEN YOU'RE ANXIOUS AND KNOW HE WILL HELP?**

PRAY

GOD, FORGIVE ME FOR WORRYING AND NOT TRUSTING YOU TO PROVIDE FOR ME IN EVERY WAY. COMFORT MY ANXIOUS HEART AND SHOW ME THAT COMING TO YOU WITH MY FEARS AND WORRIES IS ALWAYS BETTER.





DAY FIVE

ROMANS 8:26-27

Have you ever faced a situation where you didn't know what to say? Maybe you studied for an English test on grammar, but then the test was on a book you were supposed to read over the weekend. Or you were giving a presentation in an after-school club, and someone asked a question you didn't know how to answer. More seriously, maybe a friend confronted you about something you did but didn't realize was hurtful. Or a friend experienced tragedy or loss and you were afraid of saying the wrong thing, so you said nothing at all. All of us have days when we can't find the right words, when we're completely speechless.

Here's the good thing: God is prepared for this (because God is prepared for everything). God knows that we won't always know how to ask Him for help. He knows we'll have days that leave us speechless before Him, whether we've messed up or experienced something really messed up. Thankfully, one of the Holy Spirit's roles is to pray for us when we don't have the words. Interestingly, Scripture doesn't say the Holy Spirit prays with normal words like we do but with "inexpressible groanings" (v. 26). The Spirit intercedes for us (goes before God on our behalf), expressing to God our needs in a language deeper than words. And God understands these groanings because He knows the Spirit's mind.

Praying doesn't mean you have all the right words or even realize everything that you need, but it's an acknowledgment that, above all, you need God and trust Him to understand what you can't even say. He knows our hearts and hears our prayers—even the ones we can't bring ourselves to speak.

- **WHEN HAVE YOU STRUGGLED TO KNOW WHAT TO PRAY? WHAT HAPPENED?**
- **HOW ARE YOU COMFORTED TO KNOW THAT THE HELPER GOD HAS GIVEN US (THE HOLY SPIRIT) PRAYS FOR YOU?**

PRAY

HEAVENLY FATHER, THANK YOU FOR THE GIFT OF
THE HOLY SPIRIT. WHEN I DON'T HAVE WORDS TO
PRAY, COMFORT ME WITH THE TRUTH THAT HE
PRAYS FOR ME, AND YOU ALWAYS HEAR.