



LifeGroup Study
2023-12-03
YOU ARE WHAT YOU LOVE
The Language of the Soul
Leader Notes

OVERVIEW:

Welcome back to our series, You Are What You Love. Today's study is called – *The Language of the Soul*. Prayer is a formative activity. Spending time talking to and listening to God is one of the most formative things we can do with our time. When we form good habits/routines/liturgies around prayer we will find God shaping our heart through them. For this week's study, we'll look at how Jesus modeled these prayer habits in his life and we'll learn how we can pattern our prayer time after him.

ICEBREAKER: That's My Language

What language did your great grandparents (or maybe grandparents or parents) speak? Was it a language other than English? Did you grow up speaking another language? What kind of shaping influence has this language had in your life? If your family is English speaking only, is there another trait within your family that has shaped who you are today? **Share your story with your group!**

STUDY:

As we spend time with God in prayer, he reshapes our hearts. Let's begin our study by having a look at how Jesus prayed so that we can learn from him.

PRAYER HABITS OF JESUS

In Matthew 14 we see the priority Jesus placed on prayer. After the miracle of feeding the 5000, Jesus insists that his disciples get back into the boat and travel back across the lake. Then he sends the people (the ones whom he had fed) home.

1. READ: Matthew 14:20-23

²³ After sending them home, he went up into the hills by himself to pray. Night fell while he was there alone. NLT

- **What do you notice in this account about how Jesus prioritized prayer?**

LEADER NOTES: Imagine the excitement in the air as the 5000 men (plus women and children) experienced the amazing miracle of being fed by God! For the people and the disciples, this would have been a "Yay Jesus" moment. They would have loved to stay and celebrate this Jesus who just gave them a free meal (and to see if maybe he would do it again). But Jesus had a different priority. He was not interested in being what the people wanted him to be. He wanted what the Father wanted. This is why Jesus went off by himself to pray. Note as well the duration of time Jesus spent in prayer. As night fell he was there with the Father.

In Mark 1, we have another example of the priority Jesus placed on prayer. After a busy day of healing the sick, early in the morning, Jesus gets up and goes off by himself to pray.

2. READ: Mark 1:32-38

³⁵ Before daybreak the next morning, Jesus got up and went out to an isolated place to pray. NLT

- **What do you notice here about Jesus' habit of prioritizing prayer?**

LEADER NOTES: In this account in Mark 1, as well as the account we read in Matthew 14, we see that Jesus had habits that showed his priority of prayer. He went off by himself to pray. Jesus wanted a place where he would not be distracted, where he could commune with the Father. Jesus set aside time to pray. In Matthew 14, he prayed at night. In Mark 1, Jesus prayed early in the morning.

In Luke 5, we have another example of the priority Jesus placed on prayer. Note how at the end of his account of Jesus' growing popularity, Luke adds a note about Jesus' habit of prayer.

3. READ: Luke 5:12-16

¹⁶ But Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness for prayer. NLT

- **Why do you think Luke chose to add this insight about Jesus' prayer habit in verse 16?**

LEADER NOTES: Luke seems to add this insight about Jesus' priority of prayer in light of what was happening with his growing popularity with the people. Jesus did not allow the priorities of the world around him or the expectations of people around him to shape his priorities. He chose instead to prioritize prayer. Note as well that Jesus *often* withdrew for prayer. This was a regular, ongoing habit for Jesus.

In the accounts we've read we have noted a number of habits Jesus had to prioritize prayer in his life:

- Withdrawing to lonely places: Jesus went to places where he would be free from the priorities of the world and the expectations of others so he could be alone with the Father.
 - Setting aside time: Jesus set aside time to be with the Father. For Jesus these times seemed to be late at night, or early in the morning.
 - Praying often: Jesus' disciples noticed that he often spent time alone with the Father. This was a regular enough habit in Jesus' life that it caught the attention of his followers.
- **How might Jesus' prayer habits help you prioritize prayer in your life?**

JESUS TEACHES US TO PRAY

Perhaps the most well-known prayer in the church is what we call *The Lord's Prayer*. This prayer that Jesus gave his disciples is one that God can use to shape our heart today. Let's look at a few of the key components of Jesus' prayer.

READ: Matthew 6:9-13

⁹ Pray like this:

Our Father in heaven,

may your name be kept holy.

¹⁰ May your Kingdom come soon.

May your will be done on earth,
as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us today the food we need,^[a]

¹² and forgive us our sins,
as we have forgiven those who sin against us.

¹³ And don't let us yield to temptation,^[b]
but rescue us from the evil one.^[c]

NLT

NOTE: While it was likely not Jesus' intention that we repeat his prayer verbatim, there are great, heart-shaping benefits from using components of his prayer to form our prayer habit.

4. *“Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy.”* This first part of Jesus’ prayer focuses our attention on God. **How does starting our prayer in this way help to shape our heart?**

LEADER NOTES: Starting our prayer by honouring God has a powerful shaping influence on our hearts. We are reminded of God’s greatness. He is large and in charge. We are reminded of his holiness. He is worthy of our praise. We are reminded of our relationship to him. He is our heavenly Father who loves us and is ready to hear our prayer.

5. *“May your kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”* This part of Jesus’ prayer focuses our heart on Jesus’ kingdom and will. **Why is this an important, heart-shaping part of prayer?**

LEADER NOTES: This part of Jesus’ prayer shapes our heart to prioritize his kingdom and will. God’s kingdom, his rule and reign in the hearts of people, is what God most wants to accomplish. To align our hearts with God, we can pray that his kingdom will come and we can pray for his will to be done in our world and in our lives.

6. *“Give us today the food we need,”* **How does this request shape our heart?**

LEADER NOTES: This part of the Lord’s Prayer reminds us of our dependency on God. God is our provider. All that we have, our health, our ability to work, create, love and so on, comes from him. In our culture it is easy to take for granted basic things like the food we eat each day. This prayer shapes our heart by growing our trust that all we have comes from our loving heavenly Father.

7. *“... and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us.”* **Why is it important to confess our sins to God?**

LEADER NOTES: 1 John 1:8-9 says, ⁸“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” Confession shapes our heart as we agree with God about our sin and ask him to cleanse us. Confession prepares our heart to forgive others with the same forgiveness God has shown to us.

8. *“And don’t let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one.”* **Why is this an important part of Jesus’ prayer?**

LEADER NOTES: Scripture tells us we have an enemy (the devil) who prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. (1 Peter 5:8) In this prayer we are invited to allow God to shape our hearts by moving us away from temptation and toward his will for our lives. God is our Rescue. He is the one who has defeated our enemy through the cross. He is mighty to save. (see Colossians 2:13-15)

9. Look back through the components of the Lord’s Prayer. **How might God use the Lord’s Prayer to shape your time of prayer with God?**

PRAYER:

For your prayer time in group, try using the components of the Lord's Prayer. For example, have volunteers in your group each take on a component of the Lord's Prayer. Try taking the spirit of each component and put it into your own words. Allow God to shape your heart in this experience!