

Session 3

Exploring a Life of Discipleship - Faith Filled Prayer

CONSTANT COMMUNICATION

“Stewards nurture their relationship with God by having a prayer life. Whether that is two minutes or two hours a day, listening and responding to God is at the core of the disciple’s life.”

*Bishop Robert F. Morneau,
(Auxiliary Bishop, Diocese of Green Bay)*

GATHERING: (15 minutes)

Welcome and Greeting

Group Members Share:

- One word that describes me today is...
- What did I commit to in Session 2?
- How did I follow through with my commitment?

PRAYING: (15 minutes)

Songs

Traditional songs to sing/play or select a contemporary personal favorite

- Open My Eyes – Jesse Manibusan
- You Are Near – Dan Schutte

YouTube selections:

- Awesome God-Rich Mullens
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wx3st6YjQB8>
- Lord I Lift Your Name on High - Rick Founds
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J3iB30gCqAc>

Quotation for Silent Reflection

Consider a word or phrase for possible sharing

“For me, prayer is an uplifting of the heart, a glance toward heaven, a cry of gratitude and love in times of sorrow as well as joy. It is noble, something supernatural, that expands the soul and unites it to God.”

St. Therese of Lisieux

Scripture for Inspiration

Luke 11:1-13

Question for Group Reflection

- Words or verses that spoke to me are?



Prayer Conclusion (Together)

Ever present God, we offer you our gratitude for your patience as we work to build and strengthen our relationship with you. May your Spirit fill our lives as we strive to be good stewards of each day. Assist us in offering you the day’s first fruits so we may grow closer to you through prayer and live more authentically like Jesus. We ask this in the name of your Son.

Amen

In a busy society like ours, time is one of the most precious possessions we have. How we spend our time is perhaps the clearest indication of our progress in the life of Christian discipleship.

(Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response, United States Catholic Conference of Bishops)

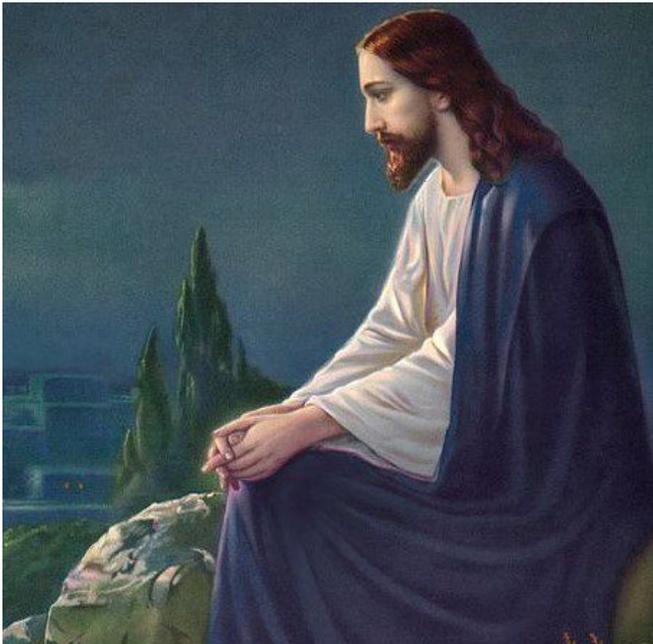
CONSIDER THIS: (38 minutes - If participants have not read content prior to gathering, please take a moment to read aloud, rotating willing members.)

Jesus and Prayer - the Testimony of Luke

If the objective of every Christian is to live in imitation of Jesus, unearthing examples of him in “constant conversation” with his Father is effortless. The Gospel of Luke is especially filled with examples of how Jesus prayed in all circumstances, at all times of the day and in a variety of locations. He prayed that he would accomplish his Father’s will and he prayed for others. His disciples were witnessing a unique and powerful relationship between the Father and the Son and prayer was the catalyst. There is no doubt that if we were eye witnesses to the Master, we would have asked Jesus to teach *us* to pray.

Jesus prayed at all the momentous times of his life. His official ministry in the Gospel of Luke begins with Jesus praying as he is baptized by John (*Lk 3:21*). Soon thereafter, following the performing of many miracles, he “withdrew to deserted places to pray.” (*Lk 5:16*) The importance of selecting “the twelve” who would be living witnesses to the Redeemer was prefaced in prayer (*Lk 6:12-13*). Likewise, prayer was evident prior to the first prediction of his death (*Lk 9:18-22*), at the time of the transfiguration (*Lk 9:28*), following the return of the seventy disciples (*Lk 10:21*), and prior to teaching the crowd how to pray (*Lk 11:1*). Of course, two of the most memorable accounts of Jesus in prayer took place in the Garden of Gethsemane where he asked for the “cup” to be taken if it was his Father’s will (*Lk 22:30-49*), and during his death on the cross when he prayed that his perpetrators be forgiven (*Lk 23:24*).

If you were to read the above mentioned passages in Luke, you would encounter the praying Jesus in the desert, on the mountain, in the morning, during the evening at times of great joy and in his darkest hours. There were prayers of petition as well as praise and thanksgiving. It is all there. How can we follow Jesus’ lead?



Quotation for Reflection

Let us not be consumed with haste, as if time dedicated to Christ in silent prayer were time wasted. On the contrary, it is precisely then that the most wonderful fruits . . . Come to birth. There is no need to be discouraged on account of the fact that prayer requires effort, or because of the impression that Jesus remains silent. He is indeed silent, but he is at work.

*Pope Benedict XVI
Meeting with clergy in
Poland May 25, 2006*

Silence of our eyes. Silence of our ears. Silence of our minds. In the silence of the heart God will speak.

Mother Teresa

Stewardship of Prayer in a Busy World

Since the death and resurrection of Jesus 2000 years ago, the leaders of the Christian community expressed the importance of prayer in their teachings. Consider Paul's encouragement to the Thessalonians, to "Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing" (1Thes 5:16-18), to Pope Benedict who states "True prayer consists precisely in uniting our will with that of God" (Angelus, 2007). The significance of being in relationship with God as a steward of prayer is undeniable in the Catholic Tradition yet, today we often find it difficult to make prayer a priority.

In a world where our calendars define our lives, there is a way to evaluate our own commitment to being in "constant communication" with the One who created and redeemed us. Of the 168 hours that each of us has been blessed with each week, where do we place our "first fruits?" How much time do we spend working, watching T.V., using current technology, involved in sports, meetings, shopping, child rearing, sleeping, eating, cleaning, etc. How much time do we gratefully return to God in prayer? Recalling the Parable of the Talents (Mt 25:14-30), in Session 1, the Master will return one day and ask us what we have done with the precious gift of time. How will we respond?

The long tradition of prayer in our Church offers a variety of ways to build a relationship with God. Pope Francis says, "Praying together unites us in so many ways. We can hold each other up as brothers and sisters." (World Meeting of Families) The source and summit of prayer is the Eucharist, the communal prayer in which we share the Word of God and the Body and Blood of Jesus. There are opportunities for private and group reflection using the scriptures, retreats, short course bible studies, praying with the saints as well as the rosary and Eucharistic Adoration. Pope Francis also reminds us: "Through prayer, charity and humility before God, people receive a heart 'which is firm and merciful, attentive and generous'." (Lenten Message , Feb., 2015). The question is: if we want to live in imitation of Jesus, what are we willing to "make time" for?

Questions for Reflection:

How does Jesus' prayer life parallel your own? * Without time and prayer, how do we know our lives reflect God's will? * What does it mean to you to be in relationship with Jesus?

What is the most joyful aspect of your current calendar? * What is the most frustrating? * What are some of the obstacles to a solid relationship with God in prayer? * Where in your calendar might you see an opportunity to increase your prayer life even by a small step? *

Notes:

The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God.

(Catechism of the Catholic Church no. 27)

FROM THE HEART OF POPE FRANCIS: (optional)

- The first task in life is this: prayer. But not the prayer of words like a parrot but of the heart; gazing on the lord, hearing the Lord, asking the Lord. *(Oct. 8, 2013 homily)*
- When we pray courageously the Lord not only gives us grace; he gives us his very self in the grace, for the Lord never sends or gives his grace by post: he brings it himself, he is grace! *(Oct 10, 2013 homily)*
- Good theologians do theology on their knees. Study without prayer is useless. *(April 10, 2014 Gregorian University)*
- In our Christian life too, dear brothers and sisters, may prayer and action always be deeply united. A prayer that does not lead you to practical action for your brother - the poor, the sick, those in need of help, a brother in difficulty - is a sterile and incomplete prayer. *(July 21, 2013 Angelus)*
- This is how it is: there is a battle to be waged each day, but God is our ally, faith in him is our strength and prayer is the expression of this faith. *(Oct 20, 2013 Angelus)*
- To listen to the Lord , we must learn to contemplate, feel his constant presence in our lives and we must stop and converse with him, give him space in prayer. *(May 1, 2013 Audience)*



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LIVING LIKE JESUS: (21 minutes)

Take Action

Consider how your prayer, reflection and sharing in Session 3 might have inspired you to step out in faith this week. Share ideas that reflect your personal situation or consider one of the simple ideas below.

- Spend some time with your calendar reflecting on your priorities. Consider how you might be a better steward of your relationship with God by increasing your prayer time. Make a commitment using some of the ideas below or ideas that might touch your heart and place it on your calendar.
- Begin and end each day with five minutes of spontaneous conversation with God.
- Attend weekday Mass and or Eucharistic Adoration, one or more times a week.
- Pray the rosary several times a week.
- Consider a retreat at one of our local retreat centers.
- Ponder an online daily quotation, reflection or mini-retreat.

Commitment:

- In light of this, what commitment will I make for the week(s) ahead?

WRAP UP: (1 minute)

Date for Session 4 _____

Additional Scripture Passages

2 Chronicles 7:14-15
Psalms 145:18
1 John 5:14-15
Philippians 4:6-7
James 5:16
Ephesians 6:18

Psalms 25:1-2
Isaiah 55:6
1 Thessalonians
5:16-18
James 4:3
Romans 8:26

Closing Prayer (Together)

God, you are the source of our hope and wellbeing. We belong to you and draw strength and encouragement from you through prayer and reflection. Just as the early disciples recognized the gift that prayer is by watching your Son in conversation with you, help us to be good stewards of our time by making prayer a priority. Assist your children in making strides to imitate Jesus through increased prayer. We ask this in the name of your Son and our Savior.
Amen

“Food for the body is not enough. There must be food for the soul. When we have spiritual reading at meals, when we have the rosary at night, when we have study groups...Christ is there with us.” *Dorothy Day*

