



Discipleship Study

Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." Luke 9:23

A disciple's life of following Jesus can be summed up in the disciples cross illustration to the right. In this illustration, there are five essential principles disciple's life; Christ, the Word, prayer, fellowship, and witness.

Obeying each principle will lead the follower of Jesus to put into practice the ministries of a disciple.

Each week leading up to Easter, we will be studying one of the five aspects of the Disciples Cross illustration above.

The Disciples Cross

1. Pray In Faith: Our Vertical Relationship with God

When I have faith in God, I will trust and depend on Him for every need. Prayer is an essential part of my walk with Christ. I will be led to worship Him and I will long to communicate and fellowship with my Lord and Savior in prayer.

- John 15:7, "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you."
- Jeremiah 33:3, "Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know."
- Philippians 4:6-7, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

The direct petition and intercession of prayer is one of the greatest blessings God has given to the follower of Christ. Jesus said over and over again in various ways that if we seek Him and look to His kingdom and abide in His presence, then we can freely go to the Father with our requests and He will answer our prayers.

However it is oh so important that we understand the purpose of prayer. Prayer is intended to involve me in God's purpose rather than me involving God in my plans. Let me say that again, prayer is intended to involve me in God's purpose rather than me involving God in my plans. Read Mark 14:36

- Have your prayers been about seeking God's will and His purpose or have they been about involving God in your plans?

Let people share

I think most of us fall into the trap of making God kind of like a Genie whom we can go to with our requests. The only difference is we don't see ourselves limited to three wishes so we wish for everything we desire. I know my prayers, even the ones for healing are often times short sided on what I want rather than what God wants. This is a constant battle. James 4:2-3 says, "you do

not have because you do not ask God. When you ask you do not receive, because you ask with the wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.”

Let me describe two forms of prayer; petition and intercession. Petition is asking for yourself. God wants us to pray for our personal concerns. Think about this, God’s answer to your prayers are for the benefit of you growing closer to Him and to help mold you into the person He wants you to become.

Intercession is praying for others. You pray for others for the same reason you pray for yourself, so that they can grow closer to God and that He can mold them into the persons He wants them to become. In intercession, God uses you as His vehicle to accomplish His will when you pray for others.

- Why do you think God chose prayer as His divine means to intervene in our lives?

Discuss this question

I can’t answer this but I do think one aspect of this divine plan is that God longs to be close to us. Prayer is one way we come near to God. James 4:8 says, “Come near to God and He will come near to you.” Deuteronomy 4:7 says, “What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to Him?”

God delights in answering prayers that are asked in accordance to His will. We need to hear God’s voice and watch where He is already at work to guide us in prayer. Then we need to stop and pray and seek His will to be done.

- What do you think it means to prayer according to the will of God?

Let people share their thoughts

I think it means to ask God that you might see things the way He does. Seeking to hear from the LORD and follow His lead. Praying in the Spirit is letting God lead your words of prayer. In order to do so we must completely let go of our own will before we can seek God’s will.

- Why do you think we are all so quick to bring our “wish lists” to God rather than praying according to His will?

Let people share

Let’s face it, we are a greedy people. We want things. We want pleasure. We want health. We want relationships. We want success. We even want to be used by God. So we come up with our plans and our lists. The challenge is the more we see answered prayer, the easier it is to make the lists.

- Many people I have spoken with over the years have expressed being very uncomfortable praying. Why do you think people are uncomfortable going to God in prayer?

Let people share their thoughts

I think that “religion” has made prayer hard. The way we bow, fold our hands, the words we use, the voice tone of prayer... all are designed to make it hard for us to come to God. Jesus argued this point in in Matthew 5:5-8.

I think another reason is that some people feel unworthy to come to God. Let's face it, we all are unworthy but we don't go to God on our own merit. We go to God because Jesus Christ made the way and He is our intercessor. (Romans 8:32-34)

Read Hebrews 4:13-16 and Philippians 4:5-7

- What do these two passages tell you about being comfortable in approaching God in prayer? What do they tell you about the process of prayer?

Two of my favorite passages in scripture these verses remind me that God is waiting, He understands, and He wants to intervene. And when I go to Him I can go to Him in confidence, without method or payment, but simply because He loves me and wants to help. And I have an assurance that He will answer my request with the blessing of a peace to guard my heart and He will pour out His mercy and His grace in my life and in the lives of those whom I pray for.

Another key aspect of prayer is simply worship and thanksgiving. For example, praying through a Psalm while directing your thoughts to God can bring you into the proper presence of God. While you worship and thank Him in prayer consider the beauty of His amazing creation, the blessings He has poured out in your life, His sovereignty, His protection, His deliverance, His forgiveness and His faithfulness.

You may want to spend some time discussing how you worship and give thanks in prayer.

One other aspect of prayer is to come clean with God. In order that nothing hinders our prayers we should search our heart for sin and any wrong motives. Then confess our sin before God and ask Him to forgive us. Read 1 John 1:8-10, Psalm 66:18 and Psalm 139:23-24.

Keeping a prayer journal to remember how God has led you to pray and to acknowledge His answers will strengthen your faith.

Take a moment to discuss with your group if and how they use a prayer journal. Encourage them that it will help them to seek God in prayer and observe His answers therefore increasing each of their faith and trust in Christ.

Each day of the week I am asking you to read the scripture and in a journal or notebook answer the following two simple questions:

- *What God Said to Me: (My Discovery from His Word)*
- *What I Said to God: (My Prayer Response)*

Daily Bible Reading for the Week:

- Day 1: Matthew 6:7-11
- Day 2: Hebrews 4:13-16
- Day 3: 1 John 5:14-15
- Day 4: Matthew 26:36-45
- Day 5: 1 Samuel 1:1-28 & 2:1-10