

UNIT 1 HANDOUT

SPIRITUAL DIMENSION OF GOD'S MISSION

This unit helps students examine some of the foundational scriptures and themes found throughout the gospels. Students will be encouraged to build the foundations of their lives upon the God we read about in the Scriptures. As students secure their foundation in God, they will be taught the importance of staying connected to the True Vine (Christ). A life that divorces itself from Christ will fail to bear fruit. Next, students will learn that we are not alone as we seek to live out God's mission in the world. The same Holy Spirit who empowered and guided Jesus desires to empower and guide us to live out our faith today. And as we strive to be faithful to God, Jesus reminds us to live and serve for the glory of God as opposed to the praise of people. The unit also examines how Jesus taught the disciples to pray. Students will take a closer look at the Lord's Prayer and how it provides us with a great template for how to pray. Finally, students will observe Jesus praying in the garden and be challenged by his ability to pray, "Not my will but your will for my life." Students will be challenged and encouraged to surrender to God's will for their lives as well as embody the selflessness and servanthood of Christ.

This unit will include:

- **Lesson 1: Securing a Strong Foundation**— This first lesson takes a look at the baptism of Jesus and focuses on the importance building our lives on the foundation of God. Teens hear mixed messages all the time about spirituality and alternative forms of faith. This lesson will help encourage and challenge the teens to find that faith and foundation in God. (Matthew 3:13-17)
- **Lesson 2: Staying Connected to the Vine**— This lesson continues where the first lesson left off. Once your teens have decided they want God to be the foundation of their lives, they must stay connected to the True Vine if they are going to remain strong and fruit bearing. (John 15:1-17)
- **Lesson 3: Empowered and Guided by the Holy Spirit**— This lesson looks at how the Holy Spirit guided and empowered Jesus as he spent 40 days in the wilderness. That same Holy Spirit desires to guide and empower your teens as they seek to live out God's mission in the world. (Luke 4:1-13)
- **Lesson 4: An Audience of One**— This lesson teaches teens the importance of having humility as we seek to live for God. Teens are taught that we should desire to give God the glory and not ourselves. (Matthew 6:16-18)
- **Lesson 5: Praying How Jesus Taught**— This lesson teaches teens how to pray in a more thorough way. The lesson takes a closer look at the Lord's Prayer and how it is a good guide and example for prayer life. (Luke 11:1-13)
- **Lesson 6: Jesus As Our Example**— This lesson challenges teens to look at Jesus's prayer in the garden of Gethsemane and how he surrendered to the Father's will. Jesus demonstrates a selfless heart and attitude. (Matthew 26:36-46)

GROUP EXPERIENCE

As you begin this lesson series, hang up a large poster or canvas on a classroom wall. If you can't hang it on a wall, you can roll or fold up your poster or canvas every lesson. At the top of the poster simply write in large letters, PRAYER. Let the students know that at any point during the next six weeks (or after) they are free to write down their prayers, praises, requests, thoughts, and questions for God. It is an opportunity for students to respond to what God is doing in their lives. As you plan your weekly group time, feel free to incorporate this prayer banner as much or as little as you would like.

LEADER LINK

There may be weeks that you leave your group time a little discouraged because it didn't go as well as you would have liked or you didn't do as good a job explaining something as you hoped. In those times, remember the most important thing you can do is be a living example for your students. You can be the most knowledgeable Bible scholar in the word, but if students do not see Christ in your words and relationships, chances are they will reject anything you have to say. Be encouraged!

SECURING A STRONG FOUNDATION

LEADER GUIDE
UNIT 1 LESSON 1

Scripture

LUKE 6:12-16; JOHN 15:12-15

Lesson Overview: Relational Dimension

While there are times in our lives when it is good to get away, there is no doubt about it: God created his people to live in community with one another. Jesus makes it a point to get away and pray several times throughout the gospels; however, he is also intentional about surrounding himself with close friends. That's right; Jesus has friends.

This first lesson will take a broad look at the life and teachings of Jesus in regards to friendships and relationships. Students will be challenged to understand the importance of surrounding themselves with people who will encourage them to live out their faith while not excluding and isolating themselves from the rest of the world. The remainder of the lessons in this unit will look at specific traits we should seek to embody in our friendships and relationships.

Biblical Commentary

While the gospels do not go into great detail about the lives of some of the disciples, one thing we can conclude is that Jesus calls some pretty ordinary people to spend a vast majority of his time with. When speaking about friendships and relationships in John's gospel, Jesus tells the disciples that they are to love others just as Jesus has loved them. Jesus goes on to demonstrate the fullness of his love by laying down his life for them. Sacrificing one's life for another is the highest form of love that one can show.

Jesus tells the disciples that he no longer calls them servants even though he has the right to refer to them as such. Christian friendship is more than just casual acquaintance; it is a partnership of mutual esteem and affection for one another. The disciples are not simply slaves whom Jesus calls to live out God's mission. A slave is never given a reason for the work that is assigned. A friend is a confidant who shares in the knowledge and mission of his superior's purpose and voluntarily decides to live life in accordance with that mission.

These two passages (**Luke 6:12-16 & John 15:12-15**) are two small glimpses of a larger picture that we see throughout the gospels. Jesus chooses to live in community, not only with the disciples but with other people we read about in Scripture. Jesus's life and teachings point to a greater truth that we as believers are created to encourage one another, support each other, pray for one another, rebuke one another, teach each other, and so forth. The book of Acts also gives witness to this truth. After the ascension of our Lord, the disciples continue to meet together for the greater purposes of living out God's mission in the world.

REFLECT ON THESE THEMES:

- *Community*: Are you faithfully connected to the body of Christ? Do you allow yourself to pour into other people's lives and be poured into by others?
- *Friendships*: Are the closest friendships you have in your life ones that mutually encourage one another toward Christlikeness?

THINK ABOUT YOUR STUDENTS:

- Do your students surround themselves with people who encourage them in the faith?
- Do your students see the importance of being connected to the body of Christ?

Resources

- White board or poster board
- Cloth tarp
- Sharpies and/or markers
- Magazines (creative option)
- Glue (creative option)
- Scissors (creative option)
- Envelopes (creative option)
- Paper (creative option)
- Stamps (creative option)
- Student journals (creative option)

Messages to Parents and Teens



For Teens: The following are a couple of text messages, Tweets, or Facebook statuses you could send out to your students to promote the meeting and/or prepare them for it.

- Check out John 15:12-15 before you come to group this week. How would you describe someone who is a good friend? Let's talk about it at group this week!
- Who is your best friend and why? Did Jesus have a best friend or best friends? Hmm... Looking forward to seeing everyone at group this week!

For parents: Here are some text messages to get parents and teens talking before your next meeting and a follow-up email to equip parents to continue encouraging their teens to engage in living out God's mission.

- This week we are looking at John 15:12-15 and talking about friendships and relationships. Ask your student who their best friend is and why they are their best friend.
- This week we are talking about the theme of friendships and relationships. Ask your students what they believe to be the most important trait or quality in a friendship.

This is a follow-up email/message you may wish to send to parents regarding the content that you studied during group time.

Dear Parents,

This week we looked at a couple different passages (Luke 6:12-16 and John 15:12-15). We talked about friendships, relationships, and the importance of being part of a strong community that encourages us in the faith. While Jesus made it a point to get away by himself to pray from time to time, he spent most of his time with other people. We challenged the students to look at their own friendships and relationships and to ask themselves if they are God honoring or if our friends are dragging us down.

Here are some follow-up questions you can discuss with your students:

- *What are one or two things you remember from group this week?*
- *Why is it so important to surround ourselves with people who will build us up and encourage us?*
- *What challenges would we face if we tried to be Christian and never got connected to other believers?*

Explore

Begin your time by allowing students to share highlights of their week. Also take some time to allow students to share some praises or prayer requests. Open your time in prayer.

OPTION: A Little Help From a Friend

PURPOSE: To open up your lesson by introducing the topic of friendship and community.

ASK & DISCUSS: What challenges would you face in a baseball game if you were the only person on your team?

How could eight other people help you out in the game?

How long would it take you to put together a 10,000-piece puzzle by yourself?

How long would it take you if you had 10 other people communicating with you and helping you put it together?

How challenging would it be to put on a full play by yourself?

How could 40 other people help you put on an even better play?

How about in our lives as Christians? What challenges would you face if you never spoke or interacted with another person for the rest of your life?

SAY: For this week's lesson we are going to look at the life of Jesus and the friendships and relationships he had with people. We are also going to talk about the importance of having friendships and relationships that encourage one another as Christians.

Encounter

OPTION: Questions Surrounding the Text

PURPOSE: To understand and explore the text

Read through Luke 6:12-16 and John 15:12-15. You may want to read the passages twice using different translations to help the students hear and become familiar with the passages. After doing this, take some time to ask and discuss these questions.

ASK & DISCUSS: What do you think is the difference between a servant and a friend?

Why do you think Jesus called these people to be his disciples in Luke 6:12-16? Why didn't Jesus just go through life alone?

Think about the people you surround yourself with in your life. Do your friends help you be a follower of Christ or get in the way of being a follower of Christ?

How can friendships and relationships help us as we try to live out our faith?

What are the benefits of being around a bunch of other Christians at a church?

As Christians, do you think we should ever hang out with people who are not Christians? Why or why not?

SAY: While Jesus loved all people, he made sure his primary friendships were people who encouraged and supported him. Think about how much more difficult it would have been for Jesus if all he did was hang out with people who tried to drag him down. This doesn't mean Jesus never hung out with non-believers, but his primary friendships were with people who did their best to build him up. Can you say that about the people you spend most of your time with? Do your friends challenge you to be a better Christian?

OPTION: Who's in Your Circle?

PURPOSE: To challenge students to think about their closest friends and if they are being built up and encouraged to follow Christ or being brought down.

(Before using this option, read through the main gospel passages and discuss some or all of the questions listed in the option above. This will help students become familiar with the theme and direction of the lesson.)

Using a white board or poster board, draw a dot in the center and then draw four or five circles that get gradually larger around the dot (so it looks like a bull's-eye).

SAY: The dot in the middle of the board represents you, and the circles surrounding the dot represent your relationships and friendships. The people in the closest circle are the friends and people you spend the most time with and who have the greatest influence on you. The furthest circle represents the people in your life who are more like acquaintances whom you spend little time with and who don't have as much of an influence on you.

SAY: The passages we read tell us that there were 12 disciples Jesus had, but other parts of the Bible suggest that out of the 12, there were a couple he was especially close with (John, Peter, James). Jesus taught and encouraged them, but these people

were also good friends in return to Jesus. These two or three disciples Jesus was especially close to would be in Jesus's closest ring. The people in Jesus's outer ring were the people Jesus spent time with who were far from God. These were the people who took extra energy for Jesus to be around because they either tried to bring Jesus down, or they required a lot of attention. When Jesus needed to recharge his battery, he went to pray and spend time with his closest friends, who loved him.

ASK: (EITHER RHETORICALLY OR DISCUSS ALOUD) What would your friend chart look like?

Are the people in your closest circle people who bring you up and encourage you, or do they bring you down and tempt you to make poor choices?

As people trying to follow in the footsteps of Christ, are there any changes you may need to make in your circles?

Engage

OPTION: Friendship Graffiti

PURPOSE: To allow students the opportunity to creatively respond to the lesson and to think about what the discussion and conversation mean for their lives.

Using a large roll of paper or a large cloth tarp, write the words *God-Honoring Friendships* at the top prior to class. Provide plenty of Sharpies and markers for the students.

SAY: We have spent some time talking about friendships, relationships, and the importance of being connected to people who are going to encourage us as Christians. Now we have the opportunity to make our own graffiti. I want all of you to be as creative as you want decorating this poster with words, phrases, pictures, symbols, and designs that describe what it looks like to be a good friend. We are going to hang this graffiti up in the room once you are finished (optional).

Give the students 13-15 minutes to work on the graffiti.

Closing

Reaffirm the following truths to your students:

- Jesus surrounded himself with people who loved and encouraged him.
- God created us to live in community with one another.
- We as Christians need to surround ourselves with people who are going to encourage us and challenge us to follow in the footsteps of Christ.

Close your group time in prayer.

Creative Options

Engage: Journal It- A Good Friend Is...

PURPOSE: To have students look for words they would use to describe good friends.

Bring in some magazines you don't mind parting with along with some scissors. Challenge the students to go through the magazine and cut out words they would use to describe a good friend. Have them glue the words onto a page of their journal. Give the students 8-10 minutes to do this. Allow students to share some of the words they found afterward.

SAY: Today we are going to begin our group time by looking at what Jesus taught us about friendships and relationships in our lives.

Encounter: The Power of Community

PURPOSE: To help students understand the importance of being part of the church and surrounding themselves with people who will build them up.

(This option would best fit after groups have already read the gospel passage and discussed the questions surrounding the text.)

ASK & DISCUSS: How can being a part of a church community...

Help us learn more about the Bible and Jesus's teachings?

Encourage us?

Help us make good choices?

Help us when we are making poor choices?

Help us get through difficult times?

Help us love and serve others?

Challenge us to grow in our faith?

Engage: Thank a Friend

PURPOSE: To challenge students to think about someone who has been a Christlike influence in their life and to thank them for doing so.

As you close your lesson, give the students some lined paper, an envelope, and a stamp. Ask them to think about someone in their life who has been a great friend to them and a positive influence. Challenge them to write a letter expressing gratitude for that friendship. Give the students about 6-8 minutes to do this.

SECURING A STRONG FOUNDATION

READ MATTHEW 3:13-17.

What does it mean for God to be the foundation of our lives?

What does it mean for us to be faithful to God with the choices we make at school? While hanging out with our friends? While we are on the internet or watching television?

The Bible shows us how Jesus was faithful to God's mission. What are one or two ways God may want to use you to do his work?

Notes:

STAYING CONNECTED TO THE VINE



LEADER GUIDE
UNIT 1 LESSON 2

Scripture

JOHN 15:1-17

Lesson Overview: Spiritual Dimension

Once students realize the importance of making God the foundation they build their lives on, it is important to teach them about day-to-day living and staying connected to the true Vine.

Our students face challenges every day that come in all shapes and sizes. How are they supposed to discern how to live when everywhere they turn they see messages, television shows, and celebrities that encourage and celebrate ungodly living? The way Christ calls us to live stands in direct opposition to much of what our culture has to offer. The truth is this: We are all being fed and nourished in one way or another. The question is, what is it that is feeding and nourishing your students? Are they connecting to the true Vine, Jesus Christ? Or, are they being fed lies, false images and messages, and sin?

Biblical Commentary

Jesus begins the passage by stating, "I am the true vine." Believers cannot expect to produce quality fruit in their lives if they are not connected to Christ. In the passage Jesus states that his father is the gardener who cuts off every branch that does not bear fruit while pruning the branches that do bear fruit in order for them to be even more fruitful.

The primary means by which pruning is done is the Word of God. It condemns sin; it challenges believers to holiness; it encourages people on to Christlike maturity. As Jesus teaches and shares God's words with the disciples, they are faced with two options. One, they can listen to Jesus's words and apply them to their lives. They can allow God's words and truth to penetrate their hearts and minds, thereby being changed. Or two, they can reject God's truth in their lives. Those who respond in faithfulness to Jesus's words will inevitably see fruit and growth in their lives while those who reject God's truth will eventually wither and perish. Just because two believers may be connected to the same vine does not necessarily mean the quality and quantity of the fruit will be identical.

So now the question must be asked: How does one maintain this strong connection to the vine? The answer is obedience and prayer. To remain in Christ and allow his words to remain in us is to have a constant acceptance of the authority of his word and be in contact and communion through prayer. To pray is to continually realign one's life with Christ. Therefore, while prayer is something we may do before a meal or when we wake up in the morning, it must be something that is close and continual, like breathing. It is difficult to stray too far from the vine when we anchor ourselves to it with prayer.

REFLECT ON THESE THEMES:

- *Influences:* What do you surround yourself with? Do you find your nourishment in Christ?
- *Maturity:* As you reflect back on the last 5-10 years of your life, do you see consistent growth?

THINK ABOUT YOUR STUDENTS:

- Do your students feed their lives with trash TV, movies, music, and conversation?
- What are the major influences on their lives? What feeds them?

Resources

- White board
- Poster
- Marker
- Construction paper (optional)
- Markers/Crayons (optional)

Messages to Parents and Teens

For Teens: The following are a couple of text messages, Tweets, or Facebook statuses you could send out to your students to promote the meeting and/or prepare them for it.

- Be sure to check out John 15:1-17 before you come to group this week. We will be talking about what it means and looks like to stay connected to the vine.

- What are your top three favorite TV shows? What about movies? Musicians? Looking forward to hearing your responses at group this week!

For parents: Here are some text messages to get parents and teens talking before your next meeting and a follow-up email to equip parents to continue encouraging their teens to engage in living out God's mission.

- Read John 15:1-17 with your teen this week. Spend some time talking to your teen about what it means for us to be the branches and Christ to be the vine.
- This week we are talking about our need to stay connected to Christ. Ask your teen, "If there was a Jesus tree planted in the front yard, what would the fruit of that tree look like?"

This is a follow-up email/message you may wish to send to parents regarding the content that you studied during group time.

Dear Parents,

This week we looked at John 15:1-17 and focused on the idea of Jesus being our true vine and staying connected to Christ. Jesus made it clear that people who stay connected to the true vine (Christ) will bear much fruit while those are not connected will fail to produce fruit and be thrown away. We also talked about how it is important to be careful that we don't feed our lives with junk that can be easily found on television, the internet, and the media.

Here are a few questions you may wish to discuss with your teen:

- *What are one or two things that you remember from your group time this week?*
- *What are ways we can stay connected to the vine?*
- *What is the fruit of someone who stays connected to Christ?*

Explore

BEGIN: Welcome the group. Spend a minute or two asking the students about what the highlight of their week was. Open up with prayer.

OPTION: Name the Fruit

PURPOSE: To introduce the idea of what it means to bear fruit. The goal is for this activity to help prepare your students to read the gospel passage.

ASK: If there were such a thing as a Justin Bieber tree, what would the fruit of that tree look like?

If there were such a thing as a mathematics tree, what would the fruit of that tree look like?

If there were such a thing as a Facebook tree, what would the fruit of that tree look like?

If there were such a thing as an MTV tree, what would the fruit of that tree look like?

If there were such a thing as a Hollywood tree, what would the fruit of that tree look like?

If there were a tree named after you, what would the fruit of that tree look like?

SAY: This week we are going to look at a passage in John's gospel where Jesus talks about our lives bearing fruit.

Encounter

Ask a volunteer to read John 15:1-17.

OPTION: Questions Surrounding the Text

PURPOSE: To challenge the students to explore the text and think about what Jesus was saying.

ASK & DISCUSS: Let's read verses 1-4 again together. What do you think Jesus is talking about when he talks about branches and fruit?

What kind of fruit do you think Jesus is talking about?

If Jesus is the True Vine, how can you and I stay connected to Jesus?

What are some things that can poison and damage an actual branch? What are some things that can poison and damage us as branches connected to Jesus?

OPTION: Remaining in Christ & Loving our Neighbor

PURPOSE: To help students realize that loving others is a major way we stay connected to Christ, our true Vine. Also, to challenge the students to think about what that looks like.

For this activity, you can either do this verbally or use a white board to write down ideas and thoughts.

SAY: In verses 10-12 Jesus says, "If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you." One of the ways we remain connected to Christ is by obeying his call to love one another. However, we all know this can be difficult to do at times. Let's think of ways we can show love to the people in our lives whom we may find it most difficult to love.

Here are a few categories to get you started:

- an annoying person at school,
- a brother/sister,
- a mom/dad or stepmom/stepdad,
- that person who thinks they are better than everyone else
- the person who makes fun of you

NOTE: Make sure this activity does not turn into a gossip session.

Engage

Option: Disconnect in Order to Reconnect

Purpose: This activity is to help students realize that one of the ways we can draw close and stay connected to Christ is to disconnect from all the stimuli and distractions around us.

Draw on a white board or a poster a big circle with the word ME in the middle.

SAY: We live in a world where we are constantly connected to everyone and everything around us. If there is silence, we turn on the TV or listen to music. If we are bored, we get our phones out. If we are sitting around, we get on Facebook. And while there is nothing wrong with some of those things, many of them can end up getting in the way of our relationship with God. Let's think of all the things we do and that are a part of our lives that we fill our time with.

As students begin sharing and responding, write out their responses and draw a line that connects their answers to ME.

ASK: How can all of these things you shared get in the way of our relationship with God?

How could disconnecting from some of these things help us better connect with Christ?

SAY: One of the main ways Jesus stayed connected to the Father was by getting away from the craziness of life and going to pray. Jesus understood that there were times in his life that he needed to disconnect from people, schedules, and activities in order to pray and be with the Father. As we close our time, think about what this could look like in your own life.

ASK: Do you make time during your day to 'disconnect' from distractions in order to reconnect with Jesus?

Closing

Reaffirm the following truths to your students:

- Christ is our true Vine, and we cannot produce good fruit apart from him.
- The main ways we stay connected to Christ are through obedience and prayer.
- Sometimes we need to disconnect from distractions in order to reconnect with Jesus.

Close your lesson in prayer. Pray that God would help all of us to draw close to the true Vine. And as we do this, may we see the fruit of love in our lives.

Explore: Nasty Blender

Challenge the students to come up with the nastiest milkshake/smoothie ever created. (Don't worry, you won't actually be making any milkshakes or smoothies in this activity.)

ASK: If you could only use three ingredients and you had to make the most disgusting drink possible, what would your three ingredients be?

Here are a few suggestions;

- skunk, tomato juice, and slugs
- gasoline, black licorice, and tree bark
- mud, armpit sweat, and cologne

Allow some time for students to come up with their own creative concoctions.

SAY: What would happen if you had to drink that milkshake or smoothie every day for the rest of your life? Chances are you would be sick pretty quickly because you decided to fill your body with garbage. Sometimes we fill our lives with garbage by the things we watch on television, the movies we watch, and the conversations we join. On the other hand, if we created a drink that was filled with good and healthy ingredients, it would have the opposite effect. In today's passage, Jesus talks about how you and I can produce good and healthy fruit in our lives.

Encounter: Journal It- He is the Vine, We are the Branches

Before you begin, have every student write at the top of a page in their journals: *I am the vine, you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.* John 15:5. For this option you will need green construction paper, markers or crayons, scissors (optional), and glue sticks. Have the students begin by tearing the construction paper to make leaves. While they are doing this, reread John 15:1-17.

SAY: What are characteristics of people who bear good fruit? What would this look like in your life?

Encourage students to write their responses on the leaves they have created. Have them draw a vine on their journal pages and glue their leaves to the vine. Allow time for students to share.

Engage: Unplugged

Challenge the students at the end of your class time to give up something that consumes a lot of wasted time in our lives (Facebook, television, games on our phones, etc.) for a week. When we choose to fast, it shows us how dependent we have become on worldly things. Challenge the students to replace some or all of that time by reading God's Word, prayer, and writing about their experiences in their journals.

STAYING CONNECTED TO THE VINE

READ JOHN 15:1-17.

Read verses 1-4. What do you think Jesus meant by branches and fruit?

What kind of fruit do you think Jesus is talking about?

If Jesus is our True Vine, how can you and I stay connected to Jesus?

What are some things that can poison and damage a real-life branch? What are some things that can poison and damage us as branches connected to Jesus?

EMPOWERED AND GUIDED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

LEADER GUIDE
UNIT 1 LESSON 3

Scripture

LUKE 4:1-13

Lesson Overview: Spiritual Dimension

This week we are going to look at how Jesus was empowered and guided by the Holy Spirit in his life and how the same Holy Spirit desires to lead and guide us to do God's work in the world.

As was talked about in last week's lesson, our students face many challenges and distractions when it comes to living a godly life. The Holy Spirit desires to speak truth and wisdom into the lives of our students, but sometimes it is hard to discern truth and wisdom when they are bombarded by so many other competing messages. The goal of this lesson is to teach the students about the Holy Spirit and encourage the students to welcome the Spirit who desires to empower and guide them through life.

Biblical Commentary

This week's gospel passage may seem odd at first. The first verse tells us that Jesus is led by the Holy Spirit into the desert for forty days, where he is tempted by the devil. Why does the Holy Spirit lead the Son of God to a place where he will experience temptation? To better understand this week's passage, it helps us to take a look at Luke's gospel as a whole. After Jesus's time in the desert Luke immediately jumps into Jesus's earthly ministry. In other words, Jesus's forty days in the desert is the last thing he does prior to beginning his earthly ministry, according to Luke.

So we must ask the question again: Why does the Spirit lead Jesus to the desert, where he will experience temptation? It is the desert where our Lord becomes familiar with what it means to be physically in need and weak. And it is in the desert that our Lord learns what it means to be empowered by the Spirit to do what he cannot do on his own. It is through the leading and empowering of the Holy Spirit that Jesus is able to remain strong and speak truth in the face of Satan, who feeds him lies. It is the Spirit who enables Jesus to remain faithful while experiencing temptation. And it is the Spirit who will go with Jesus as he leaves the desert to go into the towns and cities to teach and live out the mission of God. Are you starting to get the picture? Jesus is sent to do the work of the Father while being empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Another key idea to keep in mind as we read this passage is to understand that the temptation Jesus faces is real. Often we forget that the Spirit who empowers Jesus is the same Spirit who is alive and present today. As you study and discuss this week's passage, may you realize that the Spirit helps us faithfully live out the mission of God in the world.

REFLECT ON THESE THEMES:

- *Strength*: Do you ask the Holy Spirit to empower you and help you live out God's call on your life?

THINK ABOUT YOUR STUDENTS:

- Do your students have any idea what the Holy Spirit is?
- As your students face the challenges of everyday life, do they pray that the Holy Spirit would help them live faithfully?

Resources

- *The Big Red Tractor and the Little Village*, by Francis Chan (Book or video)
- 3x5 cards for each student
- Writing utensils
- 20lb weight (creative option)
- Pencil (creative option)
- Compass (creative option)
- Magnet (creative Option)

Messages to Parents and Teens

For Teens: The following are a couple of text messages, Tweets, or Facebook statuses you could send out to your students to promote the meeting and/or prepare them for it.

- Before you come to group this week, check out Luke 4:1-13. Be ready to talk about it!
- When you think of the Holy Spirit, what comes to mind? Looking forward to group with you this week!

For parents: Here are some text messages to get parents and teens talking before your next meeting and a follow-up email to equip parents to continue encouraging their teens to engage in living out God's mission.

- If you have a minute, sit down and read Luke 4:1-13. Ask your teen why Jesus would have spent 40 days in the desert.
 - This week we are going to be talking about what the Holy Spirit is and how the Spirit leads and guides us through life. Ask your teens what they think of when they think of the Holy Spirit.
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This is a follow-up email/message you may wish to send to parents regarding the content that you studied during group time.

Dear Parents,

This week at group we spent some time talking about Jesus and how the Holy Spirit was with him throughout his time in the desert and his earthly ministry. We also discussed how the Holy Spirit desires to lead, empower, and shape our lives as well. Also, just because believers may be Spirit led does not exempt us from experiencing trials and temptations.

Here are some questions you may wish to discuss with your teen:

- *Who is the Holy Spirit, and what does the Holy Spirit do?*
- *How did the Holy Spirit help Jesus while he was in the desert?*

Explore

OPTION: Story Time

Spend a minute or two asking the students about the highlight of their weeks. Open with prayer.

ASK: Have you ever gone through or done something that you found to be quite difficult at the time, but afterwards you felt as though you had grown as a result of having gone through it?

Give the students some time to think about the question then go around the room and allow the students to share their stories.

SAY: In this week's lesson we are going to look at how Jesus went through a difficult time in his life and how the Holy Spirit helped him stay strong and to grow.

Encounter

OPTION: Questions Surrounding the Text

Read Luke 4:1-13.

ASK & DISCUSS: If a friend of yours were to ask you, "What is the Holy Spirit?" What would you say?

The first verse tells us that Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit and led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where he would experience temptation. Why would the Holy Spirit lead him to a place where he would experience temptation?

How do you think Jesus felt at the end of his time in the wilderness?

Do you think the Holy Spirit is with Christians today? If so, what does the Holy Spirit do?

How can the Holy Spirit help us when we are faced with temptation?

OPTION: Book Illustration/Video Option

Francis Chan has written a book titled *The Big Red Tractor and the Little Village* (David C. Cook Publishing, 2010). This short picture book can be read aloud in five minutes and does a great job teaching students that God desires his people to do his work through the power of the Holy Spirit. Even though it is more of a children's book, your teens will probably enjoy it. The story is also available in video format on YouTube. After reading the book or watching the video, ask these questions:

- **What did you think of the story we just heard?**
- **What did the owner's manual represent?**
- **How is a Christian with the Holy Spirit like the tractor at the end of the story?**

Engage

Hand every student a 3x5 card and something to write with. Have them write this prayer down on the card and fill in the blanks as it specifically relates to their own lives. Each phrase should be written on a separate line:

Holy Spirit,

Give me patience when _____

Give me strength when _____

Help me to forgive when _____

Help me to live out my faith when _____

Help me to love _____

Amen

Encourage the students to carry this card or put it in a place where they will see it daily.

Closing

Reaffirm the following truths to your students:

- The Holy Spirit helped lead and empower Jesus to do God's work.
- The Holy Spirit desires to help lead and empower us to do God's work in the world that we could not do on our own.
- The Holy Spirit can help us grow and persevere during difficult situations and times we face.

Close in prayer.

Explore: Pumping Iron

Ask two students to volunteer to help out for this illustration. Give one student a pencil and another student a weight that is 20lbs or more. Ask both students to do ten bicep curls.

ASK: How beneficial would it be to do the pencil bicep curls every day?

How beneficial would it be to do the 20lb weight bicep curls every day?

How can persevering through something that may seem difficult in the beginning help us in the long run?

SAY: For today's lesson we are going to be talking about how the Holy Spirit helped Jesus persevere and prepare to do God's work in the world.

Encounter: Journal It- Your Own Story

After you finish reading/watching *The Big Red Tractor*, encourage the students to write their own story in their journals in children's book form of a time when the Holy Spirit helped them in a difficult time in their lives. Give them 10-15 minutes to work. Encourage the students to share their stories out loud once they are finished.

Engage: False Norths

Bring a compass to your small group time. Explain to your students that the Holy Spirit leads us and guides us sort of like a compass points us in the right direction. Just because we may call ourselves Christians does not necessarily mean we are people who are being led and guided by the Holy Spirit. Often we as believers can look and turn to alternative means to seek wisdom, guidance, and direction in life. As you explain this to your students, ask one of the students to hold up a small magnet near the compass and show the students how a magnet can cause the compass to give a false reading. The magnet represents the lies we listen to that steer us in the wrong direction.

UNIT 1 LESSON 3 HANDOUT

EMPOWERED AND GUIDED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

READ LUKE 4:1-13.

If a friend of yours were to ask you, "What is the Holy Spirit?" What would you say?

The first verse tells us that Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit and led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where he would experience temptation. Why would the Holy Spirit lead him to a place where he would experience temptation?

How do you think Jesus felt at the end of his time in the wilderness?

Do you think the Holy Spirit is with Christians today? If so, what does the Holy Spirit do?

How can the Holy Spirit help us when we are faced with temptation?

Notes:

AN AUDIENCE OF ONE

LEADER GUIDE
UNIT 1 LESSON 4

Scripture

MATTHEW 6:16-18

Lesson Overview: Spiritual Dimension

For those of you who have been around children or raised children of your own, you know they love to make their parents and teachers proud of them. The approval a child receives from a mother or a father is a great thing. Jesus teaches an important lesson in today's passage. And while he happens to be talking about fasting, his message is not just limited to when we fast.

It is only natural for students to want to show off the good things they do to others. However, Jesus states that when you fast, don't walk around in a way that lets the whole world know what you are up to. The goal of this lesson is to teach students about the way of humility and to avoid boasting.

Biblical Commentary

If you have read the entire Sermon on the Mount (**Matthew 5-7**), you have probably realized there is a pattern to Jesus's teachings. Jesus is less interested in teaching people dos and don'ts and more interested in addressing the hearts of the people. In today's passage, Jesus addressed the topic of fasting. However, instead of teaching the people five convenient steps on how to fast, Jesus begins addressing their hearts. While fasting can help spur one on toward maturity in the faith, it also provides a great opportunity for religious showmanship and to gain a reputation for being a holy and religious person.

Throughout the gospels we commonly see a frustration Jesus speaks with when addressing the Pharisees. His frustration is often caused by their cold and corrupt hearts. For Jesus, a humble devotion to God all comes back to a question of the motives. What is your goal? Are you fasting so you can gain a greater awareness of your mortality and God's sovereignty? Are you abstaining from food and drink in order to retreat and spend some time with your heavenly Father? Are you fasting in order to give thanks to God for the blessings and provisions in your life? Or, are you fasting so that brother Joe or sister Lisa will think you are a holy and righteous person? Do you find ways to slip into conversation the kind and loving things you do in order for people to praise you? What is your motivation? What is it that you seek?

It should also be noted that in this passage Jesus assumes his listeners incorporate the discipline of fasting into their lives. Jesus says, "*When* you fast," not, "*If* you fast." And while Jesus does not elaborate on the spiritual discipline of fasting, this passage does open the door for some good conversation on the subject.

Today's passage also provides a great opportunity to teach students the core of Jesus's teaching when it comes to holiness, humility, and our honest devotion to God.

REFLECT ON THESE THEMES:

- *Motivation*: Do you ever find yourself seeking the approval and praise of others when you should be seeking to honor and glorify God?
- *Humility*: Is genuine humility present in your relationship with God?

THINK ABOUT YOUR STUDENTS:

- Is humility a part of your students' lives?
- Do they understand that Jesus cares more about the condition of our hearts than what life looks like on the outside?

Resources

- Journal (creative option)
- Markers and crayons (creative option)

Messages to Parents and Teens

For Teens: The following are a couple of text messages, Tweets, or Facebook statuses you could send out to your students to promote the meeting and/or prepare them for it.

- Please check out Matthew 6:16-18 before you show up to group this week. Let's be ready to talk about it!
- When you hear the word humility, what do you think of? Let's talk about that this week!

For parents: Here are some text messages to get parents and teens talking before your next meeting and a follow-up email to equip parents to continue encouraging their teens to engage in living out God's mission.

- Please check out Matthew 6:16-18 with your teens. Ask them what message Jesus was trying to get across in this passage.
 - This week we are talking about humility versus boasting. Ask your teens if they understand the difference between being humble and boastful.
-

This is a follow-up email/message you may wish to send to parents regarding the content that you studied during group time.

Dear Parents,

This week we looked at Jesus's teachings in Matthew 6:16-18 on the subject of fasting. We spent some time talking about fasting but spent a majority of our time talking about what genuine humility looks like in the life of the believer. We also talked about how Christians should avoid boasting about the good things they do.

Here are a few questions you may wish to discuss with your teen:

- *What are one or two things you remember from your group time this week?*
- *What did Jesus have to say about fasting?*
- *According to Matthew 6:16-18, what should we avoid doing as believers?*

Explore

OPTION: Once upon a Time

PURPOSE: To introduce the topic of boasting versus humility to your group

Spend a minute or two asking the students about the highlights of their week was. Open up with prayer.

SAY: Let's open with a story. Once there was a kid named Cody who was going into the 8th grade. His youth group decided they were going to help out a needy family in the community. The youth leader told the students one night, "If you brought donations to help out the needy family, put the money in the envelope at the end of the night. We will let you know how much money we raised next week."

The following week the youth leader got up to give an update to the students about the money they raised for the family. "Good news! We raised a total of \$122.97! That is \$22.97 over the goal we set! Great job, everyone!"

After the group finished clapping, Cody raised his hand and stood up. "I just want to say I am really happy that the \$50 I contributed helped us reach our goal. I got that money from mowing lawns, but I thought it would be really good of me to give the money." For the rest of the night Cody told people about the \$50 he contributed to the family.

ASK: What do you think about Cody's actions in the story?

How do you think it made other people in the group feel?

What do you think Cody should have done instead?

Encounter

Ask a volunteer to read Matthew 6:16-18.

OPTION: Questions Surrounding the Text

PURPOSE: To understand and explore the text

SAY: Dictionary.com defines the word hypocrite as: a person who pretends to have virtues, morals or religious beliefs, principles, etc., that he or she does not actually possess, especially a person whose actions belie stated beliefs.

ASK & DISCUSS: What does Jesus mean by fasting? What is the purpose of it?

Do you think it would be wrong to boast and brag about fasting? Why?

Let's read verse 16 again as a class. What reward have the hypocrites already received from the people?

What does it mean to be humble? How are boasting and being humble opposite?

How can you and I be humble when it comes to our relationships with God and other people?

OPTION: What Was Jesus Getting At?

PURPOSE: To help the students understand the concept and truth of the text.

SAY: In this passage Jesus was talking about how we should have a humble attitude while we fast. Our goal should be to give honor and glory to God, not to receive glory and honor from others. So, for this next activity I want you finish the statements listed on your handout in a way you think Jesus would.

Give the students about 5-7 minutes to finish the statements and then share them as a class together.

Here is an example:

- *And when you hold the door for somebody...* Don't yell, "Hey everybody, look how nice I am for holding the door!"

How do you think Jesus would finish these statements?

- *And when you donate money to a good cause...*
- *And when you help out a neighbor by raking their leaves...*
- *And when you give some of your clothes away to a local Salvation Army...*
- *And when you give away some of your lunch to someone who forgot to bring theirs...*
- *And when you give away one of your brand-new Christmas gifts to someone who didn't receive any...*
- *And when you volunteer at a local soup kitchen...*

Engage

OPTION: Act it Out

PURPOSE: To give students the creative opportunity to understand the difference between doing something with a pure heart and motives versus an impure heart and motives.

Divide the students up into groups of 5 or so. Give them 8-10 minutes to come up with a skit or story that would help someone better understand Jesus's message in Matthew 6:16-18. Encourage them to be as creative as they want and to have fun with it. After the students have finished creating their skits, have them perform them for the rest of the class and explain the message they were trying to get across.

Closing

Reaffirm the following truths to your students:

- Jesus taught us not to perform our good deeds so people will give us honor and glory but to do them for God's glory.
- Jesus desires that our hearts and motives be pure.
- Jesus cares much more about the inside of our hearts than what we look like on the outside.

Close your lesson in prayer. Ask God that he would help us be people who are genuinely humble in our lives and that our goal would be to please God more than winning the praises of those around us.

Creative Options

Explore: Journal It- Creating Humility

PURPOSE: To introduce the topic of humility to the students and get them thinking about what humility looks like.

Ask the students to take out their journals and at the top of the next empty sheet, have them write the words, **A PICTURE OF HUMILITY**. You may want to explain to them that humility is linked with being humble. Give them markers and crayons and ask them to draw a picture that would help explain to someone else what the word *humility* means. Give them 8-10 minutes to work on their creation and then have them share with the rest of the class.

Encounter: An Example in Your Life

PURPOSE: To challenge the students to look for people who model humility and a pure heart.

SAY: As we read over Matthew 6:16-18 it is obvious that Jesus was much more concerned with the inside of a person's heart and life than what they looked like on the outside. A person could fast all they wanted on the outside, but if they were only doing it so people would give them praise, it defeats the whole purpose.

Imagine:

An Oreo cookie that has toothpaste for its filling.

A beautifully wrapped Christmas present that has decaying fish on the inside.

A piece of chocolate that has glue in the middle.

I hope you are getting my point! Just because we may do something that looks great on the outside like fasting, giving money, donating something to someone, etc., that doesn't mean our motives are great.

Think of someone in your life who is an example to you of what it means to live a humble and God-honoring life, someone who is great not only on the outside but on the inside too. Share the person with the group and why they are a good example to you.

Engage: Secret Servant

PURPOSE: To challenge the students to bless others in a humble way.

As you close your group time, challenge your students to find a way to bless someone else anonymously. Here are a few examples: send an anonymous note of encouragement, leave a small gift and a note for someone without signing your name, clean up an area of your house without being asked. Challenge the students to not tell anyone what they did. Remind them that their heavenly Father will see their acts of kindness and reward them for being loving.

UNIT 1 LESSON 4 HANDOUT
AN AUDIENCE OF ONE

READ MATTHEW 6:16-18.

What does Jesus mean by fasting? What is the purpose of it?

Do you think it would be wrong to boast and brag about fasting? Why?

Let's read verse 16 again. What reward have the hypocrites already received from the people?

What does it mean to be humble? How are boasting and being humble opposite?

How can you and I be humble when it comes to our relationships with God and other people?

Notes:

PRAYING HOW JESUS TAUGHT

LEADER GUIDE
UNIT 1 LESSON 5

Scripture

LUKE 11:1-13

Lesson Overview: Spiritual Dimension

So far in this lesson series we have learned about God being our life foundation, our need to stay connected to Christ who is our vine, the Holy Spirit who guides and empowers us, and the necessity of having humility as we seek to live out our faith. This week we are going to take a look at some of Jesus's teachings in regard to prayer.

How we pray and what we pray say a lot about what we truly believe. Whether you realize it, your students listen to how you pray and learn how to pray from listening to others pray. The goal of this week's lesson is to help teach students the importance of prayer and how to pray in a way that is faithful to Scripture.

Biblical Commentary

As you take a look at this week's gospel passage regarding prayer, it is important to keep in mind that how we pray inevitably expresses what we believe about who God is, what God does, and what God is like. Keeping this in mind, we can assume that Jesus chooses his words of his prayer carefully as he teaches the disciples.

Jesus begins his response by saying, "When you pray, say..." Jesus implies that the disciples should frequently pray the actual prayer he is about to recite. The address "Father" is both intimate and a respectful way to come before God. We can call God father because of the reconciliation Jesus will later bring through the cross. "Hallowed be your name" is a common phrase in the Old Testament that is used to ascribe worship and adoration to God. It is another way of saying, "Let your name be regarded as holy." The next petition of Jesus's prayer is, "Your kingdom come." This is another way of saying, "May the glory and reign of God be realized soon in this world." The disciples are to pray that God's kingdom would be fully established here on earth.

The **third verse** begins, "Give us each day our daily bread." The word *bread* represents food in general and is a request that God sufficiently provide our needs just as God provided for the Israelites in the desert. The petition "Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us" is a confession of our own sin and an understanding that we need to extend that same grace and mercy to those who have sinned against us. To not forgive others is a sign that we may not have a proper understanding of God's forgiveness. The final words of the prayer, "And lead us not into temptation," are a request that the Father keep us strong and faithful when facing life's trials and temptations. Jesus does not imply that God is the source of temptations but asks that God give strength when they arise.

Jesus then uses a parable to better explain to the disciples how we ought to approach God in prayer. While the parable may seem obscure, Jesus makes the point that we ought to pray with boldness. **Verses 9-10** can be commonly misread as an invitation to think of God as a divine genie who exists to grant our wishes. However, the gift God so desires to give his children is the Holy Spirit to lead, guide, and empower us as we seek to serve him.

REFLECT ON THESE THEMES:

- *Prayer*: Is prayer a regular discipline of your life?
- *Role Model*: Have you taught and shown your students what it looks like to pray as Jesus taught us to pray?

THINK ABOUT YOUR STUDENTS:

- Do your students make prayer a regular discipline?
- Have your students ever taken a deeper look at or studied the Lord's Prayer?

Resources

- Flour
- White board
- Yarn for bracelets/necklaces (creative option)
- Multicolored beads (creative option)

Messages to Parents and Teens



For Teens: The following are a couple of text messages, Tweets, or Facebook statuses you could send out to your students to promote the meeting and/or prepare them for it.

- Please check out Luke 11:1-13 before you come to group this week. We will be talking about how Jesus taught his disciples to pray.
- Looking forward to some great fellowship and conversation this week! You are all in my prayers!

For parents: Here are some text messages to get parents and teens talking before your next meeting and a follow-up email to equip parents to continue encouraging their teens to engage in living out God's mission.

- This week we are looking at Luke 11:1-13 and what Jesus had to say about prayer. Do your teens know what the Lord's Prayer is and what Jesus was saying?
- We are taking a deeper look at prayer this week at group. Your challenge: Find a time to pray with your teens (and not just before a meal). It may be awkward for you, but it will encourage your teens to pray on their own.

This is a follow-up email/message you may wish to send to parents regarding the content that you studied during group time.

Dear Parents,

This week at group we took a look at Luke 11:1-13 and how Jesus taught the disciples to pray. We talked about the different parts of the prayer and how all of them are important. We talked about the importance of boldly praying to God and what happens when it seems like God does not hear our prayers or does not care.

Here are a few questions you may wish to discuss with your teen:

- *What are one or two things you remember from your small group time?*
- *What did you learn about prayer in your group time this week?*

LESSON GUIDE

Bring in some flour, but keep it in a plastic bag so the students can't see that you only have flour in the bag.

Explore

OPTION: Cake and Prayer

PURPOSE: To prepare the students for this week's gospel passage.

SAY: For group this week we are going to make the most amazing and best cake you have ever eaten in your entire life. I went to the store before you came and got the ingredients. But before we start, we are going to take a vote on what type of cake we are going to make. Go around asking students what type of cake they want. (The goal is to get them excited about having cake at group.)

Once you agree on what type of cake you are going to make, show them that the only ingredient that you brought was flour.

SAY: What's the matter? Why are you disappointed? Can't we make an amazing cake with just the flour?

Allow the students to respond.

SAY: You all realize that it takes several different ingredients to make a good cake. I want to challenge you with the idea that Jesus taught us to include several different ingredients in the way we pray. I know that may sound strange right now, but I think you will know what I am talking about once we start to really look at today's passage.

Encounter

Ask a volunteer to read Luke 11:1-13.

OPTION: Questions Surrounding the Text

SAY: Let's take a minute to look at the prayer Jesus taught us in Luke's gospel.

ASK: One of the first things Jesus says in his prayer is "hallowed be your name." What do you think the word *hallowed* means?

SAY: To say hallowed be your name is just like saying, may your name be praised, or, praise be to God! So the very first part of Jesus's prayer was praising God.

ASK: What do you think Jesus meant by the phrase "your kingdom come?"

SAY: Jesus was praying that God's peace and love would be seen all over the world.

ASK: How about the phrase, "Give us each day our daily bread?"

SAY: Jesus was teaching the disciples that it is good to ask God to provide our daily needs, just like how Jesus provided the daily needs for the Israelites while they wandered in the desert.

ASK: What was Jesus saying when he said, "Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us?"

SAY: Jesus was saying a couple things here. First, it is good for us to confess our sin to God. When we confess our sin, it reminds us to be humble. Second, it is important to forgive those who have sinned against us because God has forgiven us of our sins.

ASK: And the last line of Jesus's prayer in Luke says, "And lead us not into temptation." What does Jesus mean by this? Is God the one who causes us to be tempted?

SAY: Jesus was saying that we should ask God to give us strength and guidance when we are faced with temptation. We all face temptation on a pretty regular basis; therefore, it is important for us to ask God to help us when we do.

OPTION: Praying Throughout our Day

PURPOSE: To encourage students to think about the passage and about what prayer looks like in our day-to-day lives.

SAY: In today's gospel passage we read in Luke 11:5-13 that our heavenly Father desires to answer our prayers. With that being said, I want us to think about ways we could pray to God as we go about our simple day-to-day tasks.

Use the following questions to help students think about ways they can be praying throughout the day. Challenge your students to not make prayer just something that is done quickly before a meal but something they do throughout the entire day.

ASK: What could we praise God for as we are getting ready to head to school?

What could we give thanks to God for during the course of our day?

What are some of the daily needs we have that we could ask God to continue to meet?

What are some of the things we do to our families that we need to confess to God?

Who are some of the people in our lives we need to ask God to help us love and be more patient with?

How can we ask God to give us strength while we are hanging out with our friends?

How can we ask God to give us strength when we are doing something we do not want to do?

What are some other things we can pray for throughout our day-to-day lives?

Engage



OPTION: Prayer

PURPOSE: To give students an opportunity to pray to God after gaining a new perspective from the gospel passage.

Write down on a white board these five ingredients to prayer:

- Worship and thanks
- Prayer for the world and others
- Prayer for ourselves and our needs
- Confession
- Strength to live faithfully

Give the students some paper or pen (or use their journals) and have them write these five ingredients down to help them remember. Tell the students that to end group time, you are going to have a time of prayer. You may want to turn the lights down or play some quiet music to help encourage an environment of prayer. Allow the students to spread out to pray. Have them gather back together after 12-15 minutes.

Closing



Reaffirm the following truths to your students:

- Jesus gives us a good model of the different ingredients of prayer.
- We must pray regularly and boldly to God.
- We have the opportunity to pray to God throughout our entire day and in all circumstances.

Close your lesson in prayer.

EXPLORE: Agree or Disagree

PURPOSE: To introduce the topic of prayer and gain an understand of what your students think about prayer.

Ask the students if they agree or disagree with the following statements. Ask them to explain why.

I think praying for someone who is sick can help heal them. Agree or disagree?

If you are at the shopping mall and you pray, God could help you find a parking space close to the front. Agree or disagree?

Sometimes I feel like when I pray God doesn't hear or care about my prayers. Agree or disagree?

If more people prayed, I think God would change the world. Agree or disagree?

SAY: Today we are going to be looking at what Jesus had to say about prayer in Luke's gospel.

ENGAGE: Prayer Bracelet/Necklace

PURPOSE: To give students a tangible reminder about the different ingredients and parts of the Lord's Prayer.

Have the students make bracelets or necklaces out of yarn or string. Also, bring five different colored beads to go on each bracelet/necklace. Explain to the students that the bracelet/necklace can help serve as a reminder of the different aspects and ingredients to our prayer lives.

Yellow: Worship/Thanksgiving to God

Orange: Prayer for world and others

Blue: Prayer for God to provide and meet our needs

Red: Prayer of confession and forgiving others

Green: Prayer for strength

NOTE: Have the students write down the colors and their meaning in their journals.

ENCOUNTER: Journal It- Prayer Pie

PURPOSE: To help students understand and remember the different ingredients and parts to prayer

Ask the students to take their journals out and on the next blank page write at the top PRAYER PIE. Have them draw a big circle and divide it into five equal pie slices. Make sure the pie is big enough so they can also write inside each slice. Have them color each piece of the pie a different color. After they are done, have them write the five main prayer ingredients that are covered in the prayer found in Luke 11:2-4.

Worship and Thanksgiving (Father, hallowed be your name)

Prayer for the world and others (your kingdom come)

Pray that God will provide and meet our needs (Give us each our daily bread)

Confession and forgiving others (Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us)

Strength (And lead us not into temptation)

Encourage the students to reference the prayer often as a reminder and guide for how we can pray throughout our days.

UNIT 1 LESSON 5 HANDOUT

PRAYING HOW JESUS TAUGHT

READ LUKE 11:1-13.

One of the first things Jesus says in his prayer is “hallowed be your name.” What do you think the word *hallowed* means?

What do you think Jesus meant by the phrase “your kingdom come?”

How about the phrase, “Give us each day our daily bread?” What does that phrase mean?

What was Jesus saying when he said, “Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us?”

And the last line of Jesus prayer in Luke says, “And lead us not into temptation.” What does Jesus mean by this? Is God the one who causes us to be tempted in the first place?

Notes:

JESUS AS OUR EXAMPLE

LEADER GUIDE
UNIT 1 LESSON 6

Scripture

MATTHEW 26:36-46

Lesson Overview: Spiritual Dimension

We don't have to be taught what it means to be selfish. There is something in us from the very beginning that will see there is only one cookie left and snatch it up. We look out for ourselves and make sure our needs are met.

In today's lesson we will look at Jesus's prayer in Gethsemane and how selfless Christ was. Even when Jesus was faced with the prospect of death, he prayed, "not my will, but your will be done." The goal of this lesson is to challenge students to mimic the servanthood and selflessness of Christ and to be able to honestly pray, "not my will but your will be done in my life." This is the least selfish way we can pray.

Biblical Commentary

As Jesus goes to pray he is obviously in deep distress. His words "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow" are reminiscent of the psalmist's cries in **Psalms 42** and **43**. If at any point we wonder if Jesus was fully human and experienced pain, this text should help clear up those questions. In **verse 39** Jesus asks God if there is any possible way his plan could come to fulfillment in a way that will spare him from pain, abandonment, and an awful death. All of those things he will experience to a level that is foreign to us. Not only does Jesus suffer and die; he also has to experience the turning of the Father's back as the sin of the world is laid upon him. Yet, in the midst of his prayer, he reaffirms his desire to obey the Father's will and continue on the path to the cross. Jesus's deep commitment to the Father cannot be doubted.

Jesus tells the disciples, "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak." Even in the midst of his own trials and tribulations, Jesus is thinking about the trials the disciples will face in the days to come. Perhaps Jesus is also challenging Peter to pray so that when he is asked whether he is affiliated with Jesus, he can remain strong.

This week's gospel passage provides a difficult yet beautiful picture of our Lord. During one of his darkest hours, he still prays that the Father's will be done in his life. May we look at the selflessness and servanthood of Christ and seek to live and pray like our Lord did.

REFLECT ON THESE THEMES:

- *Selflessness*: Do you strive to live a selfless life like Christ?
- *God's Will*: Do you desire to live out God's calling on your life above your own will?

THINK ABOUT YOUR STUDENTS:

- Do your students know what it means and looks like to be selfless?

Resources

- Paper
- Writing utensils
- Guest speaker (Creative Option)
- Journals (Creative Option)
- Envelopes (Creative Option)
- Index cards (Creative Option)
- Glue (Creative Option)

Messages to Parents and Teens

For Teens: The following are a couple of text messages, Tweets, or Facebook statuses you could send out to your students to promote the meeting and/or prepare them for it.

- Looking forward to group this week! Check out Matthew 26:36-46 and be ready to talk about it!
- "Yet not as I will, but as you will... may your will be done." Where are these words found in the Bible? First one to text me back or give me the answer at group wins a brand-new pony.

For parents: Here are some text messages to get parents and teens talking before your next meeting and a follow-up email to equip parents to continue encouraging their teens to engage in living out God's mission.

- Read Matthew 26:36-46 with your teen. Ask what it means to be selfless as opposed to selfish.
 - We are talking about selflessness at group this week. Ask your teen in what the word selfless means and how Jesus was selfless.
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This is a follow-up email/message you may wish to send to parents regarding the content that you studied during group time.

Dear Parents,

This week we took a look at Matthew 26:36-46, which is Jesus praying in the garden of Gethsemane with the sleeping disciples. We talked about how amazing it was that Jesus was able to pray, "yet not as I will, but as you will." How Jesus prayed shows us that he was selfless and a servant to God's plan of redemption in the world. We also talked about the theme of surrendering to God's will and challenged the students to surrender to God.

Here are a few questions you may wish to discuss with your teen:

- *What are one or two things you remember from your small group time?*
- *Do you think you could have prayed the way Jesus did in his situation?*
- *What is one or two ways we can be selfless like Jesus?*

Explore

Spend a minute or two asking the students about the highlight of their weeks. Open up with prayer.

OPTION: Selfless vs. Selfish

PURPOSE: To teach students what it means to be selfless and prepare them for this week's gospel passage.

SAY: My guess is that most of you have heard of the word *selfish* before. It means to look out for your own needs and wants even if it means ignoring other people's needs and wants. But what about the word *selfless*? Have any of you heard of that word? What does it mean? (Allow the students some time to answer.) To be selfless is sort of like having the heart of a servant. A selfless person looks at the needs of others before they look at their own needs. A selfless person finds ways to serve other people. I want to challenge you today to use your imaginations as you compare being selfish to being selfless.

For this lesson start the beginning of a scenario and ask them to finish the scenario with an act of selfishness and then to finish the story with an act of selflessness.

Example: You are at a friend's house for a birthday party. Selfish response: I make sure I am the first one in line to get the cake. Selfless response: I ask my friend's parents how I can help them clean up at the end of the party.

Possible Scenarios:

You are with some friends when the three of you suddenly spot \$20 on the ground.

You are at a pizza buffet with the people from your small group. You notice the selection of pizza seems to be abnormally small.

Your friend is having trouble in a class that you are doing extremely well in.

You notice that your parents are extremely tired when they get home from work and not in the mood to do anything.

You are doing a project at school, and one of your classmates forgot to bring in materials to work on the project.

(Feel free to think up some other scenarios that could get your students talking.)

SAY: The reason I challenged you to compare a selfish response to a selfless response is that today we are going to look at one of the last prayers Jesus ever prayed and how even when his death was right around the corner, Jesus still decided to act in a selfless and servantlike way.

Encounter

OPTION: Questions Surrounding the Text

PURPOSE: To help the students explore and understand the passage.

Ask a volunteer to read Matthew 26:36-46.

ASK & DISCUSS: What do you think Jesus meant in verse 39 when he said, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."

SAY: Jesus was asking the Father if there was any way he could obey his will that didn't involve going to the cross and dying. The cup Jesus speaks of is a symbol for God's plan. However, Jesus ends his statement by saying he would rather do what the Father wants than what he wants. So, even though Jesus didn't want to go to the cross, he put God's plans before his own. Jesus shows us what it looks like to surrender to God's will.

ASK: How difficult do you think it was for Jesus to pray the prayer he prayed?

Do you think you could have said, "not my will but your will be done" if you were in Jesus's sandals?

How was Jesus's prayer selfless?

What did Jesus surrender when he prayed that prayer?

Do you think that kind of surrendering would be difficult in your own life?

Do you think most people in the world are selfless, selfish, or somewhere in the middle?

OPTION: Your Will for my Life

PURPOSE: To challenge the students to pray and desire God's will for their lives above their own.

SAY: In today's gospel passage we read about Jesus and his desire to obey God's will for his life above his own will. God gives us a great deal of freedom in terms of how we live our lives. We have the ability and opportunity to make hundreds of decisions each and every day.

The following questions can either be asked rhetorically, or you can engage in dialogue. If students are not sure how to respond to some of the questions, spend some time looking at the Scripture references to better understand God's instruction and will for different areas of our lives.

ASK: What is God’s will for how you treat your family? How do you actually treat your family? (Exodus 20:12)

What is God’s will for how we talk about people? How do we actually talk about people? (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

What is God’s will for what we watch on television or the internet? What do we actually watch on TV and the internet?

(Proverbs 4:23)

What is God’s will for how we treat our bodies? How do we actually treat our bodies? (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

What is God’s will for how we spend and use money? How do you spend and use your money? (Luke 12:13-21)

SAY: As those who desire to live and walk in the footsteps of Christ, we must make the prayer of our lives, “not my will but your will for my life... Your will for how I treat my family... Your will for how I speak with people... Your will for all that I say, do, and think...” Is this the desire of your heart?

(This activity leads into a time of prayer and reflection in the ENGAGE section.)

Engage

OPTION: Honest Reflection

PURPOSE: To challenge students to take an honest survey of their lives and think about the ways they act and live selfishly.

Then to pray about those areas.

Give the students a piece of lined paper (or have them write in their journals if you have been using them during this series) and challenge them to write down 3-5 ways they act and think selfishly from time to time. After each item they list, challenge them to write down what they could do differently to change their way of living or thinking to be more like Christ. Give the students about 5-7 minutes to work on this.

Example: I know I ignore my little brother and make fun of him a lot. Possible solution: Pray that God would help me have more patience and kindness toward him.

After the students are finished, go around the room and give them an opportunity to share parts of what they wrote down. Then lead the class in a time of prayer asking God to help all of us to be more selfless like Christ and to pray daily, “not my will, but your will for my life.”

Closing

Reaffirm the following truths to your students:

- In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed for God’s will above his own will.
- Jesus shows us what it looks like to surrender to God and live selflessly.
- May our goal be to mimic the selflessness of Christ and to pray, “not my will but your will in my life.”

Close your lesson in prayer.

Explore: Invite a Guest

PURPOSE: To have students hear a story or testimony of someone who had to trust God and pray 'not my will but your will for my life.'

Invite a guest to come in to share briefly with the students about a time in their life when they had to trust and surrender to God. *For example:* You could invite someone from your church who was or is a missionary. Another example is someone who endured hardship but continued to trust and serve God.

Encounter: Journal It- Letters to God

Purpose: To help students articulate how God can guide them to gain a selfless and servantlike attitude in four main areas of their lives.

Each student will need one envelope and four index cards (you can also use cardstock or construction paper). You will also need a couple of glue sticks.

Have the students write at the top of their journals 'Not my will but your will for my life.' Hand out the envelopes.

SAY: Today we are writing letters to God just as Jesus spoke to God in Gethsemane. We are going to ask God to help us to be more selfless with our families, our friends, how we spend our time, and how we use the resources God has given us.

Have the students glue the envelopes to their journal page so the opening seal faces out.

Next, give each student four index cards and have them write one of the following four areas of their life on each index card: My Family, My Friends, My Time, My Resources

Give the students 10 minutes to write ways they can give these areas of their lives over to God so they can practice selflessness and servanthood. Tell the students this is more of a personal activity and that they will not be asked to share their responses with the rest of the group.

After they are finished, have the students put the index cards in their envelopes and seal them.

Engage: Living it Out

PURPOSE: To challenge the students to find tangible ways to live out the call to be selfless and a servant.

As you close your group time, challenge the students to think of one or two ways they could act and live more selflessly throughout the week. As discussed in past lessons, this is not a time for students to show off and draw attention to themselves; this is a challenge for the students to love and serve others just as Christ demonstrated to us.

UNIT 1 LESSON 6 HANDOUT

JESUS AS OUR EXAMPLE

READ MATTHEW 26:36-46.

How difficult do you think it was for Jesus to pray the prayer he prayed?

Do you think you could have said, “not my will but your will be done” if you were in Jesus’s sandals?

How was Jesus’s prayer selfless?

What did Jesus surrender when he prayed that prayer?

Do you think that kind of surrendering would be difficult in your own life?

Do you think most people in the world are selfless, selfish, or somewhere in the middle?

Notes: