

Apostles Houston
Life Group Study: Prayer

Love and Laughter (~15-25 min)

Creating a Sacred Space

Welcome→ Embrace→ Refresh

Remembering Our Purpose (~5 min)

Why Do We Do Life Groups? (*feel free to communicate this in your own words*)

In Acts 2, we read how early Christ followers devoted themselves to the apostles' teachings, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. In Life Groups we follow their example with the hope of becoming more like Jesus, the goal of our salvation.

Being Known (~10 min)

Story Telling

We believe that loving God and others begins by being known.

In 5-7 minutes, what do you want us to know about yourself (~5Hs)?

Pray and Celebrate

Be sure to honor whatever is good or beautiful about their story, and ask one or two people to pray over those who just shared.

Following Up (~5-10 min)

Responding to God's Word

Before Meal Night week we were encouraged to fast either individually or in groups. Did you take the opportunity to do it? How did it go? Is this a practice you will do again?

Hearing the Word (~45 min)

Hearing: (*Read "Context" and then Mark 1:35-39*)

- Before we dive in, what comes to your mind when you hear the word "prayer"? How would you define prayer? What are some things that you heard in the sermon on Sunday?
- In v 35, we read that Jesus went to a desolate place to pray. This word can also be translated as the wilderness or as a lonely/quiet place. What is the importance of this location? (Hint: recall our study of Mark 1:12-13) What does it look like for us to imitate Jesus in praying in a quiet place? Share with each other your experiences of solitary prayer. What was special about it?
- In vv 37-38, we read that many were looking for Jesus, yet he chooses to move on to a different ministry location and take time away to pray. What does this tell us about Jesus' priorities? What does it demonstrate about how Jesus viewed prayer? How may we follow Jesus' priorities in our own lives?
- In this passage we read of Jesus in solitary prayer. Yet, there are many different types of prayer. What are some prayer types that you have done in the past? Which ones do you do well with? Which ones are you less keen on? Are there any types of prayer that you would like to practice?

Obeying:

- As we've just named some prayer types we'd like to practice, commit to trying out that practice for the coming week. If possible, choose to do one type of prayer together with a partner, a group or as an entire Life Group.

Soul Care (~20 min)

Prayer Requests

As people share their needs, pause and ask for a volunteer to lift that need up when we begin praying. Depending on the size of your group, decide if it is best to split up or pray as a group. Also consider reprising the gendered break-out groups for prayer that we did the last time around.

Announcements (~5 min)

- None this week!

Teacher's Notes

Context

Our passage for this week continues on in Mark 1, where we've already spent some time this year. After Jesus' baptism, he immediately went into the wilderness for prayerful fasting. As Mark recounts it, upon returning, Jesus began calling disciples, healing people and casting out demons. His fame began to spread throughout the region (1:28) and he was soon with people non-stop. It's here that we get to our passage for today. As you read, consider the shift from Jesus' previous activity to his time away; consider also the place he chooses to pray.

Specific Insights

- The area surrounding Capernum was actually quite cultivated during this period. While it may seem like Jesus is going off into the desert, he's actually just going to a comparatively more remote place for solitude. The language here is supposed to remind the reader of Jesus' past foray into the wilderness and thematically links Jesus' solitary prayers with this initial moment.
- In Mark's Gospel, Jesus is seen praying three times in our passage (1:35), after feeding the five thousand (6:46), and in Gethsemane (14:32-42). In all places, he is praying at night and in solitude. Prayer sustains him throughout the most difficult parts of his ministry. It is by turning to God that he gains the strength and resolve to fulfill his messianic vocation and take on the cross. Jesus recognized that the business of life, fame, and success would not sustain him. Indeed, these things may distract him from his focus. This is why he chooses to seek God in solitude. There is a power to solitary prayer that is distinct from other kinds of prayer.
- While solitary prayer is one example of prayer, there are many other kinds. Examples include intercessory prayer (bringing the needs of others before God), prayers of examen (looking for God's action and our shortcomings throughout the day), and contemplative prayer (quieting one's conscious mind and inwardly reflecting on God's sustaining presence). We can always use the Bible and Prayer Book as tools. Praying through the Psalms is an especially formative practice. Yet, let us never forget the delight it can be to just simply pray to God for our own concerns. While it may at first seem selfish, we know that God deeply cares for us and wants us to take all of our worries to him, no matter how small.