



PRAYER

Father, thank You for inviting us into a life with You. Thank You that we are called to be with Jesus, to become like Jesus, and to do what Jesus says. As we gather, help us grow in understanding and love for You. Teach us how to connect with You in real ways through prayer and spiritual disciplines. May this be a time of encouragement, clarity, and transformation. In Jesus' name, Amen.

OPENING QUESTION  
(OPTIONAL)

What's one event—big or small—that has helped shape the person you are today? (Give everyone space to share. Keep it light and encouraging.)



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## WORD

“Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

“Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

“And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

“And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

Pray then like this:

“Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name.  
Your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread,  
and forgive us our debts,  
as we also have forgiven our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.

For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

**Matthew 6:1–15 (ESV)**

## REFLECTION

Jesus gives us a window into what spiritual disciplines should look like—and more importantly, what kind of posture we should have while doing them. In Matthew 6, He addresses three key disciplines: giving, praying, and fasting. What connects all three is the motivation behind the act. Jesus warns against performing spiritual habits to be seen by others. Instead, He points us toward doing them in secret, where only God sees—and where only God gets the glory. As John Mark Comer writes in *Practicing the Way*, “Spiritual disciplines are not about earning anything; they are about positioning ourselves for transformation.”

Prayer is deeply personal. It’s not a performance, it’s a conversation. Jesus teaches us not to rely on long-winded or fancy words, but to speak honestly with our Father who already knows what we need. The Lord’s Prayer is not just a prayer to recite, but a model: it starts with worship, moves into dependence, repentance, and forgiveness, and ends with surrender. As we pray like this regularly, we are shaped more and more into the image of Christ.

When we give, pray, or fast from a heart that desires to be with God and become like Him, we’re stepping into the kind of inner life Jesus lived. These practices create a sacred space where we’re not performing for others, but communing with the Father. Dallas Willard reminds us that “The disciplines are activities of mind and body purposefully undertaken to bring our personality and total being into effective cooperation with the divine order.”

Spiritual disciplines are not religious chores—they are the rhythms of grace that help us live freely and fully in the Kingdom of God. In a noisy, fast-paced, and performance-driven world like 2025, these ancient practices are radically countercultural. They help us slow down, focus on what matters, and build lives rooted in love. In private spaces of prayer and surrender, God shapes us into the leaders, mentors, and disciple-makers the world needs today.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What stood out to you from tonight's Bible reading or reflection?
2. How would you describe your current relationship with prayer? Is it more routine, relational, or something else?
3. Why do you think Jesus emphasizes doing spiritual practices "in secret"? How might that apply to our lives today?
4. Which of the spiritual disciplines (prayer, giving, fasting, etc.) do you feel God is inviting you to grow in right now, and why?
5. What's one step you can take this week to create space in your daily rhythm to be with Jesus, become like Him, or do what He says?

### **Closing Prayer**

Jesus, You are Lord of our lives. Thank You for showing us what it means to live close to the Father. Today we choose to surrender again—to be with You, become like You, and do what You say. Help us not to chase after approval or recognition, but to seek Your presence and be transformed by it. We commit ourselves to growing in the spiritual disciplines, not to earn anything, but to live deeply with You. Use our lives to bless others. We accept the call to make disciples and live out Your Great Commission in every sphere of our lives—our families, our workplaces, our neighborhoods, and beyond. In Jesus' name, Amen.