

Challenging students to consider the relationship of prayer and faith

PRAYER | TIER 1 DISCIPLESHIP | MATTHEW 21:18-22

December 29, 2019

DISCUSSION GUIDE :: AT A GLANCE

INFORMAL: (8 minutes)

Take attendance with the LEAD App and ask guests to complete a connection card. Allow for informal conversation with your group but be prepped to transition. REVIEW Memory Verse (Hebrews 4:14).

INTRODUCTION: (7 minutes)

OPENING QUESTION: Luke 17:6...When we pray do we really believe God can answer those prayers? What prayers have you prayed before that required great faith in God?
PRAY: Ask the Holy Spirit to open our hearts to desire, see, understand, & live the truth.
EXPLAIN: We will be looking at the passage Pastor Owen shared last Sunday.
READ: Matthew 21:18-22 out loud and then give some background.

DISCOVER - Asking Who, What, Where, or When (4 min)

WHO is mentioned in these verses?
WHAT does Jesus say could happen if we have faith and don't doubt?
WHAT are the main points of this passage of Scripture?

INVESTIGATE - Asking Why or How (4 min)

HOW do you define faith? doubt?
WHY do you think Jesus uses the illustration of mountain in regards to prayer?

GO - Asking Questions That Require Action (4 min)

WHAT kinds of mountains in your life need to be moved?
WHAT things seem impossible for your right now?
Do you ever struggle with doubt? Would you be willing to share now?

ACTIVITY: (10 min)

EXPLAIN: We will have some personal introspection time and some group time during today's activity. We want to encourage students to begin journaling about prayer needs in their life as well as, doubts they wrestle with.

COMMUNITY & CONCLUSION (10 min)

CLOSING QUESTIONS: Related to this morning's DIG study & the activity... How can we pray/encourage you this week? How can we hold you accountable this week?
PRAY: Spend time praying for each other. ENCOURAGE them to follow up with each other.

**Current
Memory Verse**
Hebrews 4:13

**Provided
Supplies**
Prayer Journal
Handout



**Sermon
Connection**

Today's Discussion is in response to Owen's sermon last week.



**Emmaus
Connection**

When a connection is being made to our discussion we will outline that here.

DISCUSSION GUIDE :: EXPANDED

INFORMAL: (8 minutes)

Take ATTENDANCE with the LEAD App.

Ask GUESTS to complete a CONNECTION card. Find ways to learn about the guest.

Allow for informal CONVERSATION but be prepped to TRANSITION to allow time for Bible discussion & community. REVIEW this month's Memory Verse (Hebrews 4:14).

INTRODUCTION: (7 minutes)

OPENING QUESTION: Read Luke 17:6...When we pray do we really believe God can answer those prayers? What prayers have you prayed before that required great faith in God?

EXPLAIN: We will be looking at the passage Pastor Owen shared last Sunday.

PRAY: Ask the Holy Spirit to open our hearts to desire, see, understand, and live the truth.

- *We never want to approach God's Word like we approach books we read for school/learning. We are not merely acquiring information. We are encountering words that are alive and change people through the power of the Holy Spirit. Let's position ourselves in humility and ask God for His help and to transform us!*

READ: Matthew 21:18-22 out loud & feel free to provide some background.

Matthew 21:18-22 *18 In the morning, as he was returning to the city, he became hungry. 19 And seeing a fig tree by the wayside, he went to it and found nothing on it but only leaves. And he said to it, "May no fruit ever come from you again!" And the fig tree withered at once. 20 When the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, "How did the fig tree wither at once?" 21 And Jesus answered them, "Truly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' it will happen. 22 And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith."*

BACKGROUND: When we read what happened before these verses, Jesus had just gone to the temple and overturned the tables of the money changers. In verse 13 He says "My House shall be called a House of prayer." In our verses this morning, v.18-22, He curses the fig tree and teaches the disciples about faith and prayer. Fig trees were symbols of blessings and fruitfulness. He cursed the fig tree because it had leaves but no fruit (looking good on the outside but having a heart that is far from God) Do we go through the motions of prayer but not really trusting and believing God can?

DISCOVER - Asking Who, What, Where, or When (4 min)

WHO is mentioned in these verses?

- *Jesus is teaching the disciples.*

WHAT does Jesus say could happen if we have faith and don't doubt?

- *"you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' it will happen."*

WHAT are the main take aways from this passage?

- *1) This passage shows us God's great power.*
- *2) Our need to develop our prayer life and to pray in faith.*

INVESTIGATE - Asking Why or How (4 min)

How do you define faith? How do you define doubt?

- *Faith = Complete trust or confidence in someone or something. Doubt = Feeling of uncertainty, to call into question.*

WHY do you think Jesus uses the illustration in regards to prayer?

- *God can handle all our prayers. Prayers that ask for small things and prayers that ask for big things.*
- *Reference Scripture: **Jeremiah 32:17** "Ah, Lord God! It is You who have made the heavens and earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you."*
- *QUOTE: Jerry Bridges... "The object of our faith is the person of God Himself., not our faith. When I do not have faith, I'm saying one of two things: either God cannot answer this prayer OR God will not answer this prayer. If I say He cannot, I'm questioning His Sovereignty and His Power. If I say He will not, I'm questioning His goodness."*

GO - Asking Questions That Require Action (4 min)

WHAT kind of mountains in your life need to be moved? WHAT things seem impossible?

- *The answers will vary. You might help students think about other potentials. 1) Are their friends or family that seem far from God? 2) Are their circumstances that are very difficult and seem like there is no way out?*

WHEN you face those mountains do you find yourself praying about them in faith or are you hesitant to pray because maybe you doubt God cares or His power to do the impossible? Why?

Do you ever struggle with doubt? What about? Anyone willing to share?

- *The reality is many of your students have (or have had) doubts about God, His care for them, or His power to things that seem impossible. Unfortunately many within the church are ashamed of their doubts and would never be able to talk about those things. If you say anything here PLEASE stress how important it is to talk to others about struggles with doubt. Talk about how you desire your small group to be a safe place to ask questions and share their doubts.*
- *If you have time feel free to reference **James 1:5-8** and **Hebrews 11:6**. Also here is another quote by Jerry Bridges. "We must believe that He exists, that He is God. That He is Almighty God. That He is not limited by anything that we can think of. And then we must believe that He rewards those who diligently seek Him and believe He is good"*

ACTIVITY: (10 min)

EXPLAIN: Today's activity will have some personal introspection time ,as well as, some group time. We want to encourage students to begin journaling about prayer needs in their life as well as, doubts they wrestle with. Allow students some time to work through the handout to practice journaling. After a few minutes invite students to consider the value of journaling together in your small group. Use the provided poster board to give your group the chance to write their journal entries so they can begin praying in faith for each other.

COMMUNITY & CONCLUSION (10 min)

CLOSING QUESTIONS: Related to this morning's DIG study or other spiritual struggles... How can we **pray** for you? How can we **encourage** you this week? How can we hold you **accountable** this week?

- Please use the above questions & **refrain** from stating, "Does anyone have any prayer requests?" This is too general & doesn't ask the student directly about spiritual issues. Until your group develops greater community invite students to connect with you individually.

PRAY: Spend time in prayer as a group.

- This will depend upon the life of your small group and the willingness of the individuals. A big win would be that everyone gets prayed for and every person prays. However, if your group isn't there yet take small baby steps throughout the year.

ENCOURAGE: Pray for each other & check in with each other for encouragement & accountability.

- As the adult encourager set the tone and be the lead prayer warrior this week. Give them an example to follow by checking in with your small group via text, GroupMe, or whatever means your small group has adopted for regular communication.

POST SMALL GROUP STUDENT CONNECTION

CONNECT: With your small group or the students as individuals this week by...

- Create a jpg (picture) through YouVersion App for the verse James 1:5 or Hebrews 11:6 and share it with your small group.
- Take note of specific prayer needs and/or doubts that students write down and connect with them and encourage them in those things.

"PRAYING IN FAITH"

Use this area to write down specific prayers that would bring glory to God, bring you holy joy, and would be for the good of others.

*After you answered both sections be brave and write down some of these things on the poster board so your group can pray for/wit you.

Also consider obtaining a notebook for you to begin journaling prayers. Make sure you date them so you can keep track how God works in your life.

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Use this are to write down doubts or questions that you have struggled with or that make it hard to pray for the things you wrote down to the left.

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