

session 6 study guide

the prayer of relinquishment

starter

WHOSE PRIORITIES? If you had only a few days to live, what would you do with your time? Choose one or more of the following and tell why.

- ☐ Throw a party
- ☐ Watch television
- ☐ Spend time with my family or closest friends
- ☐ Travel to a place I have always wanted to go
- ☐ Do nothing different
- ☐ Work hard to meet a girlfriend or boyfriend
- ☐ Plan my funeral
- ☐ Pray like crazy
- ☐ Other: _____

Before you go on, spend a few minutes thinking about your priorities. How do you determine what is most important to you? How does God factor in to your decisions about what is most important in your life?

message

Phrases like “What would Jesus do?” and “Be like Christ” are thrown around a lot in Christian circles—so often that we sometimes forget to be surprised by them. But if you think about it, the fact that followers of Jesus are called to become more and more like Him as they mature is totally shocking.

The apostle Paul wrote, “You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:22-24). As God’s Spirit works in us, we become less like our sinful selves and more like Him. Take a moment to be amazed. (If you’re not even a little bit shocked, you might want to check your pulse!)

If we are created to grow into Christ’s righteousness and holiness, it’s a good idea to study His example. We can find one such example in Matthew 26:36-46. As you read this passage, keep the following questions in mind: (1) How did Jesus interact with people? (2) How did He interact with God? (3) Why was prayer so important to Him?

Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.”

Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”

Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. “Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?” he asked Peter. “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.”

He went away a second time and prayed, “My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.”

When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing.

Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us go! Here comes my betrayer!”

1. Contrast Jesus’ prayer of absolute surrender to His Father with the poem below by Wilbur Rees:

*I would like to buy three dollars worth of God, please.
Not enough to explode my soul or disturb my sleep,
but just enough to equal a cup of warm milk*

or a snooze in the sunshine. . . .

I want ecstasy, not transformation;

I want the warmth of the womb, not a new birth.

I want a pound of the Eternal in a paper sack.

I would like to buy three dollars worth of God, please.

What stands out to you as the biggest difference between Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane and Wilbur Rees's poem?

2. On a scale from 1 to 10, which mindset are you closer to right now?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I'd settle for three dollars' worth of God					I want to surrender completely to God's will.				

3. What areas of your life are you most reluctant to surrender to God? Why?

dig

A great way to deepen your understanding of Scripture is something that is called “inductive Bible study.” This method of reading the Bible is a bit like being an investigative journalist. The goal is to set aside your assumptions and answer five basic questions: (1) Who? (2) What? (3) Where? (4) When? (5) Why? After you’ve answered those questions, you can figure out how the passage applies to your life (something you can’t possibly know until you know the whole story, right?).

Look at the passage you read in Matthew 26:36-46 again. Now it’s time to investigate the events of that night in Gethsemane and find out what it means for your mind and heart. If you are doing this study with a group, you can work with a partner—other believers are good sources for this kind of investigation.

1. **Who** are the persons involved in this passage?

2. **What** is taking place?

How many times did Jesus ask God to remove the cup?

What is the “cup”?

What is the prayer of relinquishment?

3. **Where** is this event taking place?

4. **When** does this event take place in Jesus' ministry on earth?

5. **Why** does Jesus pray the prayer of relinquishment?

Does the prayer have consequences? If so, what are they?

6. Now it's time to put all the information together to form a "big idea" that can be applied to your life. Jesus said, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done" (Luke 22:42). Theologian Richard Foster calls the prayer of relinquishment a prayer of self-emptying, surrender, abandonment, release and reservation.¹ Do you see these principles at work in Jesus' prayer? If so, how?

7. Do you see these principles at work in your life? If so, in what areas?

8. In what areas of your life do you find these principles lacking?

9. How would your life look different if you were to pray the prayer of relinquishment?

apply

If there is a secret to living the Christian life, it is found through our obedience. Through our obedient life comes freedom and fulfillment.

1. Read John 14:21. If we say we love God, what will be the result?

2. Why is this an important principle for our lives?

3. Read Philippians 2:5-11. According to these verses, what attitude did Jesus have?

4. What was the result of Jesus' obedience?

5. In what ways is your attitude similar to that of Jesus? How is it different?

6. What do you need to relinquish in order to be obedient?

reflect

Relinquishment is no easy task. Even Jesus struggled to release His will completely—He prayed the prayer three times, pouring sweat and blood! If you struggle with releasing your will to God, you are in good company:

- Abraham had to release his son Isaac (see Genesis 22).
- Moses had to release his will for the sake of Israel and Egypt (see Exodus 4; 7:1-6).
- David had to release his will for the son he had with Bath-sheba (see 2 Samuel 12:16-22).
- Paul had to release his desire to be free of his “thorn in the flesh” (see 2 Corinthians 12:7-10).

1. What part of your life is God calling you to give completely to Him through a prayer of relinquishment?

2. Read Galatians 2:20. How does this Scripture relate to the prayer of relinquishment?

3. Crucifixion is a slow, terribly gruesome way to die. Sometimes it can feel as though our old, sinful self is never going to just get it over with! What part of your old self is hanging on for all its worth, holding you back from total surrender to your new life in Christ?

4. You are called to become like Jesus: righteous, holy and surrendered to the Father. Don't settle for three dollars of God. When you are ready, write your prayer of relinquishment below.

meditation



Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me;
yet not my will, but yours be done.

LUKE 22:42

Note

1. Richard J. Foster, *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home* (San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins, 1992), pp. 47-56.