



The
PURSUIT

*A 4-Week Bible
Study for Women*

By Amy Groeschel





The Pursuit is a four-week study that includes five daily lessons per week. Although you can complete the study individually, it was designed to be experienced in a group to receive the maximum benefit. Set aside time each day of the study, to read through the section, look up scripture, write down your answers to the questions, make lists, take notes, and really make this guide your own. You may want to begin your pursuit by watching my introductory video message: go2.lc/thepursuitevent

At the heart of this study is *the pursuit* to know God. As you complete the next four weeks, you will be challenged and empowered to seek Him first and foremost for relationship rather than for personally-desired results from Him. And you can be sure that when you seek to know God with all of your heart, you will find Him.

As you trust God and His truth begins to take root in your heart, you will learn how to walk by listening to His voice. Once you have learned to hear God, He can direct your daily steps, which enables you to fulfill His purposes on this earth! It's a continuing process of seeking God, renewing your mind in His truth, keeping in step with the Spirit, and reaching out to others.

Each daily lesson will cover these four important components:

1. **S**eek God: Begin your time in focused prayer.
2. **O**btain Truth: Read, ponder, and learn from God's Word.
3. **A**bide by the Spirit: Personally apply what you have learned.
4. **R**each Out: Share and live out the truth you are learning.

We believe that you will begin to **soar** with God as you pursue knowing Him! Our prayer is that you will never be the same.

The Pursuit Study

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WEEK ONE

Clearing the Path for Pursuing God



Day One || A Heart Assessment

Watch the teaching video from Amy before you begin.

go2.lc/thepursuitwk1

SEEK GOD

Let's start by evaluating where you are today in your relationship with God—whether good, bad, ugly, or great. Be honest with your answers. Set a goal for where you want your relationship with God to be in one year.

Where there is no vision [no redemptive revelation of God], the people perish...

Proverbs 29:18 AMP

Based on the way you live your life, how would you say you are keeping the first and greatest commandment to love God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength? Circle your answer.

Never Sometimes Often Consistently Always

On an average day, describe your relationship with God.

I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm – neither hot nor cold – I am about to spit you out of my mouth. Revelation 3:15-16 NIV

Of the three words below, **underline** where your relationship with God is today and **circle** where you would like it to be in one year.

Cold Lukewarm Hot

Circle which of these statements best describes your relationship with Christ.

I'm losing momentum. *My relationship is pretty flat.*

It's growing slowly. *It's growing quickly.* *I'm soaring with God.*

Why do you think you answered the last question the way you did? Circle the statement that most closely applies to you right now.

I'm not seeking God *I'm minimally pursuing God* *I'm seeking God consistently*

I'm clinging to Him *I'm clinging to Him in everything*

Spend time today praying and thinking about your answers.

OBTAIN TRUTH

Take a moment and read the following passages.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9
Matthew 22:34-40

What are you pursuing? Would you like a hint? Look at how you spend your time and money. How do you spend most of your time?

How do you spend most of your money?

When I was growing up, I pursued love and acceptance wherever I could find it. Friends and boys were the top priority in my quest for acceptance. Instead of realizing that I already had my family's love—and better yet, God's love—I was not satisfied. I believed Satan's lie that it wasn't enough.

"My family and God are required to love me. My real value will have to come from others." This was the lie I told myself. And I believed it. My actions proved that I did.

If you and I don't throw out the lies, worldly thinking, and sin in our lives, they will choke the Word of God that needs to grow big and strong in our hearts. This is what happened to me. Everything God was trying to teach me was being choked out.

Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character." 1 Corinthians 15:33 NIV

The above verse was true of me. One day, I decided "no more." No more believing the lie. No more worldliness and sinful living. I'm throwing all of it in the trash, and pursuing Jesus with all my heart. Once I made that decision, my life was drastically changed! I devoured God's Word and spent all my free time at church or at a Christian event. But slowly, as the months turned into years, my new life became commonplace. Living mostly trouble-free, I had become a "professional Christian." I knew all the right answers at the weekday Bible study and could sing every lyric to the latest Christian songs. Life was good, or at least I thought it was. But I was missing out on a *thriving* relationship with my living God.

Sure, I prayed. But my prayer time was usually focused on my desire to improve myself or on someone's prayer request. Those are not bad things to pray about, but something was missing. My prayers had ceased to be centered on knowing and loving God. As I realized this and began to refocus on knowing God, my relationship with Him truly began to grow, deepen, and soar! This was a game changer.

It changed everything.

ABIDE BY THE SPIRIT

Do you desire to seek God with all of your heart? Does it feel like something is keeping you from seeking Him? Many things can keep us from experiencing intimacy with Him. Someone might have wounded you, or perhaps something has caused your heart to be closed or hesitant toward God. Maybe you believe that you're not good enough for Him. Maybe you've been deceived and have turned your heart to something or someone other than God. Whatever it is, you can overcome it through Christ Jesus. When our hearts are wounded, angry, bitter, or closed to people, our hearts are most likely closed to God as well.

Have you ever built a wall to shut off your heart to someone? Have you closed your heart to God in some way? Take a moment and really think about where your heart might be avoiding intimacy with Him. Pray and ask God to open your whole heart to receive all He has for you.

The truth is, holding onto our wounds and pain really only hurts us. Our patient and loving God is ready to heal those hurting places. We need to bring the pain and wounds out of hiding and into the light so that we can begin to open our hearts back up to God.

The greatest truth you'll find in this study, *The Pursuit*, is that our amazing God is relentlessly in pursuit of us!

We didn't choose Him or love Him, but God chose us and loves us first and forever! This was true even while we were in yesterday's sin, it is true right now in today's mess, and it will always remain true, even in tomorrow's junk!

I want to share a powerful song of truth: *Unstoppable Love* by Jesus Culture. Download it from iTunes if you can. I pray it will cause an explosion of passionate love for God in your heart as you realize His colossal and jealous love for you.

To pursue God with all of our heart, we have to be willing to open our hearts to God and ask for His help. Dear sister, would you take a moment and do this right now?

REACH OUT

Tell a friend or your spouse about where you are in your faith/love journey with God. Be honest and specific. Ask them to pray for your spiritual growth while you are going through this study.



Day Two || Three Big Roadblocks

SEEK GOD

Read the following verses from Matthew 11 aloud and hear the voice and heart of your loving Heavenly Father speak to your very soul. Then sit quietly for a moment and thank Him for His gentleness towards you.

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. Matthew 11:28-30 NIV

OBTAIN TRUTH

Take a moment and read the following passages.

Isaiah 40:28-30
John 17:3

The eagle is a beautiful creature. Amazingly, its adult body is approximately four feet long with an eight feet wingspan, but it only weighs about eight pounds. It's no wonder the eagle soars with such grace and magnificence. It is hardly carrying any weight at all!

I want to soar with God like an eagle! Don't you?

Soaring with God allows us to see everything from a new perspective.

When my daughter was seven years old, she took her first airplane ride. She said, "Mommy, from up here, all those things that we think are such a big deal seem so small. You can't even see them from up here."

It's all about perspective. When we are soaring with God, He gives us a new outlook on life. The concerns of the world are much smaller because we have our mind and heart set on things above. Our hope is in Christ and His truth. Essentially, God's powerful strength renews us.

Do you want to soar with God? Are you willing and ready to do this, friend? If so, then we need to begin by identifying and laying down all those things that burden and distract you from truly seeking Him. When we are lacking in our pursuit and desire for God, it is likely there are some significant and troublesome roadblocks along the paths of our Christian journeys. Let's identify and examine three of these major roadblocks today.

Roadblock 1 – Busyness: "I want to have time for God, but I just don't have time!" If this is you, then God is not first in your life. Rushing along and being swept into the flow of a busy life will not bring you closer to God. That is like trying to walk up a downward-moving escalator. You will eventually wear yourself out and get nowhere!

Whether we realize it or not, God is with us all the time because He lives in us through the Holy Spirit. We can get so busy that when we eventually slow down, we realize that we have not even acknowledged God's presence with us.

How do we get past this roadblock? It's important to get honest. If we really want to do something, we will create time for it. We will even plan and arrange our schedules to make room for the things we want to do. Resolve to make your relationship with God your first priority. Be intentional, and decide on your game plan today.

"If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail." Benjamin Franklin

Begin the habit of continually acknowledging God's presence with you. Learn to think, talk about, and speak with God throughout each day —throughout your work, eating, watching a movie, or interacting with other people. Recognize Him in everything instead of making Him an additional thing that you try to fit in on the side.

Roadblock 2 – Disobedience: God wants us to pursue righteousness and become like Him. To do this, we need to readily put away our old ways - our selfish, unloving and wandering hearts that chased false gods of pleasure, money, approval, status, and anything else that took God's place before we came to know Him through Christ Jesus. These are roadblocks of disobedience that prevent us from experiencing the fullness of Him.

How do we get past this roadblock?

When we hold on to something, God can't be everything! We must totally surrender our lives to God so He can set us free. Awaken each day resolving to make God's will your will.

Roadblock 3 – Apathy: "I've tried quiet time and prayer and it wasn't that great." Have you ever had that thought or one like it? I did. I would pray for a minute and become bored. I didn't feel like I was getting anything out of this time. The spiritual disciplines were really just a checklist or a duty to perform. I was lukewarm.

How do we get past this roadblock? This obstacle calls for some heart therapy. Tell God about it. Ask Him to help you desire and love Him more. I got past this roadblock by the grace of God. Feeling desperate due to an ongoing problem in my life, God gave me a renewed hunger to read His Word. As I read the Bible and learned more about who God is, I longed to know Him even more. My prayers became alive and a sweet friendship developed as I began to know God on a deeper level.

ABIDE BY THE SPIRIT

Make a list of your common roadblocks in a notebook or the space provided. As you pray over this list, surrender to God and resolve to throw off everything that keeps you weighed down and attached to this world. Do you need to make a plan for how and when you will connect with God? Do this now, too.

REACH OUT

Share the blessing of this new journey with someone else. It's not too late! Who can you invite to join you in *The Pursuit* study? Pray about who you can invite to seek God along with you these next several weeks. Send an invitation soon to whomever God puts on your heart and mind.



Day Three || First Things First

SEEK GOD

Begin your time by tuning out all distractions. Acknowledge the presence of God with you. Ask Him to prepare and teach your heart today.

OBTAIN TRUTH

Take a moment and read the following passages.

Matthew 6:19-34

Philippians 3:4-14

Revelation 2:2-5

Summarize Jesus' main points in Matthew 6:19-34.

How does Jesus' message specifically speak to you right now?

Now summarize Paul's main message in Philippians 3:3-14.

How does Paul's message specifically speak to you right now?

Summarize the main points of Revelation 2:2-5.

What does this passage challenge you to do?

"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." Matthew 6:33 NIV

What does seeking God really look like in your life? Do you whine to God about your worries? Do you complain to God about your needs? Do you seek God out of a sense of some pious duty? Think for a moment about what motivates you to engage with God.

There have been times when feelings of guilt have driven my desire to spend time with God in prayer and Scripture reading.

I thought I was letting God down if I didn't have a regular quiet time. And honestly, I do believe God must feel disappointed when we neglect Him. After all, He tells us in the Word that He is a jealous God. I'm jealous for time with the people I love, too. But here's the deal, God doesn't want us to come to Him out of obligation. Would you want an obligatory friendship with someone? No? Me neither. But when you and I see God for who He really is, our hearts will truly desire Him. He is altogether lovely!

Oh Father, open our eyes to who You are!

ABIDE BY THE SPIRIT

If you have had unhealthy motives, take heart. God already knows, and He still loves and pursues you! He simply desires for you to learn to draw near to Him out of love – seeking Him as your first love.

Write, pray, or meditate on what your typical goal or desire is when spending time with God in His Word and through prayer and worship. Tell God that you want to know and love Him more fully. Cry out to Him and ask for more awareness of His gracious presence in your life.

REACH OUT

Who do you know is filled with worry right now? Send them a message of encouragement and let them know you are praying for them.



Day Four || Pursuing God in Faith

SEEK GOD

"... Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." Mark 10:14-15 NIV

Take those words of Jesus to heart as you come before your Heavenly Daddy today with complete, childlike openness and trust. Share whatever is on your heart.

OBTAIN TRUTH

Take a moment and read Hebrews 11. Make brief notes of what each man or woman did in faith.

These "Hall of Faith" heroes of Hebrews 11 weren't perfect people, but they were all obviously acquainted with the One who is perfect! When you think about it, their actions all must have seemed pretty foolish to the common observer. But their childlike trust and obedience has now been greatly rewarded. Did they know the profound examples they were setting for us—this great cloud of witnesses who preceded the coming of our Messiah, Jesus Christ? I'm not sure, but I pray that you and I will become similar examples for future generations!

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. Hebrews 12:1-3 NIV

In light of these faith-filled people who have gone before us, what does Hebrews 12:1-3 tell us to do?

Finally, read James 2:14-26. Based on what this passage teaches, what is an active faith?

Did you see what I saw in this passage? Our faith is not so much about what we believe, but what we *do* with what we believe. So what does this have to do with seeking God? Let's read Hebrews 11:6 again to find out.

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. Hebrews 11:6 NIV



ABIDE BY THE SPIRIT

Are you living out an active faith? Do you come confidently into God's presence ready to be mercifully heard? I hope so! This is what God wants for us and it is what Jesus' sacrifice and resurrection provided.

Personally, I have seen too many faith-deprived Christians. Their prayers do not reflect any real sense that they believe that God truly hears them. They live their lives risk-free and as comfortably as they can. I know, because I have been there and done that. It's where Satan wants to keep us so that we are never a threat.

Take some time to reread your notes from Hebrews 11 and then spend some time in prayer. Ask God to increase your faith. There have been times when I have needed to ask God's forgiveness for living faithless and full of worry and fear. Is this something you need to do now?

REACH OUT

Watch your faith grow as you put it in action! Pay attention to the people and circumstances God has placed around you as you listen for His direction. And when you see a need, meet it.



Day Five || Conforming to God's Image

SEEK GOD

And we ... are being transformed into his [Christ's] image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3:18 NIV

Before you begin today's study, go before God in prayer. Bask in the reality that He isn't finished with you. His plan is to steadily and gloriously transform you into Christlikeness.

OBTAIN TRUTH

As we conclude our first week in *The Pursuit* study, I want us to be reminded of a chief priority that our Heavenly Father has for us as we seek Him. One of God's utmost desires is that we, His children, grow up to become like Him.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. Romans 12:1-2 NIV

Offering our bodies as a living sacrifice might seem familiar to you. That's because it is a lot like the first and greatest commandment.

Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. Deuteronomy 6:5 NIV

Sacrifice does not come easy to us. It means laying down our lives—offering all we are to God. At Life.Church we like to say,

"We will give up something we love for something we love even more."

When we offer our lives as a "living sacrifice" to God, we are choosing to give up the things of this world for the One we love more—for the God who chose us and loved us first. What do you think happens when we worship God with all that we are and all that we do?

Colossians 3 is speaking directly to us, those who follow Christ! In it, we are told to do some very specific things. As you read through the passage below, circle the things that you're told to do. Underline what happened to you and where your life is now. Draw a box around Whose your life is and where you'll appear with Him.

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Colossians 3:1-4 NIV

Colossians 3:1-4 is one of my favorite Bible passages. I hope it fires you up to seek God the way it does me! We don't belong to this world, but to another, unshakable, glorious kingdom that will never end!

ABIDE BY THE SPIRIT

Think this through, lovely sister: God cannot change what we will not offer to Him. Is there any part of your life that you have yet to surrender and offer fully to God? If so, will you write it down, along with a prayer of submission?

REACH OUT

Be a Christ like influence today as you lead by example. Make decisions that glorify God. Demonstrate Christ's love by being a patient, generous, and humble servant.



WEEK TWO

Pursuing To Know God's Character



Day One || The Great Invitation

Watch the teaching video from Amy before you begin.

go2.lc/thepursuitwk2

SEEK GOD

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let the one who hears say, "Come!" Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.

Revelation 22:17 NIV

You have an open invitation from the Holy Spirit to draw near to His life in you and be filled. How will you respond? Will you answer this invitation now by seeking God's face in a time of prayer? For as long as you can, even if it's only five minutes, take some time to intentionally focus on Who He is.

OBTAIN TRUTH

Some of you may be wondering why should we concern ourselves with seeking God. Don't we already have Him in our lives?

The answer is both yes and no. Let me explain it like this. You may live with someone right now, but that doesn't mean you don't need to seek out time for relationship, does it? What if you never spoke to your roommate or your spouse, even though you live in the same house? That wouldn't be a very healthy relationship. In the same way, God's Spirit lives in us when we believe in and follow His Son, Jesus. As we spend time with Him, we come to truly know Him more and our relationship with Him grows and deepens.

So if you are a Christian, you have confessed Jesus Christ as being Lord and received His sacrifice for the forgiveness of your sins. But that moment was *only the beginning* of the most wondrous relationship you will ever have! Whether your relationship with God is in the infancy stages or you have walked with God for decades, it should always have this characteristic: Closeness.

God is after your heart—all of it, always. He created us in His image to become His very own children – to know and be known, to love and be loved. Will you seek to know and love Him? He has been waiting, patiently longing for you—for all of you.

In a notebook, on a piece of paper, or in the space provided, begin a list with the title "My Relationship with God Needs ____." Start this list by writing down God's relational instructions underlined in the passage below:

Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Take delight in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this: He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn, your vindication like the noonday sun. Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when people succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret—it leads only to evil. For those who are evil will be destroyed, but those who hope in the LORD will inherit the land.

Psalm 37:3-9 NIV

Next, identify God's relational instructions in the following verses. Once you are finished, add them to your list.

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.

Proverbs 3:5-8 NIV

Do you notice the incredible blessings that come from being in a close relationship with God? If not, take another look at the parts of both passages that were *not* underlined!

Wow! What a good, good Father! I want to—no, I *get* to—draw in close to know Him more and more. Will you join me now?

My Relationship with God Needs:

ABIDE BY THE SPIRIT

To know God *intimately* is what we are after! And that is what God is after too!

Come near to God, and He will come near to you... James 4:8 NIV

Sister, this is your time. God's great invitation to you stands open. Go to Him once again.

REACH OUT

Pray that God will show you an opportunity today to practically demonstrate His love through some simple, beautiful act of humble service.



Day Two || See Jesus, See God

SEEK GOD

Read the following verse aloud as your personal prayer to God.

You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water. Psalm 63:1 NIV

Continue to think on this verse as you pray from an overflow of your heart.

OBTAIN TRUTH

This week, we are going to dig into the Word to discover and celebrate God's wonderful names and character. If we're going to grow in our faith, trust, delight, and intimacy with God, we must deepen our understanding of Who He is. I pray that this week will bring you new vision that will help you behold the wonders and greatness of our God like never before. Let's begin by reading the following verses.

No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known. John 1:18 NIV

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. Colossians 1:15 NIV

Seeing Jesus is seeing God. When we observe the life of Jesus, we see the person, or personality, of God in action.

Now, look up and read the following passages. As you do, make a list of the character traits of Jesus revealed in these verses. You might title this list "Character of God Revealed Through Jesus."

John 1:1-18
Isaiah 9:6-7

The passages in John and Isaiah reveal the majesty and glory of Jesus our Lord. Next, let's look and reflect upon Jesus' character during His earthly mission.

Philippians 2:5-12

What are the two main character traits that Jesus displayed in the passage above? Write them on your list.

Let's go back to the gospel of John and read the following passage. As you do, pay careful attention again to the character and names of Jesus and add them to your list.

John 5:1-30

Now, look over the list you just made as you consider the following verse.

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus. Philippians 2:5 NIV

Our Savior Jesus Christ, who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords, is also a *humble servant* - and we are to carry the same attitude! We don't make a show of our high calling as God's holy children. No, we follow the example of our Savior.

Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did. 1 John 2:6 NIV

Allow me to ask you a question. Are you living as yourself, or as Christ? Really stop and consider this. Ask the question again, placing your own name in the blank below. Prayerfully consider your answer.

"Am I living as
or as Christ?"

I woke up today with this question in my mind. I believe it was the Holy Spirit bringing me some gentle correction. Jesus, the Lord of all creation, made Himself *nothing*. Why do I ever try to make something of myself instead of making much of Him?

Character of God Revealed Through Jesus

ABIDE BY THE SPIRIT

Read over the full list you just made of the names and character of Jesus. Pick one character quality that you need to cling to God and seek His help for right now.

Next, choose one character trait or name of Jesus to delight in.

Finally, choose one character trait of Jesus that you would like to learn about and understand more fully.

As you consider the list, can you see what a powerful, personal, and provisional God we have? The fullness of God is actually more than we can comprehend! As you continue to pray and consider the character of God revealed to us in Jesus, I hope it stirs you to press on to take hold of knowing our glorious God more and more!

You can start learning more about these attributes of God today by doing a Bible word search. It's easy! Just get on your YouVersion Bible App or go to Bible.com and click on the search icon. There, you can type in the word or words you'd like to learn more about.

REACH OUT

Bless someone who crosses your path today by sharing a truth that you learned from today's study.



Day Three || I Am Who I Am - YHWH, The LORD

SEEK GOD

Consider the following verses.

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life ..." John 14:6 NIV

When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, LORD, God Almighty. Jeremiah 15:16 NIV

Soak your soul in the presence of God and bring your heart to the feast of Him. He is the way, the truth and the life. And you, dearest sister, are called by His name!

OBTAIN TRUTH

Today, we are going to look at the ultimate and utmost names of our God. My prayer is that we will more fully grasp the great awesomeness of the God we love and serve.

Look up and read the following passage.

Exodus 3:1-15

Notice the verbs that are attributed to God on behalf of His people. Write them down.

What are the three names that God calls Himself in verses 13-15?

In verse 15, God instructs Moses to tell the Israelites, *"The LORD . . . this is my name forever."*

Have you ever seen times in Scripture when LORD is written in capital letters and wondered why? When you see this, it is because the original Hebrew translation refers to God here as YHWH. The Hebrew written language does not contain vowels,

which is why that name looks so strange to us. We believe it might have been pronounced "Yahweh."

YHWH is God's proper name in Hebrew. It appears 6,828 times in the Old Testament, and is best translated "I AM WHO I AM." The Jews came to regard this word with such reverence that they never spoke it. They didn't want to inadvertently take the name of God in vain. So when they came to the name YHWH in their reading, they pronounced the word "Adonai" which means "my Lord." The English versions of the Bible have basically followed the same pattern. They translate the proper name YHWH with the word LORD, often noted in all capital letters. Whenever you see this, you know that the name Yahweh is behind it.

I just love knowing God's proper name, don't you? When I really want to become acquainted with someone, I want to know and call her by her given name. But in God's case, how can any name ever truly convey or encompass the fullness of His glory? With the meaning "I AM WHO I AM," YHWH is likely the closest a name could get.

Let's pause a moment and ponder: What do you think God meant by declaring Himself "I AM WHO I AM?"

I believe the name YHWH reveals God's totality and supremacy. There is only one God and He is the One. Over and over again, God stresses the uniqueness of Who He is.

I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God. Isaiah 45:5 NIV

In 1 Timothy 1:17, we see that the apostle Paul understood this about God when he penned the words, "the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God."

Yes, God's name is forever YHWH. "I AM WHO I AM." He is the only God. As my daughter Joy once said, "... and there's nothing you can do about it!"

What does the name YHWH, or "I AM WHO I AM," mean to you?

There isn't only one right answer here. I really want you to think about what your answer to this question might be. To me, "I AM" conveys the absolute sufficiency of God. His very nature and being provides everything we need, everything we are, and everything that exists.

For in him we live and move and have our being. Acts 17:28 NIV

David understood the sufficiency of God when he composed the famous Psalm 23.

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. Psalm 23:1 NKJV

Scripture shows us how Peter also knew this provisional quality of God.

His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life ... 2 Peter 1:3 NIV

And Paul realized Christ's sufficiency is actually more than enough and it is powerfully at work within us!

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us... Ephesians 3:20 NIV

Should we pause and pinch ourselves? It's mind-blowing, isn't it? Our all-knowing, all-powerful, ever-present God has provided everything we need to live the life He has for us! He is powerfully at work in us! He wants us to know this, believe this, and live from this. Let's take all this truth in and embrace it!

ABIDE BY THE SPIRIT

I don't know about you, but after studying about the great "I AM," one scripture jumps to the front of my mind.

What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? Psalm 8:4 ESV

Seriously! God, the "I AM," lives in you and me! (1 John 3:24) He intercedes for us! (Romans 8:26-27) He has written our names on the palms of His hands! (Isaiah 49:16) Take these next moments to reflect, pray, and worship the awesome and wonderful "I AM." Bring Him your needs. Praise Him for being your everything!

REACH OUT

Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes and show you some ways you can reveal the sufficiency and power of God to those around you. He may ask you to engage in simple acts of loving sacrifice to others. He may call you to do things that require more boldness and prayer. May all the ways you serve be to the glory of our God, the "I AM."



Day Four || God Is ...

SEEK GOD

Read the following passage aloud as your personal prayer to God.

O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole body longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water. I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands. I will be fully satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you. On my bed I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the night. Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings. My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me. Psalm 63:1-8 NIV

OBTAIN TRUTH

Did you know the psalmist David wrote Psalm 63 while in the desert? Not a figurative desert, we're talking a *real* desert—a waterless, temperature-breaking, life-draining, lonely wasteland. Knowing that information as we study David's desperate words gives us a glimpse of his profound intimacy with his God. Clearly, David knew God well and clung to Him despite his harsh circumstances.

From this psalm, we learn that David knew God as *his* God—personal, yet powerful. David knew God to be glorious, praiseworthy, overwhelmingly satisfying, a helper, a protector, having indescribable love, ever present and supporting. This was David's personal "God Is" list.

Let's create our own "God Is" list today as we go treasure hunting in the Scriptures for more names and character qualities of God. Start by writing the title "God Is..." in a notebook, on a piece of paper, or in the space provided.

Next, look up Psalm 23. As you read this familiar passage, add each and every name and characteristic revealed about God to the list you have begun.

Once you are finished, continue your hunt through the Scriptures printed below.

For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."
Revelation 7:17 ESV

He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young. Isaiah 40:11 ESV

As we consider all of these passages together, may our hearts be overwhelmed with awe and wonder at the tender beauty that flows from our Almighty God!

God Is ...

ABIDE BY THE SPIRIT

Glance through the "God Is" list you just made. What name or quality of God grabs your attention the most right now? Circle, highlight, or underline it. Consider writing it on a sticky note and displaying it in a prominent place as a reminder to cling to, delight in, or seek Him.

Whatever circumstance you are facing, whatever your need is, God says, "I AM." I AM able. I AM present. I AM holding you. I AM your guide. I AM trustworthy. I AM.

REACH OUT

Look up and read Ezekiel 33:21-35:15.

When we compare the good shepherd to those who have failed to look after the flock, it is clear that there are a number of things that we are called to do.

Strengthen the weak. We do this through good teaching, encouragement, prayer, and by building community.

Heal the sick. Honor all those in the medical profession and all those involved in the healing of the sick. All of us can lay hands on the sick and pray for them in Jesus' name.

Bind up the injured. There are so many broken people in our society. They can be found in our prisons, in the homeless on our streets, and even in the boardrooms of companies. Many are injured by the circumstances of life. The Spirit of the Lord enables us to bind up the broken-hearted as we pray for them, embrace them, listen to them, and care for them in our community.

Go after the strays. Like the Prodigal Son Jesus speaks about in Luke chapter 15, many prodigal sons and daughters have strayed from the Father. They are like lost sheep. We can help them come back to the Father's arms.

Search for the lost. At times, we may have to leave the other sheep to search for the one who is lost, to bring them back to repentance and cause more joy in heaven (Luke 15:1-7).

Shepherd with justice. Seek justice on behalf of the oppressed, the needy, and the poor. We should rescue children, women, and men from slavery, bring the perpetrators to justice, set the captives free, and care for them.

What will you do? You can begin by encouraging someone as you share a fresh insight that you learned about God from today's study.



Day Five || God is Love

SEEK GOD

Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always. Psalm 105:4 NIV

God longs for you to draw near to Him. Come close and seek His face. Before beginning today's study, stop and pray. Lovingly acknowledging that God is with you right now. Ask Him to give you a deeper understanding of who He is through this time in His Word.

OBTAIN TRUTH

What is the meaning of love to you? How would you define it to someone?

Look up the following passages. Make a list of what these scriptures say love is and what it isn't.

1 John 4:7-21

1 Corinthians 13

Does reading these passages change your answer about the meaning of love? Multitudes of people search for love, even as much of the world is sorely void of it. This lack of love is evident in every broken and wounded soul. Love, when truly experienced, ushers hope and healing to our hungry hearts.

From the Scriptures listed above, we clearly see that love isn't merely determined by the things we do. Appearances can be deceiving. What may look loving can be laced with false motives, right? We can do many things that appear to be loving. But oddly and sadly, we can be void of love in the midst of our "good deeds."

Love is the greatest of all virtues. It even trumps faith and hope. In its perfection, love dispels all fear. Why is this? It's because love is a Person. Love, in its very essence, is God. Therefore, love is only realized and demonstrated from the soul who possesses Love—God.

Our love is simply an overflow of our loving relationship with God. We love others because God loved us first. I believe we will always need a growing revelation to further grasp the love of God.

... I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Ephesians 3:17-19 NIV

We have been rooted and established in love, and we need God's supernatural power to take hold of deeper insights concerning His love for us. Take a moment and consider the following questions.

What does being "filled to the measure of all the fullness of God" mean to you?

Why do think this fullness is connected to God's love?

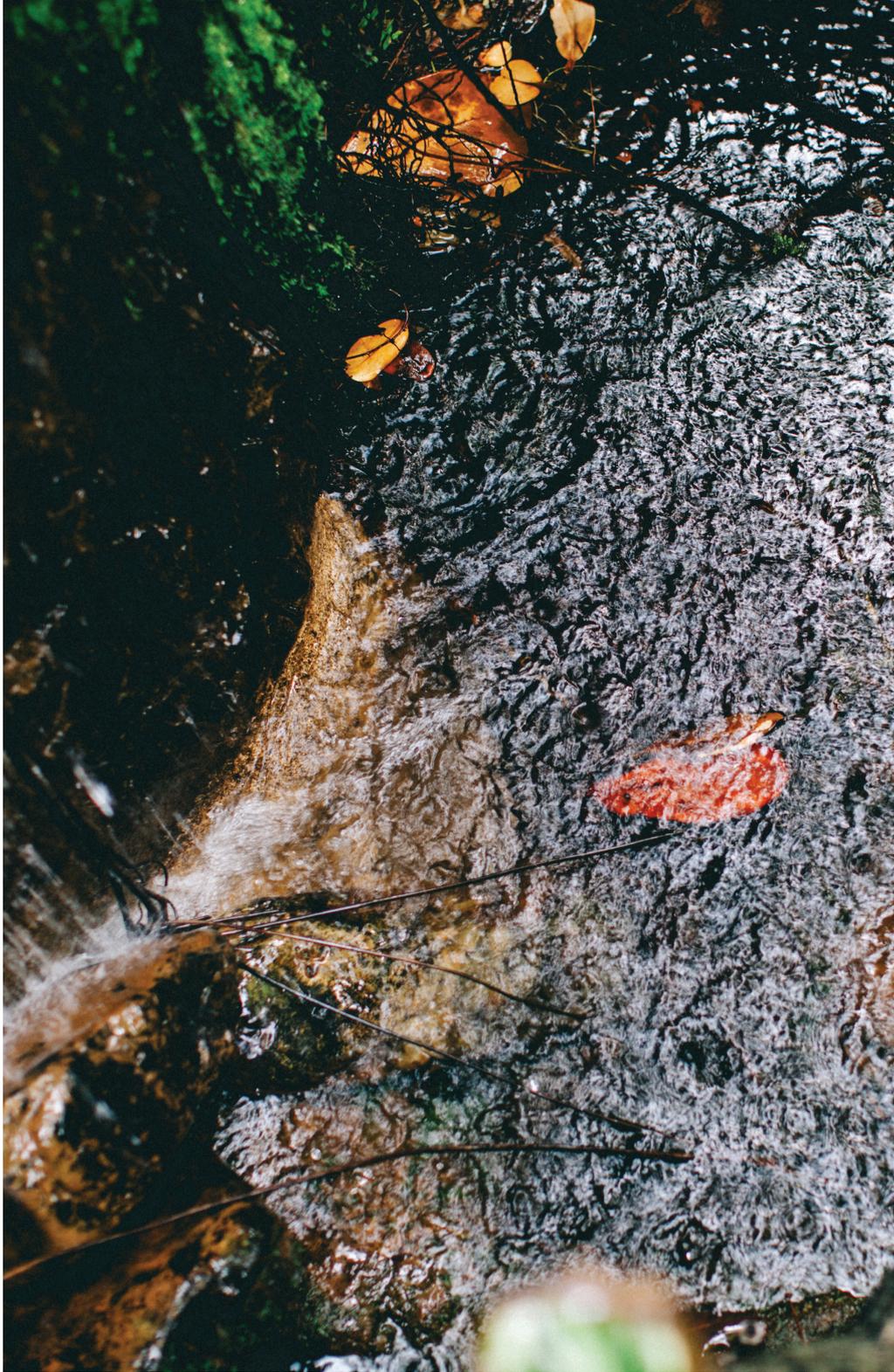
ABIDE BY THE SPIRIT

Take a moment and reflect on the nature of God's love being unchangeably who He is. Worship Him for being patient with you. Praise Him for His kindness and forgiveness. Bask in the wonder of His humility. Realize that God, Who is love, lives in you. You can live from the abundance of this love when you give the Holy Spirit control. Have you been living as an overflow of God's love or from the overflow of your old nature? Make this choice today. Who will you serve, yourself or your God?

REACH OUT

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. Romans 13:8 NIV

God has lavished us with His unchanging, indescribable love. We repay this "debt" of love as we love those around us. Make a list of the people with whom you are in regular contact. This can include your next-door neighbor, a store clerk, or the person who does your hair. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your mind and heart to reveal specific ways you can demonstrate the love of Christ to someone on your list today.



WEEK THREE

Pursuing God through Prayer



Day One || The Call to Pray

Watch the teaching video from Amy before you begin.

go2.lc/thepursuitwk3

SEEK GOD

Are you ready to begin your private time with your loving Father today? Quiet your heart and mind. Enter into a time of prayer as you read this verse.

I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. Psalm 119:10 NIV

OBTAIN TRUTH

Before we go any further, I must admit that the task of expressing all that is in my heart and spirit about the subject of prayer in five daily lessons is quite daunting to me. Prayer is so deeply rich and personal to me. This subject contains the very heart of pursuing and knowing God. We will start by looking at two questions: What is prayer? And, why should we pray?

What is prayer? Prayer is a turning of our hearts and attention to God. It is giving God our desires and will and asking for His. It is an outcry of the soul to God. It is a primary way in which we abide in Christ.

Prayer is our high privilege! Prayer offers us entrance into a divine and intimate communication with the Lord of Lords and King of Kings. At its core, prayer is all about a relationship—the most vital relationship we will ever have.

Why should we pray? As amazing an honor as prayer is, I often still hear the question, “If God is all-knowing and in control, why should we bother to pray?” And many who confess that they do pray still seem to lack the rest, satisfaction, and confidence that being before the Almighty Father should provide.

Why? What is missing? Perhaps a better understanding of prayer will help. Let’s start by looking to the Scriptures for an answer to this basic question.

Look up the scriptures listed below. As you read each passage, pay special attention to the “what” and “how” of prayer found in these passages. You’ll notice the “what” and “how” of prayer reveal the importance, or the “why,” of prayer. As you notice these things, write them down in a list entitled “Why Should I Pray?”

1 Peter 3:12

1 John 5:14-15

Nehemiah 1:11

Matthew 14:23

Mark 1:35

James 5:13-16

1 Peter 4:7

Jude 1:20

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

2 Thessalonians 3:1-2

Matthew 7:7-11

Are you grasping the importance of prayer yet? I could go on and on adding more verses for you to look up! You can always search on your own if you want more evidence and encouragement. The Bible is full of great insights on prayer.

Before we move on, based on what you've just studied in the Word of God about prayer, I'd like you to write out a few of your own thoughts and conclusions about the significance of prayer.

What beautiful truth about prayer is explicitly conveyed in each of the above verses?

Of all the reasons that I could give about why we should be people of prayer, the following verses in Psalms display it clearly:

The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. Psalm 34:17 NIV

Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice. Psalm 55:17 NIV

The LORD hears the needy and does not despise his captive people. Psalm 69:33 NIV

The LORD hears us! Isn't that too wonderful to fully comprehend? Of course, we know and assume a major function of prayer is that we are communicating to be *heard* by God. But how many times do we feel doubtful and question whether or not our prayers are ever penetrating past the natural realm? Our faith needs to be built up in this area! When we pray, aside from the hindrances of unrepentant sinful living, unbelief, and greedy prayers (James 1:6-8, 1 John 3:21-22, and James 4:3), God's ears are open and attentive to us! His heart is bursting to bless and make known His loving faithfulness!

ABIDE BY THE SPIRIT

God tells us to pray. God wants us to pray. Here are some questions to consider. Are you praying? If your prayer life is weak and minimal, why do you think that is?

Do you need to ask God to increase your faith? Maybe you need to ask for a softened heart. Remember, we often do not have because we have not asked. What do you need to ask and believe God for personally? Examine your motives and be specific.

Are you seeking God in prayer purely out of a desire to know Him? If not, what is holding you back?

What can you commit to do in order to better know God intimately through prayer?

I hope and pray that today's lesson has strengthened your faith as to why we pray. Let's all resolve to live a life more connected to God through the gift of prayer.

REACH OUT

I encourage you to seek out a prayer-partner relationship. This is someone with whom you can share prayer requests as you hold each other accountable in prayer.



Day Two || Prayer Attitudes

SEEK GOD

... I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child is my soul within me. Psalm 131:2 ESV

No matter what the state of your soul is right now, you can receive rest and peace as you come before your loving Daddy. Allow His arms to sweep over you and bring you in close for a soul embrace. He loves and desires to minister wholeness to every part of you—spirit, soul, and body. Sink deep into Him and breathe deeply. Thank Him for His love.

OBTAIN TRUTH

I get crazy excited when sharing about what I call “Prayer Attitudes.” What do I mean by “attitude”? An attitude is a way of thinking or feeling about someone or something and is typically reflected in a person’s behavior.

What’s your general attitude when you approach God in prayer? What you think and feel about God determines the way you will approach Him in prayer. Maybe you’ve thought or said something like this, “I’m not sure God hears my prayers. What’s the use?” or, “I’ve already tried praying about it. Nothing’s changed.” Or maybe you’re full of faith with a more positive stance, like, “I want to pray right

now. I can’t wait to see what God will do!” Whatever your attitude about prayer is right now—whether weak, weary and indifferent, or eager and passionate—know that it truly matters. It matters to God.

Personally, I’ve been all over the prayer-attitude spectrum. I am so thankful that in more recent years, as I’ve grown in my relationship with God, He’s led me to a place of passion about pursuing Him in persistent prayer. Luke 18 is a favorite chapter of mine on the subject of prayer. Over the next two days, we will look at four prayer-attitudes that the Lord Jesus teaches us.

Prayer Attitude 1 – Passionate Perseverance

Read Luke 18:1-8. As you do, be sure to note *why* Jesus told this parable!

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. Luke 18:1 NIV

A prayer attitude of passionate perseverance says, "My God is just and good. Therefore, I won't give up! I will continue to ask and believe!" Jesus would say to us, "My child, keep asking, hour by hour, day and night, week after week, month after month, and year after year. Don't give up! Trust Me. Have faith in Me!"

When my first-born daughter Catie was 18 months old, she was obsessed with American cheese slices. Every time she finished eating a slice, she ran over to the refrigerator door and pulled its handle. Unable to open the refrigerator, she would then look to me and plead, "Eezze!" Over and over again, she would eagerly beg for more. And over and over again, this stubborn mom would eventually give in to her cuteness. (Within reason—I didn't want her to make herself sick.)

I don't know about you, but I want this kind of passionate perseverance! I believe God wants our prayers to be intensely heartfelt. Don't just pray because you should. Pray because He *hears*! And He wants to know that we desperately love and cling to Him in all things.

In the morning, LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait expectantly. Psalm 5:3 NIV

We've got to learn to be patient. After all, God's been so very patient with us! We often have impatient prayer attitudes. Sorry, but there will never be a Divine Instant Answers App. I've prayed for the salvations of some family members for y-e-a-r-s! (Most are now Christians!) I've been asking and waiting for over 12 years now for my own physical healing concerning a certain issue. But God's delays aren't always denials. Only He knows the full story! In the meantime, you and I can trust God completely! His ways are *always* faithful and trustworthy for His children. We won't always understand His purposes. But we DO know ours! We are to keep asking! We are to remain on the path of passionate, persevering, faith-filled prayers! This. Is. God's. Will. For. Us. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 tells us to pray continually. And I pray that Jesus will find a multitude of faith-filled, praying, Christ followers when He returns.

Prayer Attitude 2 – A Humble Heart

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable:

“Two men went up to the Temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed this prayer: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people – robbers, evildoers, adulterers – or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, and I give you a tenth of all I get.’

“But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”
Luke 18:9-14 NIV

What prayer attitude did the Pharisee have?

What prayer attitude did the tax collector have?

My youngest daughter Joy approached me one day with a request to eat dinner at her favorite restaurant. She began her entreaty with a syrupy string of, “Mommy, I love you, I love you, I love you, I love you, and I LOVE YOU!” I guess she thought she needed to earn some points to entice me to comply. To her great surprise, I said, “Sorry, no. Not tonight, Honey. But I love you, too!” Although Joy had appeared to come to me humbly, her insecure pride was revealed as she tried to win my approval by flattery. (Yes, pride and insecurity go hand-in-hand.) Her pride said, “Be good enough, and that will get me what I want.”

Afterward, I began to ask myself, “Father, do I ever do this to you? Do I try to impress You or try to win Your favor and blessings?” I have to admit I sometimes see this attitude subtly creep into my thinking. “God will hear and answer me when I’ve kept up with my Bible reading, prayer time, giving, serving, etc.” This is wrong thinking! It places confidence in my efforts. As if I could add anything to Christ’s finished work! It is pride. Pride seeks to make me the focus. Other people must come beneath us when we seek to elevate ourselves.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite [repentant] heart, O God, you will not despise. Psalm 51:17 ESV

Jesus became our righteousness when we received Him by faith. We don’t need to “butter-up” or try to impress God! His loving work in and through our lives is based on the grace and faith given to us when we became His adopted child! Therefore, we should come before our gracious and loving God with a heart of humility. A humble heart in prayer says, “Gracious Father, I am amazed by your great mercy and love for me! Thank you for teaching me through Your Word that I can boldly ask you to hear my requests!”

Did you notice how this prayer’s focus was on God’s goodness? Living in feelings of guilt over sins we’ve already confessed or taking pride in our own good works will make our prayers about us. Our identity and confidence should be in Christ alone! A self-righteous attitude won’t get you very far with God in prayer. We must seek to maintain an attitude of humility through which God graciously hears and responds to us with His best.

If you crave more study time about prayer today, read Matthew 6:5-18. Make a prayer attitudes list in a notebook or this guide from the teachings of Jesus. I hope you will do this and be blessed with rich insights!

ABIDE BY THE SPIRIT

Consider the question again. What is your general attitude when you approach God in prayer?

Remember, what you think and feel about God determines the way you will approach Him in prayer. Are you praying with a passionate perseverance or have you given up on some of your requests ever being answered?

If you've realized that you need to engage once again in prayer for certain people and situations, create a prayer list. Commit to a daily routine of prayer.

Do your prayers display a humble, yet confident approach? Or do you often feel the need to earn merit points with God through good behavior in order for your prayers to be truly heard?

Dear sister, there is no special sauce, formula, or right words to pray for God to respond. Be set free of this lie today! The truth is your prayers don't have to be perfectly eloquent or powerful in Bible terminology. They simply need to be sincere, constant, humble, and with a confident faith in the goodness and ability of your God.

REACH OUT

Do you know someone who is full of anxiety right now?

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:6-7 NIV

This verse is a great encouragement and reminder to exchange all our worry and doubt and commit to taking everything to God in prayer. Who can you lovingly share this verse with today?



Day Three || Prayer Attitudes (Continued)

SEEK GOD

Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice. Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always. 1 Chronicles 16:10-11 NIV

Before you begin today's study, seek the Father's heart. Don't rush this. Take your time. Your relationship with Him is far more important than anything else.

OBTAIN TRUTH

People were also bringing babies to Jesus for him to place his hands on them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. But Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it. Luke 18:15-17 NIV

Prayer Attitude 3 – Childlike Dependence

Of all the prayer attitudes, this one is probably my favorite because it rightly makes much of God. Let's take another look at that last verse.

Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it. Luke 18:17 NIV

All the promises of God and His Kingdom must be received like a little child. But what does that mean? It doesn't mean that God wants us to become immature and ignorant. On the contrary, we know that God would have us grow in spiritual maturity and in wisdom and knowledge. So what are the childlike qualities that God desires for us to have? Faith, dependence, and sincerity are certainly some good characteristics of a child-like attitude. But sadly, the world pulls us towards self-reliance, pride and pretension. We must resist the world's system! As Christians, Christ calls us to be made new in the attitude of our minds.

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 NIV

One way to beat the traps of the world and its spiritual darkness is to have the attitude of a little child. I believe that our prayers to God should have a childlike disposition.

About five years ago, I asked God to give me a greater revelation of what it means to live by His Spirit. His answer? "Depend on Me." "And how am I to depend on You, Father?" I asked. "Like a helpless infant depends on their caregiver," was His gentle revelation to my heart. Gasp! I was dazed as I reflected on His clear message. "Really, Lord? This sounds like complete and utter dependence, but yes. Yes! This agrees with Your Word, 'Apart from Me you can do nothing.'"

My own children are still ridiculously dependent on me at times. They seem to think that I'm a nurse, a wastebasket, a water fountain, a snack bar, and an entertainment center. "My tummy hurts! Here's my empty wrapper. I'm thirsty! I'm hungry! I'm bored." Sometimes it's a little annoying. But hey, at least these are honest, humble, and very dependent requests! They cling to me. Some do it literally! They need me.

And God knows we desperately need Him. Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, how we need our Father God! On our own we are so terribly poor, weak, and unable. You don't believe me? Who is sustaining your every heartbeat and breath right now? Only through God do we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). Apart from Him, we can't do anything (John 15:5).

This is how I now come to God in prayer. Clinging to His wisdom and strength, my prayers are often unpolished, messy, and unmistakably simple. They are more specific, faith-filled, and open to listening in silence rather than babbling on. My trust is deeper and my heart is more willing to obey. So while my prayer relationship has become more childlike, I am growing in maturity at the same time! All glory to God for being my faithful, perfecting Father!

Proverbs 3:5-6 truly explains in perfect clarity the childlike dependence we should strive to maintain. Read it carefully now, as if for the very first time, like a little child.

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. Proverbs 3:5-6 NIV

Prayer Attitude 4 – Joyful Surrender

No one displays this quality better than Jesus.

... For the *joy* set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.
Hebrews 12:2 NIV

Look up the following passages. As you read them, be sure to examine Jesus' prayer-attitude closely.

Hebrews 5:7-8
Luke 9:23

Although we see Jesus as fully surrendered, these passages seem far from joyful. And what about His daunting words, saying we must deny ourselves and take up our cross to follow Him? What's joyful about that?

I believe the joy is found in the midst of our obedience. That's because no matter how difficult, our obedience demonstrates our faith. We know there are future rewards for the Kingdom of God, and amazingly, for us too!

To glimpse this awesome truth for yourself, look up 2 Corinthians 4:7-17.

Did you read what I just read? Does His Word really promise daily renewal and eternal glory for me, for you, for us? Yes! Are you feeling any joy now?

Now, let's shift gears and look again at Luke 18. There we read about a certain rich ruler who had the honor of a face-to-face encounter with Jesus Christ. A wealthy leader, he already had many blessings from God. But this man knew that he lacked what was needed for true righteousness and eternal life. So he asked Jesus, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" This ruler claimed to have kept all of God's commands since childhood, but to reveal his true devotion, Jesus answered, "You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." The man became very sad because he had great wealth. He wanted

eternal life but not at the expense of a fully surrendered earthly life. What a tragedy! He needed a prayer attitude of joyful surrender. Instead, he was deceived into caring more about temporary pleasures than eternal glory.

We must all first come to Christ by making a great exchange—all of His life for all of ours. But it doesn't end there! That's just the beginning! As we remain in Him, we are to continue in a life of joyful abandonment. This is easier said than done, right?

As God's child, your spirit longs to follow your Father and bring Him glory in all you do. That means our attitude in prayer should be without any self-seeking agenda and with a heart surrendered to His will.

A few years ago, the Holy Spirit led me to begin a new ministry endeavor. I will be frank. It thrilled me and terrified me. God gently asked me, "Amy, if I lead you, are you willing to follow no matter what the cost?" His call to me entailed great sacrifice, discomfort, and many unknowns. But we don't have to have all the details and answers to obey God fully in what He shows us to do. Therefore, in faith and with joyful surrender, we can willingly take up our cross and follow Him.

Oswald Chambers once said about obedience, "Obey God in the thing He shows you, and instantly the next thing is opened up." He also said, "God will never reveal more truth about Himself until you have obeyed what you know already." There is no other way to live a life to its fullest than to joyfully surrender your life to Him.

Are you craving more Bible study? You can discover more about prayer attitudes by reading Luke 18:35-43. As you read, make note of any insights by adding to your "prayer attitudes" list.

ABIDE BY THE SPIRIT

How childlike are your prayers? Explain.

Little children are typically not wise in their own eyes. Are you?

Unfortunately, there have been too many occasions when I think too highly of my “wisdom,” even in my prayers. I’ve caught myself trying to “help” God know how to handle a certain matter. I don’t think God has ever said, “Gee, Amy, thanks for that great idea! I hadn’t thought of that.” Instead of trying to be so clever and spiritually sophisticated, we need to allow God’s Spirit to prompt our hearts and minds and guide us in how to pray—and we can do this even while we are praying!

How joyfully surrendered are you in prayer?

Do you live before God as a fully yielded soul, or are you holding tightly to a harmful habit, a sinful pleasure, or the easy (lazy) way? What else may be keeping you from joyfully surrendering everything to Him?

Will you ask God to show you any way that you might be deceived? Are you willing to lift your hands in abandon and give everything to Christ Jesus? I pray you will know the joy of a life fully surrendered to Him.

REACH OUT

Ask your Heavenly Father what childlike act of obedience He has for you today. This could be anything, but be aware; it will take faith and it may not make sense! Don’t hesitate to follow through. Blessings await you!



Day Four || Continuous Prayer

SEEK GOD

He [the Sovereign LORD] wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being instructed. Isaiah 50:4 NIV

Spend time being still, quiet, and just listening to the Father. Ask Him to open your spiritual ears so that He can teach you. Write out any lesson He blesses you with.

OBTAIN TRUTH

I believe it's vital that we develop a lifestyle of continuous prayer. Prayer is not just a part of our daily spiritual rituals; it should be the most thriving conversation we have throughout each and every day. Our prayers are needed. God even asks for them. Just look at these Scriptures that encourage us to pray.

They all joined together constantly in prayer ... Acts 1:14 NIV

... pray in the Spirit on all occasions...
Ephesians 6:18 NIV

Continue steadfastly in prayer ...
Colossians 4:2 ESV

We also thank God continually ...
1 Thessalonians 2:13 NIV

As we pray most earnestly night and day ...
1 Thessalonians 3:10 ESV

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Romans 12:12 NIV

Pray continually. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 NIV

King David provides us a great example of being faithful in prayer:

Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice.
Psalm 55:17 NIV

How often are we told to pray?

Right now, you might be thinking, "Continually? Really? How is that even possible? What would it look like? I'm busy and I don't have that kind of time. This sounds too hard."

I want to encourage you as someone who used to compartmentalize my prayers and rarely did spontaneous praying, I understand. But you can do this! Ask for God to help you. That's all I did to learn all-the-time prayer. I simply asked God to teach me, nudge me (I'm easily distracted), and remind me of my continual need for him.

Some of you might argue, "But I'm too undisciplined and weak to go to God in constant prayer." The following passage should dispel that fear and doubt.

For we do not have a high priest [Jesus] who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach the God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." Hebrews 4:15-16 NIV

Jesus empathizes with your weakness! He understands your reluctance! And He's waving you towards the throne of God saying, "Come here, my child! Come and receive the mercy and support you need." In fact, realizing your inabilities is a perfect condition for continual prayer! Paul E. Miller, author of *A Praying Life*, explains, "You don't need self-discipline to pray continuously: you just need to be poor in spirit." I completely agree. Why? Because I believe that our communication with God is most frequent when we realize our complete and utterly desperate need for God.

Think about this. What is a young child often like around their caregiver? If you don't know, allow me to paint you a picture: They love to cling to your legs and cry out, "Hold me!" Some love to ask questions over and over again—all in the same hour. They are continuously needy talkers, playmates, and snugglers who don't want you to miss out on a moment of enjoying them. Ever. They're needy, right? They can be exhausting! But unlike a human caretaker, our loving, faithful Caregiver does not grow weary. Instead, He is delighted when we constantly look to Him!

Look up Daniel chapter 6 in the Bible. As you read this passage, I pray you are inspired by Daniel's example of faithful and dedicated relationship to God.

What prayer attitudes do you see Daniel exemplifying in this chapter?

Remember, our prayer attitudes—patient persistence, a humble heart, childlike dependence, and joyful surrender? Daniel seemed to completely possess all these qualities in his relationship with God!

Why do you think Daniel was so fearless about disobeying the king's decree?

What do you think you would do now if it were against the law to pray to God?

What stood out to you most in this chapter? Why?

ABIDE BY THE SPIRIT

It's time to be doers of the Word and not just hearers (or readers). So pray! Pray when you need to type that email. Pray as you walk into that store. Pray as you drive. Pray before opening your mouth when talking to your child, spouse, friend, boss, or co-worker. Pray when you don't know what to do with your free time. Pray because you just need to express gratitude. Pray before, during, and after that test. Pray when you can't sleep. Pray when you are sad, angry, happy, bored, confused, worried, depressed, or sick. Pray simple, one-word prayers like, "Help!" Pray when you're writing a Bible study. (Oh yes, I am praying now! *God, please guide my thoughts and give me your words to instruct my dear sisters and build them up.*) In everything, just keep praying.

REACH OUT

As you pray, pray, and pray some more, don't forget to make and keep a prayer request list going of people who are in need of your prayers! I have a prayer list on my phone and in a prayer journal.



Day Five || Intercessory Prayers

SEEK GOD

Be still, and know that I am God... Psalm 46:10 NIV

You may be very familiar with that verse, but how well do you practice its command? Use the next few minutes applying this verse to your life. Yes, right now, just be still and know that He is God.

OBTAIN TRUTH

Besides repentance, to me there is nothing more meaningful and beautiful than time spent interceding for others. True intercession is a selfless act where our hearts connect with the suffering and needs of others. It's where we stand in the gap for the weak and believe all things are possible with God. It's where miracles and maturity happen and the fullest joy is found. Advocating in prayer for people is not just for the church "prayer team." It is a high privilege that all believers in Christ should faithfully commit to.

Read 2 Corinthians 1:8-11. This will help us grasp the importance of our prayers for one another. What action did the missionary author Paul give credit to for their ability to receive deliverance from all their troubles?

As you look up and read the following Scripture verses, begin two columns with the titles, "What to Pray" and "How to Pray." List your findings in the appropriate column. I really hope that you are making these lists! They reinforce and promote personal discovery.

Colossians 1:9-12
Ephesians 6:18-20
Colossians 4:12
Luke 6:27-28
Ephesians 1:17-20
Philippians 1:9-11

I'd love to continue adding Scriptures for you to read, as the Bible is full of lessons and examples in prayer! But for the sake of time, I'm hoping and praying that this small sampling will open your eyes and increase your hunger to go further with this subject in your personal studies. Go get that PhD in knowing God through prayer!

As you read over your completed lists, I hope you've come to realize how important your prayers are. So, if it's going to be, is it all up to thee? (Sorry for the cheesy rhyme! Sometimes rhymes happen.) Seriously though, do we have to carry our prayer burdens alone? The Bible has great news for us in answer to this question. Amazingly, we are not without Heaven's support in our prayer efforts! Paul's words in the following passage encourage us with profound truth.

What to Pray:

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with the will of God.” Romans 8:26-27 NIV

*“Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.
Romans 8:34 NIV*

Christ Jesus is interceding for us! This is encouraging, isn't it? But how does the Holy Spirit help us in prayer?

The good news is that we don't have to fully understand how this whole process works. We can simply know and be confident that God has us covered! God provides all we need for Christian living and that certainly includes the important area of prayer. In God, we have a Holy Advocate, a Divine Prayer Partner, continually! That's how much God is for you and loves you!

Before we conclude our study in the Word today, I want you to read the following passage. It is a prayer that our Savior Jesus prayed for us before He left this earth! As you read, you may want to add more to your “What to Pray” list.

How to Pray:

My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one - I in them and you in me - so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. John 17:15-24 NIV

I love the desire of Jesus' heart throughout this prayer and especially in verse 24. He wants us to be with Him. Amazing, isn't it? Doesn't it sound like something a best friend would say? What a wonderful Savior we have!

ABIDE BY THE SPIRIT

Look over the “What to Pray” list you made in today’s study. Do these prayer topics resemble the things you often pray about? Circle any specific subjects on the list that you often pray for and list them here.

Next, underline the topics you need to begin praying for others. Which ones stand out the most as things you want to begin praying for?

Now, look at your “How to Pray” list. Do these words describe how you often pray? What do you think the Holy Spirit would want you to add to your prayers?

REACH OUT

Sister in Christ, if you have not joined the ranks of God’s prayer army to advance the Kingdom of God, now is the time! Consider joining or starting a prayer group. Better yet, enlist your existing small group, friends, or family members to join you in a commitment to deeper prayer. I have two personal prayer partners—one is my husband and the other is a friend. I am also a part of two prayer groups. One is a texting group, and the other connects through email.



WEEK FOUR

Pursuing God through Worship



Day One || Crush the Idols

Watch the teaching video from Amy before you begin.

go2.lc/thepursuitwk4

SEEK GOD

Read King David's final words to his son and then turn to God for a time of prayer.

And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches every heart and understands every desire and every thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will reject you forever. 1 Chronicles 28:9 NIV

OBTAIN TRUTH

This week, we are going to talk about worship. Everyone worships. Every day we are giving our affection, adoration, devotion, honor, and reverence to something or someone. We were created to worship. But what exactly is the biblical meaning of the word worship?

The primary Hebrew word for worship is shachah, which means to lower or to bow down. The Greek words for worship convey the meanings to adore, revere, and serve. In the most basic sense, worship is an outward expression towards what we deem as truly awesome and worthy of our whole adoration and commitment. All too often our devotion is given to these false gods: pleasure, possessions, power, a relationship, or pride in our own opinions and lifestyles.

After one of our state college teams wins a national championship title, everyone in the state seems to become a fanatic. Many fly team flags off their home, flags out their car windows and some even paint their bodies or acquire a tattoo to proclaim their faithfulness.

Similarly, when we truly fall in love with God, the only natural response to truly knowing Him intimately is a life of worship! When you realize the depth that you have been forgiven, you may want to fall to your knees weeping and worshiping because of the love and mercy you have experienced. This is spontaneous and true worship! Because of Who He is and what He's done, we should be complete Jesus fanatics!

In the following passage, Jesus gives a very explicit example of the kind of worship He is worthy of.

Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. Matthew 10:37-39 NIV

Notice that Jesus wasn't saying that loving your family is wrong. Loving them more than Jesus is what is unacceptable. God wants our whole heart—a heart that will follow Him no matter what the sacrificial cost is to us. We are found worthy of Him when He has become fully worthy to us.

Can you recite all of God's 10 commandments by memory? I tried this as a "fun" Bible pop quiz with my kids and found that we were a little rough around the edges with some of our answers. Still, God's Word says that the commandments of God were written on our hearts when we believed and confessed Jesus to be our Lord and Savior.

... I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. Jeremiah 31:33 NIV

Look up Deuteronomy chapter 5. As you read, write down a list of all Ten Commandments. How many commandments have something to do with worshiping and loving God? Well, technically all of them do. But I mean, how many are our heart's relationship to God directly?

What do these commands teach you about the nature of God?

Like me, I hope your view of God is growing bigger and your attitude is becoming more reverent. God is so worthy of our worship!

To conclude today's Bible study, read Jeremiah 2:1-13 and observe what God's chosen people, the Israelites, had done.

My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water. Jeremiah 2:13 NIV

Cisterns are vessels used for storing water. The cisterns in the above passage are idols—things that claim our hearts, our worship and our attention instead of God. Sad isn't it? Idols had claimed hearts of God's people in the days of Jeremiah, and so it continues today. Rejecting the one true God, countless people are fashioning more and more broken water containers that can never satisfy or save.

ABIDE BY THE SPIRIT

I recommend reading the lyrics recorded by Jimmy Needham in *Clear the Stage*, by Ross King—search for them online, and may they become your song as you prayerfully search your heart to identify any idols that need crushing in your life.

Who or what do you worship? What idols need to be crushed in your heart? Be open to really think this through. Write down any thoughts of conviction that come to your mind.

Now cross out the idols you have written down and commit yourself to worshiping and serving God alone as you cry out in a prayer of repentance to Him. If you would like to extend your worship today, I recommend *Wonder* by Bethel and *You Won't Relent* by Misty Edwards.

REACH OUT

Sister in Christ, if you have not joined the ranks of God's prayer army to advance the Kingdom of God, now is the time! Consider joining or starting a prayer group. Better yet, enlist your existing small group, friends, or family members to join you in a commitment to deeper prayer. I have two personal prayer partners—one is my husband and the other is a friend. I am also a part of two prayer groups. One is a texting group, and the other connects through email.



Day Two || *The Postures of Praise and Worship*

SEEK GOD

Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them." Psalm 126:2 NIV

On average, children laugh 25 times more often than adults laugh. Just as there is a time for sorrow, there is also a time for rejoicing. Reflect on the great things that God has done for you. Let these memories stir up your soul in joyful praise and even laughter. Remember, Jesus taught us to become like little children.

OBTAIN TRUTH

As a child, I grew up regularly attending a Christian church. I remember watching the choir each Sunday and wondering, "Why don't these people's faces reflect the wonderful lyrics of the songs they sing?" As a young teen, my thoughts were not as sweet. "These people look like someone peed in their Post Toasties!" The choir in my church often appeared bored or even a tad cranky. (Sorry, Mom. I know your heart was in the right place and that you were simply keeping the church's choral culture.) But my spirit knew that worship should have more expression! Yes, it should be reverent, but shouldn't it also be joyful and demonstrative?

Let's not assume that I have all the answers to these questions. Instead, we should go to God's Word and see what it teaches us. "Halal" is the primary Hebrew word for praise. It is the root word of our word, "Hallelujah" which means "Praise Yahweh" or "Praise the LORD." I love the meaning of halal. It means to shine, to celebrate, to boast, to be clamorously foolish. Isn't that just awesome? There are other Hebrew words used to describe the postures of praise.

- Shabach means to exclaim or shout aloud
- Tehillah means to sing or laud
- Zamar is the Hebrew word for instrumental praise
- Yadah is an expression of worship with the hands extended
- Barak means to kneel down in adoration

Psalm 95 contains a beautiful use of barak.

Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.

Psalm 95:6 NIV

I wonder to what extent we who follow Christ miss seeing Him for all He is and all He brings to those who love Him.

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms ... Ephesians 1:18-20 NIV

What if we had a greater revelation of Him? What manner of worship would result? Today we will take a look at just a small sampling of the postures of worship found in the Bible. Let's start with Psalm 100.

Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth.

*Serve the LORD with gladness;
Come before him with joyful songs.*

*Know that the LORD is God!
It is he who made us, and we are his;
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.*

*Enter his gates with thanksgiving
and his courts with praise;
Give thanks to him and bless his name.*

*For the LORD is good
And his love endures forever,
his faithfulness continues through
all generations.*

Psalm 100 NIV

Below is a list of the forms of worship expressed in Psalm 100 as an example for you.

Postures of Worship in Psalm 100

1. Giving God joyful, noisy praise
2. Happily serving Him
3. Singing before Him
4. Acknowledging Him as the Lord God and Creator
5. Expressing heartfelt words of thanks, praise, and blessing
6. Proclaiming His goodness, love, and faithfulness

Now, it's your turn! Look up Psalm 95, 96, and 97. Make a list of the postures of worship you find in these passages. If you have the time and want to keep going, read through Psalm 148, 149, and 150 too, continuing to list the postures of worship you find there.

ABIDE BY THE SPIRIT

Worship leader Bruce Leafblad defines worship as "centering our mind's attention and our heart's affection on the Lord." Considering all that you have learned in this study so far, write out your own definition of worship.

Review the list you made on the postures of praise and worship. Are there any forms of worship that stood out to you? Why do they stand out?

Think about how you can begin to intentionally incorporate these postures of worship into your life as a response to who God is. He is worthy!

REACH OUT

Oh yes, we were created by God to know Him and bring Him glory through our praise. The amazing thing is that when we lift up our King in worship, it magnifies Him, yet changes us. We become more aware of who He is and who He calls us to be. He draws us out of self-centered living to live a life of loving service. Our lifted hands in praise become a sign of our willingness to use them *for Him* as representatives *of Him*. Ministry and serving people should always be an overflow of our worship.

Do you want to learn more? Watch or listen to the wonderful sermon series *Come to Worship* at Life.Church by my husband Pastor Craig Groeschel.



Day Three || Whatever You Do

SEEK GOD

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.
Revelation 22:13 NIV

Before you begin today's study, pause and reflect on the greatness and awesomeness of Yahweh. Give your whole mind, emotions, and physical being to loving, knowing, and serving Him. Ask God to mature and complete you in Him.

OBTAIN TRUTH

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. Colossians 3:23-24 NIV

I'm very eager to begin today's lesson. We are going to peer in and look intently at what it means to live a life of wholehearted worship to God in whatever we do.

Look up 1 Chronicles 29:1-22. There we discover how worship is a whole-life expression. In what ways do you worship God intentionally?

True and proper worship comes from sincere, humble, and yielded hearts – hearts that have come to the realization that apart from God there is no hope. He deserves all of our heart's affection, all of our mind's capacity, all of our multi-faceted emotions, all of our sacrifice, and all of our physical gusto!

What do the verses teach us about worshipping God? Grab a pen and write your answers in your notebook under the title "As Unto the Lord."

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. Romans 12:1-2 NIV

What does Romans 12:1-2 teach us about worshipping God?

This passage became very personal to me one day. I was in my late 20's with three daughters when the Holy Spirit tugged at my spirit and revealed that I was to offer *my* body—more specifically, my uterus—as a living sacrifice. This absolutely terrified me. I was very content with three children. Craig and I continually said, "We are so done." I was sure that if I surrendered this, we would end up having a bazillion children. But never mind what I wanted or what we wanted. I knew I needed to trust God with my whole life. I remember thinking, "If I can trust God with my

salvation, I surely can trust Him with this." Fast-forwarding to the present day and our six amazing children, I am absolutely thrilled that I gave God my whole body in worship to Him.

Our bodies and minds belong to God. We are not our own. We have been purchased by God through Christ and are called to His kingdom mission. My children all have kingdom purposes that are outside of my temporary plans for them. They are The LORD's just as I am the LORD's.

As wholehearted worshipers, we should be driven by the Holy Spirit's desire to fulfill God's greatest commandments to love God and love people.

Look up Matthew 25:31-46. This passage is a powerful example of how we worship (love) God, and simultaneously, love others. Read through this passage and be sure to take notes on the truths that God uniquely reveals to your heart about worship.

Next, read Colossians 3:1-17. There we discover many more ways we can offer ourselves as living sacrifices. Continue to write down your insights.

Lastly, let's read Romans 14:5-11. Here Paul gives us some clear instructions about worship. Write these instructions down and prayerfully consider the insights you've gained about worship through these verses.

What do these verses have to do with worshiping God with your whole life in whatever you do?

ABIDE BY THE SPIRIT

I can't think of a better way for you to respond to what you have just studied than to go before God in prayer. I've written a simple prayer to help get started.

Father, I want to know you so fully and intimately that my heart overflows with worship to you. May everything I do be for You, bringing You glory, and furthering your Kingdom purposes. Reveal to me any part of my life that is not a reflection of worship to You.

May the Holy Spirit lead you as you continue in prayer.

REACH OUT

Who can you serve and demonstrate consistent love to in the name of Jesus? The best place to start is with the people under your roof, in your neighborhood and in your church home. Take an inventory. Who do you know in need? What can you do to help them? When you serve and bless them, whatever you do, do it for and through the love of Christ Jesus.



Day Four || *Worship in Spirit and in Truth*

SEEK GOD

"More spiritual progress can be made in one short moment of speechless silence in the awesome presence of God than in years of mere study." A.W. Tozer

Take some time right now to be still in God's presence. Listen for His whispers.

OBTAIN TRUTH

What do you think of when you hear the words, "a place of worship?" I typically think of a church building. What does this place of worship look like to you? What kind of atmosphere should it have? Are there stained glass windows, a choir, and soft organ music playing? Maybe you see a contemporary worship band and a gathering of energetic, smiling people ready to praise God singing the newest Christian worship tunes. What if you lived in a village near the jungles in Papua New Guinea or in the plains of Sudan, Africa? What would worship look like then? Which way of worship is right and pleasing to God?

Read Hebrews 12:18-29 and Exodus 19:16-23, then answer the following questions. What was the physical mountain of Mount Sinai like when God's presence descended upon it?

How is the heavenly Mount Zion described in Hebrews 12?

We see a stark contrast between the physical mountain where the law was given to Moses before the awesome presence of God in the Old Testament and the heavenly Mount Zion where Christ-followers worship God along with a multitude of angels. This contrast reveals that our worship of Christ Jesus should be from hearts full of deep reverence as well as joyful gratitude because we realize that our gracious and loving God is also completely holy and a consuming fire.

Our worship of God should be a space and place of freedom! Because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we no longer have to go to a specific physical place to experience the presence of God. Now we can worship *anywhere*! The Holy Spirit lives in us and we have become His holy temple! We are the place of worship! We are the living stones of Christ's living Church!

... you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.
1 Peter 2:5 NIV

Now let's go to John chapter 4 and read verses 1-30, paying careful attention to verses 20-24. We know that God is spirit, so it's not too difficult to understand the need to worship Him in spirit. In Christ,

our spirits are reborn and reconciled to God. We connect with Him through our spirits. But what does it mean to worship God in truth? Let's look at the words of Jesus in this passage. What idea of worshipping "in truth" is do you think is implied here?

True worshipers worship from their spirits and from the basis of the truth. We know what or who we worship, and that is Jesus, The Truth! The Word of God is truth; all the Scripture teaches about God and His ways and the commands and instructions about holy living are truth. So when we worship God "in truth," it is worship derived from what we *know* as the one and only truth—a truth which we live out and proclaim. Our spirits know and worship the truth. We declare, shout, and sing the truth. We live the truth. This is worshipping God in spirit and in truth!

Now read Revelation 4. As you do, I pray this chapter will reveal a deeper level of perspective in your worship of God.

ABIDE BY THE SPIRIT

The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. Psalm 145:18 NIV

In light of this verse, do you think you have ever prayed to God with requests that were not in line with His truth? Have you ever thought God was your personal celestial Santa Claus who should give you what you want? Sometimes we come to God with anger and pain because we don't fully understand who He really is or His ways. Our attitude towards God and ourselves should be like as the following verse describes.

Let God be true, and every human being a liar. Romans 3:4 NIV

I agree with John Piper when he said, "Any form of worship outside of 'spirit and truth' is false worship." God is not interested in where we worship, or in our cultural style of worship as long as it comes from the love and purity of our spirit that embraces the truth.

Where and how do you like to worship God?

Here some ways I worship God:

- I pray throughout the day. This is my way of staying connected to God's heart.
- I take my anxious thoughts captive and trust God.
- I play worship music in my car or at home.
- Besides reading the Bible, I often listen to an audio of the Bible through the YouVersion Bible App. God's Word renews my mind and heart.
- During our singing at Life.Church, I love to worship God in prayer and shout out faith statements that I'm believing for the Church around the world, for our church body, or for an individual.
- Throughout my daily activities, I worship God by really trying to keep His Word by walking in love and following His voice.

Have you limited your worship to a certain place or activity? Maybe it's time to live a lifestyle as a true worshipper. Don't just set aside a time and place for worship and then go through the rest of your day or week without it. Realize that your whole life can and should be an expression of true "spirit and truth" worship.

REACH OUT

All Christians need to be built up in their faith and encouraged in the truth. Whose faith can you build up in the truth today? In what ways can you do this? Could you share a Scripture or a worship song? Would you be willing to call or even visit them just to pray with them? Do they need some assistance or a meal? Ask God to show you what to do and tune in to listen for His guidance. These are all spiritual acts of worship.

As you worship this week, I recommend the songs *The Love Inside* by Laura Hackett Park, *Still Believe* by Kim Walker-Smith, and *Good Good Father* by Chris Tomlin.



Day Five || Worship in Your Warfare

SEEK GOD

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever. 1 Chronicles 16:34 NIV

Declare this verse. Sing it. Share your love and gratitude to your awesome and good Father!

OBTAIN TRUTH

Prepare to be amazed today by battles fought and won through the power of God! Let's start by looking up 2 Chronicles 20:1-25. As you read this passage, take notes of all the significant acts of worship God's people engaged in.

What do you think was the most critical decision Jehoshaphat made? Why was the decision so important? There is no right or wrong answer here. Just write down your opinion.

I believe that Judah's success started when Jehoshaphat immediately looked to God for help and called for all of Judah to fast and pray. And I love how humble and dependent King Jehoshaphat was when he prayed!

For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.
2 Chronicles 20:12 NIV

King Jehoshaphat understood that we don't have to have all the right answers and might to win our battles. We just need to call and rely on the One who does. Look again at verse 22. When did the victory for Jehoshaphat's people actually begin to take place?

Isn't it incredible? The songs of praise from God's people brought down the vast army of men. How profoundly simplistic! To their enemy, and maybe even to some of them, it must have seemed so weak and weird. Imagine for a moment that you were there that day. What would you have learned about God?

The Bible tells of another amazing event that occurred during the ministry of Paul and Silas. You can read this story for yourself in Acts 16:16-30. As you do, write down your own simple descriptions of what took place.

Paul and Silas were committed to time with God in prayer. Wherever they went, they preached the good news of Jesus and displayed His healing power to those in need. They even patiently put up with the stalking of a fortune-teller girl for days before casting out the demon that had possessed her. All those things should have earned them great favor from God to protect them from all trouble, right? But soon after the demon was expelled, the girl's owners and the people of the town were stirred up to conspire against them. They were lied about, stripped down, brutally beaten, flogged, and imprisoned.

I truly cannot imagine the level of pain that Silas and Paul must have been in. I fall apart when I stub my toe. And what about their emotional state? We can tell from this passage that they remained spiritually positive. Still, this could not have been easy for them emotionally.

Clearly, Paul and Silas were spiritually very strong. Their strength was in their unwavering faith in the God they knew firsthand. Sure, they were chained and locked up in a cold, hard, prison cell. But the Holy Spirit was still with them, strengthening them. And so they prayed. But that wasn't all they did! Around midnight, they began to sing songs of worship, not because they felt good or because they enjoyed the horrible circumstances they were in, but because their source of joy, peace, and love remained. The Living Water was bubbling up in their soul!

Did they know their songs of praise would release them from their chains? I doubt that they consciously used their singing as a warfare tactic. Sure, it is possible. They did know the Old Testament stories. But I tend to think that their singing was just out of the overflow of their hearts. What do you think?

If you'd like to continue studying examples of warfare fought with worship, read Joshua 6:1-21.

ABIDE BY THE SPIRIT

Have you ever fought a problem with praise? It can feel very awkward and unnatural at first. When facing life's problems, praising God is usually the exact opposite of how you really feel, right? When I have done this, it always begins through a tear-streaked face, a voice cracking with sorrow, and a heart bursting with pain. But as I push through that pain and keep praising my Daddy, something powerful *always* happens. Supernatural strength, wisdom, peace, and joy takes over my overwhelmed soul—even though nothing concerning my current problem has seemed to change yet! But as I praise God in my pain, I am reminded that He is always at work, and His work will be for my good.

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.
Romans 8:28 NIV

What might happen if you and I followed the example of Jehoshaphat, Paul and Silas?

In his book, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* William Law explains the power of singing songs of private praise. In it he writes, "Just as singing is a natural effect of joy in the heart so it has also a natural power of rendering the heart joyful... There is nothing that so clears a way for your prayers, nothing that so disperses dullness of heart, nothing that so purifies the soul from poor and little passions, nothing that so opens heaven, or carries

your heart so near it, as these songs of praise. They create a sense and delight in God, they awaken holy desires, they teach you how to ask, and they prevail with God to give. They kindle a holy flame, they turn your heart into an altar, your prayers into incense, and carry them as a sweet-smelling savor to the throne of grace."

But what if you don't feel like praising? What if we'd rather give someone a piece of our mind? How many times have you opened your mouth too quickly in order to defend yourself or someone else? We usually don't even allow God to battle for us! What are we thinking? There would be much less drama in our friendships, our families, and in our world if we would learn to continually trust, pray, and sing praises to the Father. When we do this, we are giving Him the room to fight our battles. What situation or relationship in your life looks more like a warzone or prison instead of a place of peace, love, and freedom?

Are you ready to fight these battles through the Word of God, prayer, and *praise*? Remember, the Holy Spirit is always with you, in every circumstance, no matter how dark, chaotic, or hopeless things may seem. Allow Him to strengthen you and fill you with songs of deliverance. It's time to get your praise on and worship God. He is waiting to prove to you just how mighty He is!

REACH OUT

We all know people who are in desperate need of support in their battles. Who will you commit to war in prayer and praise for? Encourage them today by letting them know that you are standing with them.



NOTES

