



RIVER
C H U R C H

Habitual

Small Group Lessons

By: Louie Marsh & Brie McRae

**Habitual
Small Group Lesson #1: A Practical Guide to Prayer
By: Brie McRae**

Opening Prayer

Opening Question

- 1) How would you describe your attitude towards prayer?

Action Step

Leave at least 10 minutes at the end of your group discussion. Allow people to pray individually for that time before ending your group with prayer requests and group prayer. In your packet, you will see different types of prayer methods and models that you can try if you find yourself struggling with prayer.

Lesson Video & Fill-in-the-Blanks

- 1) Prayer is a _____ with God

- 2) There is no _____ formula for prayer

- 3) Our _____ regarding prayer is important

- 4) We do not pray to gain other people's _____

And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. Matthew 6:5

- 5) We pray so that we can _____ God

But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. Matthew 6:7

- 6) The model of prayer presented to us in Matthew 6 has the following aspects:

- _____ God
Our Father in heaven, hallowed by your name
- **Submitting to God's** _____
Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

- **Presenting our _____ to God**
Give us this day our daily bread

- **Asking for _____ and help to _____ others**
And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

- **Expressing our need for spiritual and physical _____**
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Discussion Questions

- 1) How would you describe your prayer life? Is it a spiritual discipline that you are familiar with or one that you are more distant from?
- 2) What is one practical way that you can grow your prayer life?
- 3) Look back at the things that are modeled in the Lord's Prayer...
 - a. Which one do you normally focus on the most? Why?
 - b. Which one do you tend to place less importance on? Why?
- 4) How have you seen prayer make a difference in your life?
- 5) Have you been tempted to use prayer as a means to gain the approval of others? If so, how?
- 6) Does knowing that there is no magic formula to prayer change how you approach prayer?

Close in Prayer

Prayer Methods

- 1) ACTS Model
 - a. Adoration: Take time to praise God for who He is and what He has done for you.
 - b. Confession: Confess any sins that you have committed against God or against others. Come to Him with honesty and ask for forgiveness.
 - c. Thanksgiving: Thank God for what He has done in your life and how you have seen Him answer previous prayers.
 - d. Supplication: Present God with your requests and the requests of others in your life.
- 2) PRAY Model
 - a. Pause: Prepare yourself for prayer. Focus on God and, if possible, move to a place where you are going to be able to focus on prayer.
 - b. Rejoice: Praise God for who He is! Focus on one or two attributes of God. Thank God for what He has blessed you with.
 - c. Ask: Present God with your requests and the requests of others in your life.
 - d. Yield: Surrender yourself and your requests to God. Take time to realize that God is all-powerful and all-knowing. Submit to His plans for your life.
- 3) Intercessory Prayer
 - a. Write down a list of prayer requests that you heard at church or that your small groups shared. Pray through that list, item by item. Present the peoples' needs and requests to God.
- 4) Writing Your Prayer
 - a. Take a blank page and write out your prayer in a letter format to God. This might help keep you on track and seeing your prayer written out might help you keep record of your prayers.

Habitual
Small Group Lesson #2: A Practical Guide to Meditation
By: Louie Marsh

Opening Prayer

Opening Question

- 1) When you hear the word meditate or meditation, what thoughts and images spring into your mind? People with crossed legs and wearing diapers gazing into a candle? Do you think most people associate meditation with Christianity? Why or why not?

Lesson Video & Fill-in-the-Blanks

Why Should I Meditate?

- 1) I should meditate on God's Word so that I will _____

*This Book of Law shall not depart from your mouth, but **you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it.** For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go. Joshua 1:8-9*

- 2) I should meditate on God's Word so that I will _____

*Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seats of scoffers; but **his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.** Psalm 1:1-2*

- 3) I should meditate on God's Word so that I'll be _____, not just smart

*Oh how I love your law! **It is my meditation all the day.** Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for **your testimonies are my meditation.** I understand more than the aged, for I keep your precepts. I hold back my feet from every evil way, in order to keep your word. I do not turn aside from your rules, for you have taught me. How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way. Psalm 119:97-104*

- Smart = having great knowledge of the _____ of Scripture

- Wise = having _____ it to my life so I can help others obey it in theirs
- Remember – the goal isn’t Bible knowledge – it’s to be

Seven Steps to Biblical Meditation

- 1) **Get** _____ (see lesson four in two weeks!)
And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone. Matthew 14:23

- 2) **Get** _____!
The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight. Proverbs 4:7

- 3) _____
Casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. 1 Peter 5:7

- 4) **Get** _____
Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us. Hebrews 12:1

- 5) **Go** _____
And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding. Colossians 1:9

- 6) **Different** _____
I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Romans 12:1

- 7) **Make** _____
All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Discussion Questions

- 1) How large is the difference between Eastern meditation that we see in Yoga, Hinduism, Buddhism, etc., and Biblical meditation? How important is this difference?
- 2) How do we know whether or not our mediation on Scripture is yielding fruit or not?
- 3) What's the difference between being smart and being wise? How wise do you think you are?
- 4) Which one of the seven steps to Biblical meditation is the toughest for you to do – and why?
- 5) How hard is it for you to unplug from the Net? Do you think you are better or worse at doing that than most people you know?

Close in Prayer

**Habitual
Small Group Lesson #3: A Practical Guide to Fasting
By: Brie McRae**

Opening Prayer

Opening Question

- 1) Have you ever fasted before? What was that experience like?

Action Step

Make a plan to fast for at least one meal, or habit, that takes up most of your time before your next group meeting. Share with the group your plan and what you hope to gain from fasting.

Lesson Video & Fill-in-the-Blanks

- 1) Fasting often begins with an _____ look at your

_____ life

- 2) Fasting is _____ you and God

And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. Matthew 6:16-18

- 3) Fasting is _____ to food and meals

- 4) The purpose of fasting is to _____ your relationship with God in

some way

- 5) Whatever you are fasting from, _____ that with time spent with

Jesus

- 6) Start _____ and don't get _____

Discussion Questions

- 1) Have you thought of fasting as a spiritual discipline before? How is fasting typically portrayed in our culture?
- 2) In both prayer and fasting, Jesus warns us against doing these things for societal gain and approval. Why do you think this warning is important? Have you sought societal approval when participating in a spiritual discipline?
- 3) Which do you think would be more beneficial for you: fasting from a meal or fasting from a habit (tv, phone, reading)? Why?
- 4) Have you started a spiritual discipline before and then gave up? What could make it different this time?

Close in Prayer

Habitual
Small Group Lesson #4: A Practical Guide to Solitude
By: Louie Marsh

Opening Prayer

Opening Question

- 1) When you think of spiritual habits, does solitude spring to mind? How is being alone an advantage to us spiritually? How does the thought of spending significant time alone with God make you feel?

Lesson Video & Fill-in-the-Blanks

Solitude in Scripture

- *And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone. Matthew 14:23*
- *Now it happened that as he was praying alone, the disciples were with him. And he asked them, "Who do the crowds say that I am?" Luke 9:18*
- *In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God. Luke 6:12*
- *But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray. Luke 5:16*

Advantages to Solitude

- 1) You can be _____ and express yourself freely
 - **cry, shout, mope, sing, etc**
 - **whatever, it's just me and God!**

And David danced before the LORD with all his might. And David was wearing a linen ephod. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting and with the sound of the horn. As the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal the daughter of Saul looked out of the window and saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD, and she despised him in her heart. 2 Samuel 6:14-16

Remember to find a place that isn't so interesting that it distracts you from God

- 2) What if I can't get alone?
 - **Do the best I can with what I've got**

- **Be creative**
- **Remember Susanna Wesley**

Susanna Wesley was the mother of John and Charles Wesley. John founded the Methodist church. Charles preached and wrote many hymns. She married a man who couldn't manage money. They disagreed on everything from money to politics. They had **19 children. All except ten** died in infancy. Sam (her husband) left her to raise the children alone for long periods of time.

One of their children was crippled. Another couldn't talk until he was nearly six years old. Susanna herself was desperately sick most of her life. There was no money for food or anything. Debt plagued them.

Sam was once thrown into debtor's prison because their debt was so high. Twice the homes they lived in were burned to the ground, losing everything they owned. It was assumed that their church members did it because they were so mad at what Sam preached in the pulpit! Someone slit their cow's udders so they wouldn't have milk, killed their dog, and burned their flax field!

When Susanna was young, she promised the Lord that for every hour she spent in entertainment, she would give to Him in prayer and in the Word. She had no time for entertainment or long hours in prayer. She worked the gardens, milked the cow, schooled the children and managed the entire house herself. So, she decided to instead give the Lord two hours a day in prayer.

She struggled to find a secret place to get alone with God. So, she advised her children that when they saw her with her apron over her head, that meant she was in prayer and couldn't be disturbed. She was devoted to her walk with Christ, praying for her children and knowledge in the Word no matter how hard life was.

Practicing Solitude – What Do I Do?

**1) Begin by just _____, slowing down
for a while**

2) _____ your time with God.

- **Pray about what's on your heart or mind**
- **Thank God for who He is, what He's done in my life, etc**

- **Read a short passage of Scripture and ask God to help you apply it to your heart**
- **Meditate on that passage and on whatever problems or struggles you are currently having**
- **Whatever you choose to do – do it as to God – keep your focus on Him!**

3) Don't be _____ of silence

- *But the LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him.*
Habakkuk 2:20

- *Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him,* Genesis 17:3

- *When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last,"* Revelation 1:17

4) _____ on the goal!

I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet. Revelation 1:9-10

5) Be sure to _____ in your calendar

O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you and watch. Psalm 5:3

Small Group Exercise

Create as much space as possible in the room you are in. Then, sit in absolute silence for 60 seconds. Regather and talk about how you felt being silent for that long. Did you enjoy it? Did it feel really awkward?

Discussion Questions

- 1) Do you like being alone? How does it make you feel?
- 2) Is it difficult for you to find the time and space to practice solitude? What can you do to build some space in your life to be alone with God?
- 3) Imagine you're alone with God right now. What do you want to do next? Cry out to God in prayer; weep before Him; dance in (or out) your undies before Him; yell and vent your anger or frustration at Him? Which of those actions make you feel uncomfortable – and why?

- 4) How do you think practicing solitude would impact your life and spiritual growth? Do you see it as an important tool in your spiritual toolbox?
- 5) If the perfect Son of God felt the need to be alone on a regular basis, what does that say about my need to do the same?

Close in Prayer

Habitual
Small Group Lesson #5: A Practical Guide to Worship
By: Brie McRae

Opening Prayer

Opening Question

- 1) When you hear the word ‘worship’ what immediately comes to your mind? Do you think that accurately depicts what worship truly is?

Action Step

Scan the QR code in your packet. This will take you to a worship playlist where Brie has put together some of her favorite worship songs. Choose one or two to listen to as a small group. You can also take this playlist home and listen to the full thing.



Lesson Video and Fill-in-the-Blank

- 1) **Worship is not always _____ you**
- 2) **Worship is not _____ you**
- 3) **Worship _____ about expressing our devotion to God**
- 4) **Worship extends _____ Sunday mornings and Wednesday nights**
- 5) **We should live a _____ of worship**
I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Romans 12:1
- 6) **We should _____ our hearts for worship**
- 7) **Examine your _____**
 - *Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 2 Corinthians 9:7*
 - *If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this*

commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother. 1
John 4:20-21

8) Do your _____ and _____ line up?

Discussion Questions

- 1) Have you fallen into the mindset that worship is always for you? How do you respond when you might not get anything out of a church service or small group lesson?
- 2) Why is it important for us to have clarity on what worship is?
- 3) How do you live a lifestyle of worship?
- 4) What can you do to move from seeing worship as something we do on Sunday mornings to seeing it as the way that we should live our lives?
- 5) Do you find yourself struggling with any of the attitudes Brie talked about (sense of obligation; anger or hatred towards others; pride; going through the motions)? What can you do to combat that attitude?

Close in Prayer

Habitual
Small Group Lesson #6: A Practical Guide to Fellowship
By: Louie Marsh

Opening Prayer

Opening Question

- 1) Fellowship is a word that is seldom heard or used anymore, outside of J.R.R Tolkien's books that is. So we want to discuss what it is and why it's important. To start out – just how important is fellowship in your life? Would you like more fellowship, less fellowship, or to keep things just about the same?

Video Lesson & Fill-in-the-Blank

- 1) Fellowship is _____ than many think

Some of the uses of *koinonia* in the New Testament – how true fellowship is described:

- _____
*God is faithful, by whom you were called into the **fellowship of his Son**, Jesus Christ our Lord. 1 Corinthians 1:9*

- **The** _____
*I thank God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of **your partnership in the gospel** from the first day until now. Philippians 1:3-5*

- **The** _____
*So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, **any participation in the Spirit**, any affection and sympathy. Philippians 2:1*

- **The** _____ **of Jesus**
*That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may **share his sufferings**, becoming like him in his death. Philippians 3:10*

- **Fellowship with God the** _____ **&** _____ **&**
_____ **as well**
*That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have **fellowship** with us: and indeed our **fellowship** is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. 1 John 1:3*

2) _____ is the essence of true fellowship

*By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your **contribution** for them and for all others. 2 Corinthians 9:13*

3) **Christian fellowship** _____ **the distinction that divide us**

- *For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. Galatians 3:27-28*

- *Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. Colossians 3:11*

4) **Christian koinonia** is what being _____ is all about

- *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are **in Christ** Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. Romans 8:1-2*

- *But now **in Christ** Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. Ephesians 2:13*

- *Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints **in Christ** Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons. Philippians 1:1*

If I am in Christ and you are in Christ, then we are _____ regardless of how different we may be in other ways!

5) **Nothing replaces the** _____ **in Christian fellowship**

I have much to write to you, but I do not want to use paper and ink. Instead, I hope to visit you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete. 1 John 1:12

Discussion Questions

- 1) You can actually learn a lot about what true fellowship is from Tolkien. Look at how *The Fellowship* was focused on the same thing and worked towards the same goal. DO you feel that sense of being united in purpose when you come to River Church, small group, or Bible study?
- 2) How deep is your fellowship with Christ at River Church? What do you need to do differently to deepen and broaden your experience of fellowship here?
- 3) It's easy to understand why people would want to have fellowship with Christ and even His people. But fellowship (sharing in) His sufferings? Are you kidding? Who would want that, and why?

- 4) We live in a divided nation today, yet Scripture says Jesus erases all those divisions and unites us as one in Christ. On a practical level how does that work? How do you love people who look different than you or who believe things you don't, or who advocate for causes you oppose?
- 5) What does being "in Christ" imply? Does it seem to indicate that being in Him is far different from being in the world? We talk about having a "relationship" with Christ a lot. Is that what this is?

Close in Prayer