

In Jesus Steps

Disciples for Life

Unit 2: Christian Leadership

How to positively influence the attitudes and actions of others for Jesus Christ.

Lesson 12

Praying Leader

Day One

Diamond in the Rough

A praying leader is like an exquisite, brilliant, living diamond. When a diamond is cut with precision and polished with care, it catches light and glitters. However, when we look at the gemstone, we do not usually think of the slow and systematic process that went into making it sparkle. This is true of the praying leader who shines forth the light of Christ. We appreciate the presence of these holy believers, but we do not usually think of the deliberate and consistent time they spend in prayer.

The process of making a diamond into a beautiful stone begins with the master diamond cutter choosing a diamond in the rough. A diamond in the rough refers to an uncut or rough diamond. It is not polished but looks like a clear or crystal rock. The expression itself has come to mean something that has a rough exterior that hides something valuable on the inside.

After the diamond is chosen, the master diamond cutter saws or cleaves it into separate pieces. He separates the diamond into one or more pieces to work it into separate gemstones. Similarly, God separates us from the world so that we no longer belong to it (John 15:19, 17:15–18).

God, the Master Diamond Cutter, begins the process of making an individual into a praying leader by looking for those “diamonds in the rough.” That is, those hearts with a rough exterior but with something precious inside. People do have stony hearts that resemble a diamond in its extreme hardness. In fact, our hearts are so impenetrable (cannot enter or pierce) that it is *only* through the Master’s hand that we can be transformed. Just like a laser¹ saws into a diamond, the hardest of natural materials, so the Spirit can saw into the human heart.

Unlike the diamond, the human heart must respond to the Master. At the Master’s touch, the heart’s positive response will be prayer. In prayer, we tell God we believe and trust Jesus as our Savior and Lord. It is with this first prayer of salvation that we are on our way to becoming a valuable, brilliant, and living diamond.

1. What thoughts come to your mind when you think of yourself as a *valuable, brilliant, and living diamond*?

¹ A laser is a device that generates an intense beam of light (or other electromagnetic radiation) by stimulated emission of photons. Lasers are used in drilling and cutting, alignment and guidance, and in surgery.

You are of great worth to God, and He desires to be in fellowship with you (1 Corinthians 1:9). God loves you and has called you to shine in this world (Philippians 2:15). Prayer is not only the means of companionship with God, but also the means by which you and I are able to live lives worthy of the Lord and produce good fruit (Colossians 1:9–10).

Read Mark 1:35 and Luke 5:16 and answer questions 2–4:

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. Mark 1:35

But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed. Luke 5:16

2. When did Jesus, our *Leadership Model*, pray?

3. What kind of places did Jesus go to when He prayed?

4. Why is this a good pattern for you?

Read John 11:41–42 and answer questions 5–8:

So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴²I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.” John 11:41–42

5. Did Jesus pray aloud in the presence of other people (v. 42)? Yes No (Underline One)

6. Considering that Jesus prayed alone and with others, what does this tell you about your own prayer life?

7. Jesus said, “Father, I _____ you that you have _____ me” (v. 41).

8. Jesus prayed, “I knew that you _____ hear me” (v. 42).

Jesus showed us that prayer is our means to connect and relate to God while alone and while with others. Jesus was confident God heard His prayers and He always heard them. God wants us to be confident that our prayers are heard and will always be heard in Christ Jesus.

Confidence brings answers and shows that we trust in God’s faithfulness and honor (1 John 5:14). Leaders must pray in faith and believe God is listening and will always act perfectly and powerfully. Faithless prayers will not be answered (James 1:6–8).

9. Why do you think God wants *you* to be confident in praying to Him (See Mark 11:23–24)?

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answers to #2–9 with your discipleship team.

Virginia, Diamond in the Rough

Virginia was born deaf and has lived her life in silence. When she was fourteen she went on a mission trip with her parents to Brazil. For the first time she saw broken people crying out to the Lord and hands raised in worship. God used this experience to fan into flame Virginia's passion for Christ and her desire to serve Him.

Even though Virginia had a desire to serve God, she felt helpless and alone. Communication with others was difficult because her speech was often unintelligible to those who did not know her well. She did not know how she could serve God in her deafness.

Virginia explains, "I felt as if I was rejected by life. I was in tears, battling strong lies and thoughts tormenting me from the evil one. I believed that I needed ears to hear the voice of God."²

"Virginia spent two long, difficult years struggling with her disability, feeling worthless. She resented the hardships of being deaf; like most girls, she wanted to fit in with her friends and classmates. Even more, she wanted to be a missionary, and she couldn't see how this was possible.

"Finally, one night as she lay in bed feeling torn apart and broken, she saw a vision of the Lord. She fell to her knees as Jesus stood before her, and an amazing thing happened: she heard Him speak. '*Virginia,*' He said, '*I am willing to be yours.*'

"Her depression lifted instantly. She could hear Jesus! She might not be able to use her physical ears to hear the sounds of the world around her, but her spirit could still hear. God spoke directly to Virginia's heart, intimately connecting her to Himself."³

A few months later, Virginia went outside on a warm summer day to seek God. She sat in the soft, sweet grass and prayed to understand God's calling for her life. Again, she felt God speaking to her spirit: "*Virginia, you are My chosen servant. I call you. I will go before you. Come with Me to the corners of the earth.*"⁴

Although she still had some doubts about her ability, she trusted Jesus and after graduating from high school, she went to the inner city of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where she was used by God in crime and drug-filled neighborhoods. "Although the people she served could not understand what she said, Virginia connected powerfully with everyone she met. Heroin addicts

² St. James, Rebecca, *Sister Freak*, Warner Faith, New York, 2005, pp 206–207.

³ *Ibid.*, 207.

⁴ *Ibid.*

and homeless people found unconditional love in Virginia’s eyes and hands. They found comfort as Virginia prayed for them.”⁵

Others were encouraged to follow Christ as they watched this young deaf girl reaching out to others. At twenty-two she began to lead high school students on short term mission trips to other countries. She mentored and taught with a passion that changed lives.

Today Virginia serves in a closed country as a full-time missionary with her husband. A closed country is one that does not allow or limits Christian ministry and the gospel to be preached. Of course, no country is closed to God and His people who pray and call upon His name.⁶

Virginia is a praying leader. She is a brilliant and living diamond in God’s family. She shines forth the light of Christ while sharing His love with others. God took her hearing impairment and used it to help and encourage others. God can use whatever impairments we have to change the world. Listen and talk to God each day and night and you will also reflect the light of God.

10. What impressed you about Virginia’s story?

11. Share anything you will change or do in your life because of Virginia’s story.

Action Step

12. Meditate on and memorize 1 John 5:14–15. Answer question 13.

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. ¹⁵And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him. 1 John 5:14–15

13. How can *you* be confident of praying and knowing God’s will?

Accountability: Be prepared to share your memory verse #12 and answers to #10–11, 13 with your discipleship team.

—End Day One—

⁵ Ibid., 208.

⁶ Ibid., 206–210.

Day Two

Bruting the Heart

In *Day One*, we learned that after a diamond is chosen, the master diamond cutter saws or cleaves it into separate pieces. After sawing, the diamond enters a process call bruting whereby different shapes are produced. For the round brilliant diamond, it means that it is crudely shaped into a circular form. This is done by rubbing the stone against another diamond on a high-speed lathe⁷ specially designed for that purpose. The bruter takes the rough form with its sharp edges and less than perfect shape and prepares it for its final design.⁸

God is the *Bruter* in our prayer life. He takes the misshapen heart and begins changing its form. Familiar to most, the physical heart is the organ located in the center of the body that keeps the blood circulating throughout the human frame.

However, we are referring to another meaning of the word *heart*. In the Bible, our English word *heart* also means the center of the human spirit. This is the origin or source of our emotions, thoughts, motivations, and actions. This is the *spiritual heart* that receives and circulates Christ's light throughout our spiritual frame.

God wants us to have pure, spiritual hearts for prayer. He desires us to have holy emotions, thoughts, motivations, and actions. It may be easier when we are alone with God meditating on His Word and away from other people to be saintly. However, it gets more difficult when we come into contact with others who ignore, insult, mistreat, or even physically harm us. These people—strangers or relatives, friends or enemies—can be compared to the other diamonds that rub against us on that high-speed lathe.

God may even use the very ones we are leading to scrape against us! God will use all the irritants in our lives, both people and circumstances, to refine and redirect our way of thinking. We will be changing and getting into better shape each day. Now the lifeless stone that we are using for our illustration will feel no pain on that lathe, but you and I, the *living* diamonds most certainly will.

As Jesus' leaders and disciples, we are called to a new and higher standard in our relationships. We are called to love our enemies and pray for those who mistreat us. So, we cannot ignore those who irritate us or even harm us. No, we are to do good to those who hate us and bless those who curse us.

I do not know about you, but this is challenging for me. In fact, I would say impossible in my own strength. But, nothing is impossible with God, so we cry out to Him for help. God will enable us to do all that He commands and requires of us.

God will also remind us of our *Model Leader* who accepted abuse, persecution, torture, and death from, and for His adversaries. People hurled insults at Jesus and were happy to see Him in

⁷ Lathe is a machine for holding and turning pieces of wood or metal against a tool that will shape them.

⁸ Hensley, Robert, "Insider Secrets for Diamond Shopper" from *Diamond Helpers*, **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.** (6/5/2007).

agony. Jesus, on the other hand, *prayed for His enemies*, “*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing*” (Luke 23:34).

Jesus always practiced what He preached. Let us pray that we always practice what we preach or advocate. Jesus has the same character as His Father and so should we. We belong to God’s family and as His children we should display His godly character which includes loving and praying for our enemies

Read Luke 6:27–28 and answer question 14–17:

“But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.” Luke 6:27–28 (Mistreat includes insulting treatment, abuse, disparage, and treat in an insolent or spiteful manner.)

14. Jesus commands us to: “Love your _____, do _____ to those who _____ you, _____ those who _____ you, _____ for those who mistreat you.”

15. Why do you think Jesus commands us to pray for those who mistreat us (see Luke 6:35–36)?

16. Share a time when someone hurt or insulted you, and yet you still prayed for that person?

17. Prayerfully consider anyone in your life who is mistreating you now or has mistreated you in the past. Pray for that person or persons this week and share about the experience.

As the saying goes, “There are two sides to every story.” We may have contributed to an interaction or situation that caused us pain as well as the other person. Sadly, we *are* capable of hurting or mistreating others. Sometimes we may not have intended to hurt someone or may not even be aware of it. We should examine our hearts to see what our part is in any situation.

18. Share a time when you mistreated another person, including how you felt and what you did about it?

19. Pray and ask God to reveal any person you’ve hurt in any way and what God would like you to do about it.

20. Share what God revealed in #19 and how the Holy Spirit led you.

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answers to #15–20 with your discipleship team.

Most of the time we only see with self-centered eyes. We focus on our pain and troubles rather than on the other side. The other people involved may not be Christians and in desperate need of God. Satan may have brainwashed and perverted their minds to the extent they are in spiritual bondage and need rescuing. It is easy to lose sight of their need in the face of excruciating torture and severe persecution. Only through Jesus and His Spirit can we endure and overcome.

Even when the people involved are all Christians it is still possible to lose sight of what God is doing through the situation. Most likely God is working things out for both sides to increase in holiness and be refined into the image of His Son (Romans 8:28–29). We need to remind ourselves of this fact regularly and pray that we do not dwell on our pain and the unwarranted attack against us. Pray that the recording in our mind of what happened stops playing in our minds and is replaced with praise and worship of how God is working things out for His glory.

To God’s glory there *are* Christians around the world who are experiencing even more than hate and mistreatment—they are being persecuted for His name’s sake. They are suffering physical abuse and injury. It’s estimated that 1 in 8 Christians worldwide are persecuted for their faith.⁹

- “Over 340 million Christians living in places where they experience high levels of persecution and discrimination
- 4,761 Christians killed for their faith
- 4,488 churches and other Christian buildings attacked
- 4,277 believers detained without trial, arrested, sentenced or imprisoned”¹⁰

These men, women, and children are following in Jesus’s steps. Jesus accepted persecution and death so that our sins may be forgiven, and we are restored to God. Jesus is perfect just like His Father. He loved His enemies and prayed for those who persecuted Him (Luke 23:34; Ephesians 5:1–2).

Read Matthew 5:44–45 and answer question 21–24:

But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. Matthew 5:44–45 (Persecute is to treat in a manner designed to injure, grieve, or cause distress or problems.)

21. Jesus now commands His disciples to pray for those who _____ you (v. 44).

22. What is the reason Jesus commands us to pray for those who persecute us (v. 45)?

23. How difficult is it for *you* to pray for those who mistreat or persecute you?

Impossible Difficult Easy (Underline One)

⁹ Open Doors < <https://www.opendoorsusa.org/2021-world-watch-list-report/>>(Accessed 1/14/2022)

¹⁰ Open Doors< <https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/>>(Accessed 1/14/2022)

24. If there is anyone in your life right now that you do not want to pray for, please explain and seek prayer from your discipleship team.

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answers to #21–24 with your discipleship team. Also pray for each other during your prayer time to succeed at *praying* for those who mistreat or persecute you so that you may be like God the Father and God the Son.

Praying for those who mistreat and persecute us does not mean we should stay in a dangerous or toxic situation if it is possible to escape. Moses escaped to Midian when Pharaoh threatened to kill him (Exodus 2:15), David hid himself when Saul was trying to kill him (1 Samuel 9:1–2), and Paul escaped over a wall in a basket when the Jews were conspiring to kill him (Acts 9:23–25). Each person’s situation is unique, and we should pray for God’s direction and protection.

As a praying leader or disciple, you may have questions. *How long or how many times should I pray for my enemies? What do I pray for those who mistreat and persecute me?* The length or duration of time to pray for others depends on your situation. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in both the time and the subject of prayers. The following prayer suggestions may be helpful.

How to Pray for Those who Mistreat and Persecute You

1. Pray to see from God’s perspective (viewpoint) and the other person’s regarding the situation (Isaiah 55:8–9; Matthew 7:12). Pray against a self-centered and selfish heart and response.
2. If the people involved are not believers, pray for their repentance and salvation (2 Timothy 2:25; 2 Peter 3:9). If believers, pray that they recognize their offense and repent. Pray also to recognize any part you may have had in the situation. Confess and repent your own offense.
3. Forgive them and pray for God to forgive them (Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60). Trust God.
4. Pray for God’s will and blessing in the offender’s life; pray for God’s will and blessing in your life as well (Jeremiah 29:11; Hebrews 13:21). Is it God’s will for you to remain in your current situation, or seek escape? Pray for their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs—similar to how you pray for yourself and your family (Philippians 4:19). Trust God.
5. Pray for reconciliation, resolution, understanding, and peace (Matthew 5:24, Luke 17:3; Hebrews 12:14). Then, follow Matthew 18:15–17 for reconciling with believers. For nonbelievers seek God daily for your strength, attitude, and response. Trust God.
6. As in all circumstances, pray for God’s name to be glorified in your mistreatment and persecution (Psalm 115:1). Pray all would see Christ in you and change their lives accordingly (Colossians 1:27). Trust God.
7. Lastly, pray for your own discipline and self-control (Proverbs 25:28; 2 Timothy 1:7)

Most of us recognize how difficult it is to pray for those who hurt us. So, we must be on constant guard to keep our emotions in check. Understand that the mind must be disciplined just like the body. When you were a baby, you had no control over your hands, feet, or even bodily functions. You really could not do anything for yourself. The idea of being in that stage again would be terrifying for any adult. (For those who are actually in this situation, due to accident or illness, they must learn total trust in God for *everything*.)

The mind has to be disciplined just as rigorously as the body so that holy, pure, and righteous thoughts are natural. God cares about the way we think, and our thoughts will be judged (Matthew 5:27–30; Acts 8:22). Our aim or goal is to always think the way Christ thinks.

When we think like Christ, we will also pray like Christ. *For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of* (Matthew 12:34b). When our hearts are full of holy, pure, and righteous thoughts, we will pray in this same manner. Our words or thoughts will mirror Christ's.

Proverbs 4:23 warns us: *Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.* That means our actions, deeds, thoughts, and prayers all come from our hearts. With a right heart, we not only do what is right, we will also pray the right prayers for ourselves and others.

Read 2 Corinthians 10:5 and answer questions 25–27:

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. 2 Corinthians 10:5

25. Is it possible to take captive every thought and make it obedient to Christ? Y N (Underline One)

26. Why are obedient thoughts to Christ important to *your* prayer life?

27. What are some practical ways that *you* can train and discipline yourself to take every thought captive so that your prayers are pure and acceptable to God?

Watching what goes into your mind is a good practical way to start disciplining your mind. Read Christian books, listen to godly music, and watch movies that honor Christ. If you are having a problem with a particular subject such as praying for your enemies or unforgiveness, search the Scriptures and immerse your mind with what the Bible says about those subjects. The concordance (word directory to find Scripture passages) and subject index in the back of study Bibles are helpful as well as internet searches.

Do not read, listen to, or watch anything that perpetuates wrong thinking. This is war against the powers of darkness who want to trick and manipulate you into having their agenda on your mind instead of God's. Walk away from harmful gossip, talk, or joking. Remember you are the leader

and not the follower. If you are ridiculed or persecuted, be joyful for great is your reward in heaven (Matthew 5:10–12).

Pray and ask for prayer. A leader is humble and will ask for prayer from other devoted Christians in their struggle for righteousness. You need back-up. Bear in mind that you are not fighting this battle alone.

“Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.
1 Corinthians 2:16

28. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 2:16 that we have the _____ of Christ.

Emotionally, I was going through a hard time because of someone close to me. This person had hurt me deeply. I was feeling rejected, unloved, and certainly unappreciated. It was difficult not to nurse my “self-righteous” and “poor-me” attitude. In the midst of my personal storm, I *was* seeking God; I did not like, nor did I want to have these negative feelings. But it was so hard!!

Then, I read 1 Corinthians 2:16 and was reminded, *I have the mind of Christ*. So, I started reciting this truth to myself each day. *I have the mind of Christ. I have the mind of Christ. I have the mind of Christ.*

A few days later, unkind thoughts of that person crept into my mind. However, my “mind of Christ” overrode my wrong thinking with: *“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”* Luke 23:34 (I was not given the chapter and verse, but I am listing it here for your reference.) I was shocked at the forcefulness of the words in my mind. We certainly do have the mind of Christ, and we need to discipline ourselves to listen and respond.

Action Step

29. Ask God to bring to your mind someone who has mistreated you. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you Christian love for him or her and to lead you in praying for this person daily for one week. At the end of the week, please answer the following question:

What did the Lord reveal to you during the week about this person or situation?

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answers to #29 with your discipleship team.

—End Day Two—

Day Three

Faceting the Heart in Prayer

After the bruting where the diamond has been roughly shaped into its round form, the next stage is faceting. A round diamond usually has 58 facets or planes. This long and delicate process grinds each flat plane onto the diamond's surface. As with each stage in the diamond process, this step takes a lot of skill and patience.

The word *facet* was originally used in 1625 to describe the planes on the diamond. It is derived from the French word *facette*, which means "little face." When you look closely at a brilliant stone, you can see all the different faces or planes reflecting the light from within. In fact, that is why the 58 facets were designed. This design has proven successful in refracting¹¹ and reflecting the most light that falls upon the diamond and then back to the viewer.

God is faceting living stones so that they will also be successful in refracting and reflecting His light. There are many facets to a leader's prayer life such as prayer and fasting (Luke 2:37), prayers of praise and thanksgiving (Acts 13:2), intercession for healing (James 5:14–15), miracles (Matthew 17:20), casting out demons (Mark 9:29), provision (Philippians 4:6), mercy (Hebrews 4:16), revival (2 Chronicles 7:14), and others.

The first step in the faceting process is to grind the large facet at the top of the diamond. We might liken this to the time we spend alone with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Our personal and prayer relationship with God is foremost. The other facets of our prayer lives and our leadership assignments will flow naturally out of our quiet times with God.

Read Deuteronomy 4:29 and answer questions 30–31:

But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you seek him with all your heart and with all your soul. Deuteronomy 4:29

30. Moses tells the Israelites that if you seek the _____ your God, you will find Him if you seek Him with all your _____ and with all your _____.

31. As a Christian leader, how are *you* seeking the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul?

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answers to #31 with your discipleship team.

¹¹ "Refraction is the bending of light (it also happens with sound, water, and other waves) as it passes from one transparent substance into another. This bending by refraction makes it possible for us to have lenses, magnifying glasses, prisms, and rainbows. Even our eyes depend upon this bending of light. Without refraction, we wouldn't be able to focus light onto our retina." Science Learning Hub, *Refraction of Light* <<https://www.sciencelearn.org.nz/resources/49-refraction-of-light>>(Accessed 1/17/2022).

One of the ways we seek God with all our hearts and souls is to sit at His feet or enter into His presence when we rise in the morning. We begin to look for Him in our first waking moments. God is on our minds and in our hearts. We ask the Holy Spirit to guide our prayers (Romans 8:26) so our communication with God is pleasing and brings us closer to Him in relationship. This is also an excellent time for God to give us assignments that result in effective service.

Read Deuteronomy 4:7 and answer questions 32–33:

What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to him? Deuteronomy 4:7 (Moses is speaking to the Israelites.)

32. Outside of the LORD our God, can anyone answer prayers? Yes No (Underline One)

33. What will cause God to come near to nations and people today when we pray (See John 14:6–7)?

34. Read Matthew 7:23. Do you think it likely that Jesus will tell believers who are *sincerely* seeking Him in prayer each day, “I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers?” Yes No (Underline One) Explain your answer:

Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’ Matthew 7:23

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answers to #34 with your discipleship team.

Although the Holy Scriptures are an integral (essential, fundamental) part of prayer and knowing God, He can work in other ways if the Bible is not available.

“For decades, a well-documented phenomenon has been occurring in the Muslim world—men and women who, without knowledge of the gospel, or contact among Christians in their community, have experienced dreams and visions of Jesus Christ. The reports of these supernatural occurrences often come from “closed countries” where there is no preaching of the good news and where converting to Christianity can invoke the death sentence. But these are more than just dreams. Setting them apart is the intense reality of the experience and the surrender of one’s heart and mind to Christ in the wake of the dream. A common denominator appears to be that the dreams come to those who are seeking—as best they can—to know and please God.”¹²

For example, there is the “story of Khosrow, who, as a teenager in Iran, despaired of life itself. That is, until he experienced a vision of Jesus Christ. In the vision, Christ extended his hand toward Khosrow, inviting him to take hold and promising him that

¹² Lausanne World Pulse Archives, *More Than Dreams: Muslims Coming to Christ Through Dreams and Visions*, Category: Perspectives, Issue: 01–2007< <https://lausanneworldpulse.com/perspectives-php/595/01-2007>>(Accessed 1/17/2022).

his ‘life would change forever.’ Khosrow took Jesus’ hand and, as he describes it, “waves of electricity flowed through my body over and over again. I wept for the first time since I was a child and joy filled my heart.

“Dini also came to faith in Christ as a teenager in her native Indonesia. Feeling let down by family, friends, and society and drifting into rebellion, Dini nonetheless yearned to know God and please him. On the night of Lailatur Qodar, when Muslims around the world make individualized prayers to Allah, Dini experienced a vision of Jesus Christ, who appeared before her and told her to follow him. Dini was hesitant. As a Muslim, she realized that following Christ would make her a Christian. But she overcame her fear and committed her life to Christ that same night. Peace filled her heart, even as persecution began.”¹³

For believers who do have access to a Bible, we should read and meditate on it daily. We should also help others get access to God’s Word. For example, there was a group of believers in a closed country where the Bible was not allowed. The leader of the group got a hold of one Bible and proceeded to tear out the pages so that each person would have some of God’s Word. They would then exchange the pages with each other.

If you are in a closed country right now, memorize the bible verses in this study, and give it to others. Pray for God to provide bibles for each member of your community of believers and to flood your country with His word.

The Bible is God’s revelation of Himself to us. That is, He reveals and shows Himself to us through His Word. Knowing Scripture keeps us from making up things about God. It also helps us to pray as we come to know God and understand His ways. As a disciple and leader, you must pray to God in the way He desires.

For example, God is sovereign (Psalm 71:16; Isaiah 10:10). Knowing God is in control of everything makes a big difference in how we make requests to Him. If we did not know that God has the power and the control of all circumstances in our lives, we would lack confidence in God’s ability to deliver or make good on His promises. He wants us to trust in His ability when we pray. God is able! He is in a position to do anything and everything He desires.

Recall the verse you memorized in day one of this lesson: *This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.*¹⁵ *And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.*

1 John 5:14–15

35. According to 1 John 5:14, if we ask anything according to His _____ He hears us.

Human will is the mental faculty by which a person decides upon and controls their own actions or those of others. God’s will is similar. He has determined a plan or a purpose for everything in all creation. So, when we pray according to what He wants and approves, He brings it to pass. Christian leaders seek God day and night to know Him and get their lives in line with His plan.

¹³ Ibid.

Within Scripture is God's determined plan and purpose for creation. All people are part of creation and therefore, the plan for our lives are within the pages of Scripture. Our leadership, although unique in certain aspects, will always fall within the boundaries God has outlined in His Word and is centered on Christ. Therefore, it is beneficial to pray the Scriptures back to God.

Acton Step: Praying Scripture

Evan Howard, a former pastor and professor, writes in his book *Praying the Scriptures*, "To pray the Scriptures is to order one's time of prayer around a particular text in the Bible." We can take a topic from the text, personalize verses, or pray the scripture word for word. The following is an example of praying Scripture word for word.

What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. Philippians 3:8–9

Almighty God, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I willingly lose all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law or legalism, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from You O God on the basis faith. Amen.

36. Choose a Bible text, citing chapter and verse, and write a prayer using the concept of praying Scripture.

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answers to #36 with your discipleship team.

Laser Prayers: In addition to praying Scripture and in-depth prayers, we can and should pray all kinds of prayers, anytime and anywhere. We might call these prayers—laser prayers. Even in the middle of a conversation with someone, we could silently ask God for help us with the right words or fill us with His wisdom. Our prayer is sent to God just like a laser beam in speed and intensity. God, in turn, can direct a laser beam answer with perfect precision and accuracy. God never misses the mark and always answers and accomplishes that which He desires.

—End Day Three—

Day Four

Polishing the Heart

After the diamond is faceted, it is polished. The verb polish simply means to make smooth or shiny, usually by rubbing. It also means to improve, complete, or perfect in some way.

“Polish influences how well light is able to pass through a diamond and is very important to a diamond's brilliance. It is necessary to select a diamond that is laboratory certified with good, very good, or excellent polish. Diamonds that have poor to extremely poor polish are less brilliant because they have microscopic polish lines that blur the surface of the diamond. These polish lines reduce the amount of light that enters or exits a diamond.”¹⁴

The Holy Spirit is the Christian leader's Polisher. The more highly polished you are, the more like Christ you will shine and the more powerful your prayers. Would you like to be a praying leader, well-polished, flawless, and brilliant in power? Then welcome the *Holy Polisher* into your heart to start working on absolutely every aspect of your life. This includes attitudes, thoughts, dreams, family, work, recreation, finances, and all relationships.

37. Have you surrendered every aspect of your life to the Holy Spirit? Y N (Underline One)

38. Is there anything you are trying to control and have not given to God? Y N (Underline One)

39. Pray and ask God to loosen your grip on everything in your life except Him.

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answers to #37–38 and pray #39 with your discipleship team.

Read Ephesians 6:18 and answer questions 40–41:

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. Ephesians 6:18 (See Jude 1:20–21)

40. How are we to pray on all occasions and with all kinds of prayers and requests (v. 18a)?

41. By keeping in mind we are to pray in the Spirit on all occasions, what are we to do (v. 18b)?

We are to pray *in* the Holy Spirit with all kinds of prayers and requests. *In* is a common word that we use all the time. It is also a simple word, with just two letters.

In is a part of speech called a preposition. The preposition establishes a relationship such as space, time, accompaniment (addition), cause, or manner between its object and another word in the sentence. The Holy Spirit is the object in Ephesians 6:18 and Jude 1:20; prayer is the other

¹⁴ Sun Jewelry website:<<http://www.sunjewelry.com/diamond-education-polish.html>>(Accessed 7/17/2007)

word (verb) in each of these sentences or verses. Therefore, there is a relationship between the Spirit and our prayers. The Spirit moves in accordance with our prayers and at the same time affects them.

Besides being a preposition, *in* has specific meanings. First, it is defined as within the limits, bounds, or area of such, as *in the living room* or *in the water*. Praying *in the Spirit* means we are totally immersed in the Spirit. He surrounds us and envelopes us.

42. When you pray, are you aware of the Spirit's presence encompassing or surrounding you? Y
N (Underline One)

When we are in the living room or in the water, we are conscious of our surroundings. We know where we are! In the same way, we need to be sensitive, responsive, and alert to the Spirit's presence. We need to be intentional in looking for the manifest (evident, clear) presence of God. We *must* look past our physical surroundings and be aware of the Holy Spirit.

I remember a time when I was still serving the Lord at *CLI Prison Alliance*. During our staff prayer time, we prayed that we would have an opportunity to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. We pray this regularly through our *In Jesus Steps* discipleship teams.

About an hour after our staff prayer time, I went to the bank and decided to stop by a "dollar store" to pick up a couple of birthday cards. As I was checking out, I noticed a couple in front of me. The Holy Spirit gave me a keen interest in them.

I watched their interactions with each other and the salesclerk. They were not sure they had enough money to pay for their purchases, but as it turned out they did. I also noted their appearance and clothing. When it was my turn to pay I was glad that I had a dollar and change to pay for my small purchase so I would not have to break the twenty-dollar bill in my wallet.

Walking through the parking lot I felt the Holy Spirit nudge me to give the twenty dollars to the couple I had noticed in the store. They were in their car by this time. I sat in my car and prayed, "Lord, I think by the time I get the money out of my purse they will have driven off. If this is really You Holy Spirit, please keep this couple in their car until I can make it over there."

I took out the twenty dollars, two gospel tracts and looked over to see if the car was still there. It was. Then I walked over to the car and knocked on the window. The man looked a little startled but opened his door. I asked him if he had heard of Jesus. He said he had. I said, "Jesus wanted you to have dinner and He asked me to give you this." I handed him the twenty dollars and the two tracts. He hesitated and I said, "It is free, no strings attached."

After he took it, I left and prepared to leave. I had backed my car out of the parking space, and it was now my time to be startled. The woman was standing by my car. She had tears in her eyes and told me the man was touched by the gesture and so was she. She had been abused for many years and did not think God loved or cared for her. She did feel God's love for her today through my words and actions. That is, the Holy Spirit's words and actions through me.

I got out of my car, and we talked for a while. The Spirit moved me to share the gospel and Evangeline prayed and trusted Jesus as her Lord and Savior. And yes, that is her name: *Evangeline*. It is of Greek origin and means “good news” or “messenger of good news.”

It was such a blessing to be prompted by the Holy Spirit who enabled me to see the fruit of my obedience! However, I do not *always* feel His presence and promptings. There will be times when Christians do not sense the Spirit’s presence, but we should still seek His advice and counsel. No matter our feelings, we must always step forward in faith and action.

However, if there seems to be a break in our relationship with God, we should prayerfully consider sin in our lives. Our sin might be grieving or quenching the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 5:19). Therefore, He is more than willing to convict us of our wrongdoing and help us confess and receive forgiveness in the blood of Christ.

There will be times in a believer’s life when God’s presence is not as evident as at other times. The point is to continue to seek God and have faith that He is with you. He desires to be known and acknowledged so you may bring Him glory (John 16:14). Whether or not you are able to perceive the Holy Spirit, be assured He is working in your life for God’s eternal purposes.

Another definition of *in* is having the activity, occupation, or function of, such as a *life in politics* or *the officer in command*. Your activity, occupation and function of praying is guided and influenced by the Holy Spirit. For example, if one chooses a job in politics, that person will function within the government system. Christians pray according to God’s system, which is the Spirit’s system. Questions and answers about God’s system are found in the Bible.

Praying in the Spirit is critical. So, let us look at another meaning of our little friend *in*. This word also means with the characteristic, attribute, or property of. The Christian leader’s prayers should be characteristic of God’s heart. The Father, Jesus, and the Spirit are one. Therefore, pray in a way that would be typical of Jesus’ prayers. Search the Gospels and study how Jesus prayed and what was important to Him.

Lastly, *in* indicates doing something with an aim or purpose in mind. When you pray in the Spirit, you have God’s aim or purpose in mind. In other words, your prayers are God-centered.

The Spirit dwells in believers (John 14:16–17) and intercedes (asks on one’s behalf) in accordance with God’s will (Romans 8:26–27.) God and the Spirit are one. So when God searches your heart He will find the Spirit pleading on your behalf with His aim and purpose in mind.

43. Pray *in* the Spirit and ask God for an opportunity to serve Jesus in love today. Share how the Spirit led You:

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answer to #43 with your discipleship team.

—End Day Four—

Day Five

Cleaning the Heart

The final stage in preparing the diamond involves thoroughly cleaning it in acids and examining it to see whether it meets the quality standards of the manufacturer.¹⁵ Let us talk about the cleaning aspect of the diamond process. It is the final stage of the diamond cutting process but in actuality, it is really an ongoing process in the life of the diamond. For example, diamond jewelry will attract dust, dirt, and grime. Even the natural oils from a person's body will adhere to the diamond and dull its shine. Soap and water are not strong enough to remove the oils, so the diamond needs to be cleaned with a stronger solution such as ammonia and water.

Now just as the diamond is cleansed and examined, you, the *living* diamond must go through a similar process. Ask the Holy Spirit, the Examiner, to reveal any sin in your life. The blood of Jesus acts like acid and dissolves all the dirt and grime that your flesh may attract. In *Christian Leadership, Lesson 8, The Name*, you received a *Confession Guide* that will be helpful in fully examining your life for sin. You do not want dirt and grime (sin) dulling your shine.

Additionally, sin can have an adverse effect on our prayers. God may not answer our prayers because of unconfessed sin (Psalm 66:18; Isaiah 59:2; James 4:3; 1 Peter 3:12). Recall we talked about laser prayers earlier. Sometimes we might ask God simply and directly: *Lord, is there anything hindering my prayers?* (To hinder is to delay or obstruct.)

On the positive side, there are two areas praying leaders and disciples can develop to keep their brilliant Christ-like shine: We need to be *strong* and *courageous*, and we need to *listen*.

I. Be Strong and Courageous

Definition: The word *strong* does mean having physical strength, but it also means being firm and emotionally resilient (flexible). It means that one has the necessary emotional qualities to deal with difficult situations including pain, sorrow, loss, and risk. A *strong* person is firm and urgent about matters of importance.

Definition: *Courage* is the ability to face danger, difficulty, uncertainty, or pain without being overcome by fear or being sidetracked from a chosen course of action. *Courageous* people are bold, alert, secure, and able to prove themselves in various situations.

Read Joshua 1:9 and answer questions 44–46:

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9

Definition: A *command* is an order given by someone in authority. It is not a suggestion but explicit instruction to do something. The one in authority expects the *command* to be followed.

¹⁵ Wikipedia, online encyclopedia, Diamond cutting, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diamond_cutting**Error!**
Hyperlink reference not valid. 1/17/2022).

44. What command does God give Joshua?

45. What is the reason God gives to His leader Joshua for being strong and courageous?

46. What meaning does God's command to Joshua have for *you* as a Christian leader?

Definition: *Humble* means being modest and unassuming in attitude and behavior. It also means being respectful towards other people. A Christian definition of *humility* is a personal quality in which one shows dependence on God and respect for other people.

Did you know that a person can be *strong* and *humble* at the same time? Being humble means seeking God and turning away from personal agendas and prestige. Joshua's assignment was to take the Israelites across the Jordan River and into the land God had promised them through their forefathers (Genesis 12:1–3, 7). The Israelites would have to physically battle other tribes and nations for the Promised Land. This was God's plan and Joshua was to be *strong* and *courageous* because he was leading in God's will.

Just as Joshua was leading the Israelites into the Promised Land, our assignment is to lead others into the promised land of heaven (2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1). We too will be engaged in battles—spiritual battles. We leaders are to take back strongholds from the devil. These are areas that Satan and his followers dominate or occupy. They may be individual strongholds like an addiction, or group strongholds like gangs, or industry strongholds like pornography.

47. Name a stronghold of Satan that you are fighting against and how the battle is going?

Satan may be a powerful foe, but he is no match for God. We are not to be afraid or fearful because God will be with us. He anoints, sends, equips, and empowers. Through prayer, God's orders and strength will flow to and through us. We receive God's command and respond: *Here am I. Send me!* (Isaiah 6:8) and *I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength* (Philippians 4:13).

Remember, God does *not ask* you to be strong and courageous—He *commands* it. If you feel that you lack strength or courage, you are to *confidently* ask God. In this way you are revealing a deep respect and trust for your Sovereign Commander. He is with us at all times, and at all times we are under His control.

II. Listen

Joshua was a good listener. He listened to God and therefore he knew what he was supposed to do. In fact, he listened so intently he was able to record God's words for us in the Book of Joshua. Are you paying close attention to what God is saying to you? Listening is an art and can be developed. As in all things, God will help us hear Him and *do what He asks*.

Read Jeremiah 33:3 and answer questions 48–49:

“Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.”
Jeremiah 33:3

48. What was God encouraging Jeremiah and the Israelites to do (and believers today)?

49. When we call to God and He answers us, how should we listen?

What a great and wondrous promise! God will answer us when we pray and tell us great and unsearchable things! However, if we have a one-way conversation going on, we are going to miss a lot. It will be difficult to hear from our Commander-in-Chief if we are not in a receiving mode.

Read 1 Samuel 3:10–11 and answer questions 50–52:

The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, “Samuel! Samuel!” Then Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”¹¹ And the LORD said to Samuel: “See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears about it tingle.”

1 Samuel 3:10–11

50. What was the first thing Samuel said to God (v. 10)?

51. What did the LORD say to Samuel after he replied he was listening (v. 11)?

52. How do *you* listen to God?

Some practical ways to listen to God are by quietly reading the Bible and waiting for God to speak to you through the text. God may speak to you through other people and circumstances throughout the day. Invite God to speak to you each day and be prepared to listen. Most of us will get a clear impression that God is speaking to us, although we do not hear His audible voice.

Satan, our enemy, will be trying to disrupt our communication with God and, sometimes, we may get mixed messages. Even our own heart may work against us at times to interpret God’s message in the wrong way. We need to always pray that we hear and obey correctly.

Remember, God will not ask you to do anything against His Word. Jesus says the greatest commandment is to love your God and the second is to love your neighbor. Everything God asks us to do will be filtered through these two commandments (Matthew 22:36–40). Since we are talking about obeying God’s instructions, we should not ask for new assignments until we have obediently completed our previous ones. Immediately perform any and all duties in God’s grace.

Action Step: Meditate on Psalm 138:3 and 145:18 and answer question 53.

When I called, you answered me; you greatly emboldened me. Psalm 138:3

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

53. Seek to listen to the Lord today. What did He impress upon you?

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answer to #53 with your discipleship team.

The diamond making process in comparison to a praying leader is ending. We have a perfect product, a brilliant living diamond—a praying leader. You sparkle on earth with the light of Christ. You serve God in love and faithfulness. The LORD has a wonderful plan for your life, and He will complete it (Philippians 1:6).

God may give you a vision (image, idea, revelation) of something that He is going to do and how you will be a part of His work. It may take time to come about, so do not become discouraged. All that you do is within God's timetable. It could happen in the next second, or it may take years. Stand firm and believe.

Read Genesis 18:17–19 and answer questions 54–55:

Then the LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do? ¹⁸Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. ¹⁹For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him." Genesis 18:17–19

54. Did God tell Abraham what He was going to do (v. 17)? Y N (Underline One)

55. Was God's plan for Abraham alone or for all nations on the earth (v. 18)?

God's plan was for all the nations of the earth to be blessed through Abraham! They would have a way to know God through Christ, who would be born from Abraham's descendants. When God shares a vision with us, it will be to honor God by blessing or helping others.

56. Has God given you a vision? Y N (Underline One)

If you do not have a vision, pray and ask Jesus for a vision that glorifies God and is fruitful for the kingdom.

57. If you have a vision from God, please share it?

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answer to #57 with your discipleship team.

58. Read Hebrews 1:1–2. Is it possible to receive a vision from God of what He is going to do apart from Jesus Christ? Y N (Underline One)

In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ²but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. Hebrews 1:1–2

59. Read John 15:15. What has Jesus made known to believers?

I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. John 15:15

In waiting for your particular vision or kingdom assignment, remember that Jesus has shown us by His life how to live each day. His kingdom assignment was the restoration of humankind to God. He would die for the sins of the world in order for this God's vision to be accomplished. Still, every day He was on earth, He walked in love and purpose to honor God. We also need to live each day to the fullest in love and purpose as we wait for our personal promises or visions to be revealed and accomplished.

Remember, Jesus made disciples and commanded us to do the same. Think about who you know that might benefit from your love and leadership. Pray for the opportunity to make disciples who will in turn take on Christ's mantle (transferred role) and make disciples.

We used an example of a diamond during our study on prayer to give you a visual of how precious and brilliant you shine when you communicate and live in God's presence. Contemplate (think about) your own prayer life as a leader and pray for guidance to improve it. Pray that your heart would be revived as well as those Christians in your sphere of influence.

—End Day Five and Lesson 12—

Next—Unit 2: Christian Leadership, Lesson 13: Faith of a Leader

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