

MARK OF A DISCIPLE

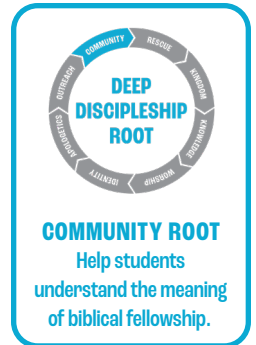
Disciples of Christ rely on God's grace (Eph. 2:8–9).

MAIN PASSAGES

MATTHEW 6:9–15

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF PASSAGE

Obviously, the Bible doesn't record every time Jesus prayed, but it does mention him praying before or during all the major points of his life. We see him pray during his baptism (Luke 3:21). When it came time to choose his twelve disciples, he spent the night in prayer (Luke 6:12). He prayed in the garden before his arrest (Luke 22:40–44). He found places and times to pray alone (Luke 5:16; 9:18) and in front of other people (Luke 9:28–29). He prayed for Peter (Luke 22:32). Jesus even prayed while hanging on the cross (Luke 23:46). Here, as he teaches his disciples how to pray, he includes the need for forgiveness. We need it from God, and we need to give it to others. Those two are connected. If we forgive others, God will forgive us, but if we intentionally withhold forgiveness from others, we shouldn't expect God to forgive us.



OPENING OPTIONS

10–15 minutes

Choose from the following options to give students opportunities to connect and have structured and unstructured fun.

I. SEMI-UNSTRUCTURED HANGOUT TIME

Based on your group's size, allow for unstructured hangout or play a game from **Deep Discipleship Games**—we recommend **This or That? (Fall Edition)**. NOTE: Free Deep Discipleship Games are already included with your Deep Discipleship Account. View the game in advance in case you need supplies or slides.

II. ARRIVAL ACTIVITY

Let it Flow

Students will stand in a circle and pass an object to each other as quickly as possible. Count how many times the object goes all the way around without being dropped. Add challenges such as passing it behind your back, or passing it while hopping on one foot. Each round gets faster and sillier, but the goal is to get the object around the circle as many times as possible without dropping it.

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- 1 object to pass (soft ball, beanbag, etc.)

Connection to Lesson

Forgiveness flowed freely from Christ to us, and it should also flow freely from us as we pass it on.

III. ICEBREAKER

You can use this icebreaker question to transition students from activity to teaching time.

If you could have a never-ending supply of any one thing, what would it be?



LARGE GROUP MESSAGE

15–20 minutes

Use the following teaching points and suggested illustrations as a starting point to build your message. Incorporate the suggested discussion questions to keep students engaged with the message.

POINT #1: Jesus taught his disciples how to pray

(Matthew 6:9–13)

As you read through the Sermon on the Mount in the book of Matthew, it can feel like a lot is packed in there. In the section we're studying today, Jesus gives his disciples an example or model to follow when they pray. Notice how Jesus orders the prayer. The first section shows us that God is the priority: he is holy and in control; it is God's will we are seeking. We then move to us: we ask for daily physical needs, for forgiveness of sin, and for protection from temptation and evil.

ILLUSTRATION: When Jesus taught his people how to pray, he gave them a pattern to follow, similar to a map. A map doesn't tell you every detail about your journey, but it shows you the right path. In the same way, this prayer "map" does not dictate every word to say, but provides a path to follow when approaching God.

- **Ask:** *What is the most challenging part of prayer for you?*
- **Ask:** *Why do you think Jesus set up his model of prayer in the way he did (God first and us last)? What might happen if we flipped the order?*

POINT #2: Forgiving others shows we know God forgives us

(Matthew 6:12–15)

Part of the prayer map Jesus gives us says, "forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (v. 12). Now this is not talking about owing money; it's about the debt we owe God because of our sin, which is death. In his mercy and grace, God forgives our debts because Jesus died in our place—even though we don't deserve it. As an overflow of the forgiveness we've received from God, we are also to forgive those who have wronged us.

After the prayer map, Jesus adds two lines about forgiveness. Verses 14–15 state that if you forgive others, God will forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will God forgive you. To be clear, we are saved by repenting of our sins and trusting in Jesus' death and resurrection. Our behavior does not make us saved. What this passage suggests is that when we truly understand what Jesus has done for us, we will forgive others. Of course, it might be difficult to forgive someone who has wronged us, but if you flat-out refuses to forgive others, hold grudges, and build up bitterness toward that person, that's a sign you may not understand or have accepted the forgiveness God has offered to you.

ILLUSTRATION: Imagine that you have a bowl of candy that constantly refills and overflows with candy, no matter how much you take from it. When you're asked to give candy away, you're happy to share what you have been given.

That's a picture of God's overflowing forgiveness. We can offer forgiveness to others because of all the forgiveness God gives to us!

- **Ask:** *Since God forgives us even though we don't deserve it, what does that teach us about how we should treat people who hurt us?*
- **Ask:** *When you think about being forgiven by God, what are you thankful for? How can thankfulness help you forgive others more easily?*



REFLECTION

5 minutes

Give students a chance to creatively process what they've just learned and to prepare for small group discussion.

Using the space provided on page 2 of their Student Guide, have students journal a short prayer thanking God for his forgiveness. Remind them that we forgive others from an overflow of the forgiveness we have received. Allow students time to decorate their pages if they wish to do so.

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- Page 2 of Student Guide or blank paper
- Writing utensils
- Markers

SMALL GROUPS

10–15 minutes

Divide into small groups. Small Group Leaders can guide students through the following discussion questions.

What does the Word say?

- What are the different things Jesus tells us to pray about in Matthew 6:9–13?
Praising God for being holy, seeking God's Kingdom, asking to know and follow God's will, asking God to meet our needs, asking to receive and give forgiveness, asking for protection against temptation and from evil.
- What does Jesus say we need to ask forgiveness for?
Our debts, which are the cost owed for our sins. All sin must be paid for. Thankfully, the sin of all who repent and believe in Jesus are paid for by him!

What does the Word mean?

- Why do you think Jesus wanted forgiveness to be part of our prayers?
Answers will vary, but should include that we mess up and need God's help and forgiveness. It keeps us humble.
- What is the connection between our forgiveness of others and God forgiving us?
If we've really experienced God's forgiveness, we can freely forgive others. Our debt was so large that there was no way we could've paid it on our own. So it's ridiculous to think we cannot forgive the much, much smaller offenses others commit against us. Experiencing the kind of forgiveness God gives should drive us to want others to experience it too.

What should I do now?

- What is one way you can make your prayers more like the "map" Jesus gave his disciples?
Answers will vary, but could include start by praising God first, then asking God for what we need.
- How could forgiving others change your interactions with friends, siblings, or classmates?
Answers will vary, but could include making us kinder, stopping fights more quickly, helping us be better friends, etc.



APPLICATION

5 minutes

Reinforce the lesson and challenge students to apply it to their lives.

Have students sit in a circle. Each crumpled ball of paper represents something a student has been holding on to but needs forgiveness (from God, from someone else, for someone else). Forgiveness allows students to release it and be free. Have students think about what they have been holding onto. Have students pick up paper balls to represent those things. Then, one at a time, they are to drop them into the container while saying, "I let this go."

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- Small crumpled balls of paper
- 1 small container

Application Question

How does physically letting something go remind us that God's forgiveness frees us to forgive others? What can you do this week to be quicker about offering forgiveness to others?

PRAY

Thank Jesus for giving us a "map" for talking to God. Pray that your students will understand the large debt they are forgiven of and that God truly sets them free by forgiving them. Ask God to help your students let go of things they hold against others.

NOTES

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