



# Group Session



## Volume Overview

### How do I live for God?

“Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.” (Matthew 6:33)

*As we explore how to live for God, our goal is to find out what that looks like in our everyday life. But this journey is full of questions. How do we put God first? How do we get through all the confusion and uncertainty in this world? What does God expect when it comes to giving? How can we show others we care? One way we discover the answers is through the Bible speaking to us. But we don't have to do that alone. We also learn from other believers as we live connected to them like God intended. In these sessions, we'll consider what the Bible has to say about devoting our life to God.*

#### **You Will Need**

- 20 playing cards, each with a different suit and face value combination
- Envelopes, one per team of 2–4 students
- Optional: Small prize for the winning team

#### **Getting Ready**

- Cut each card into four quarters, for a total of 80 pieces. Each piece should show a corner with the card's face value.
- Equally divide the pieces into envelopes, one for each team.
- First time leading Learn for Youth? Look here for the Facilitator Guide.

To access the Bible Engagement Project library from a computer, visit [App.BibleEngagementProject.com](http://App.BibleEngagementProject.com).

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## Engage

### Welcome

*Take this time to welcome everyone, introduce new students, learn names, and thank them for coming.*

### QUESTION

How many of you had an imaginary friend when you were younger? Do you remember their name or anything else special about them?

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## Opening Prayer

*Prayer thoughts: Thank God for everyone present today and for bringing them safely to the small group. Ask Him to use this session to engage everyone in the group. And ask for Him to illuminate His Word for each person.*

## Introduction

Today, we're going to learn about what it means to pursue God. The word *pursue* is a verb. This means that to pursue someone or something requires action on our part. So to pursue means that you are actively trying to connect with your target. In this case, our target is God. Thankfully, this isn't a one-sided relationship. We'll also see that God pursues us.

## Group Activity

### Pursuit

#### *You Will Need*

- 20 playing cards, each with a different suit and face value combination
- Envelopes, one per team of 2–4 students
- *Optional: Small prize for the winning team*

#### *Getting Ready*

- *Cut each card into four quarters, for a total of 80 pieces. Each piece should show a corner with the card's face value.*
- *Equally divide the pieces into envelopes, one for each team.*

Since we're talking about pursuing today, I've got a game to get us started. Each team gets an envelope. When I say, "Go," your team will look at the pieces of playing cards in your envelope. You'll determine which pieces you need to get to complete as many cards as possible. Don't open the envelopes until I say so.

You'll have a couple of minutes to talk together to determine how you'll pursue the pieces you need. You can trade as many or as few pieces as you wish with any other team. You can split up or work together as a team. You'll have to use your communication skills to negotiate exchanges with the other teams. The object is to put together the most cards before I tell you to stop. Any questions? (*Allow responses.*)

- *Hand each team an envelope. Remind them that they can't open it until you say to.*

Okay, open your envelope and look at your pieces. Now, come up with your strategy to pursue the needed pieces to make as many cards as you can.

- *Give the teams time to talk. When it looks like they are ready to play, start the game.*

It's time to play. Ready? Go!

- *End the game after 3–5 minutes or when a team has completed all their cards.*
- *Declare the winning team, and award a prize if you chose to give one.*

Great job, everyone! Thanks for playing.

## QUESTION

Did you find it was easy or difficult to pursue the pieces you needed?

## QUESTION

What was the hardest part of the activity? Why do you think that is?

Much like you pursued the right parts to win, God is purposefully pursuing us. He is always looking to connect with us.

## QUESTION

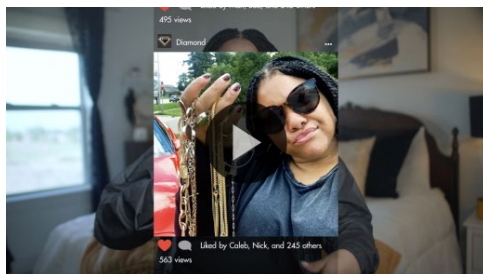
What are some ways God pursues us?

The Bible is one of the best ways He pursues us. God continues to use it to speak to us today even though the Bible was written more than two thousand years ago. First Peter 1:25 tells us His Word will be with us forever. This shows us how important His Word is to our life. We should do our best to pursue Him by reading it and remembering what He is speaking to us.

Similar to a best friend sending you a text message, God gave us His Word to share His message of forgiveness and love with us. He wants to make us whole once again, so He asks us to give up the parts that are not complete in order to make us complete.

Let's take a moment to see what we can learn from the video as we learn more about pursuing God.

## Watch



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## Consider What the Bible Says

*Ensure each student has access to a Bible, preferably the same version.*

In order to communicate with someone, a message of some sort must be involved. God has a message for us, and He wants to hear from us. But how do we do that? One important way to pursue God is through prayer. Prayer isn't meant to be something weird or mystical. It's like two

friends spending time with each other. In our Bible story today, we'll see that Jesus helped us in our pursuit of God by teaching us how to pray.

### **Set Aside Time to Be Alone with God**

Read Matthew 6:5–8.

#### **QUESTION**

Where did Jesus tell us to go when we pray?

#### **QUESTION**

Why do you think He mentioned this as a place to go to pray?

#### **QUESTION**

Do you have a regular or favorite place to go when you pray?

Don't be confused by Jesus' instruction here. His point is *not* that you shouldn't pray in this group session because it's public! Instead, think about motives. What motivates someone who prays in private? And what motivates a person who's babbling a prayer for others to hear?

#### **QUESTION**

What do you think the word babble means in verse 7? What's another word you would use to describe that?

### **Seek God with an Attitude of Humility**

Jesus wants His followers to know how important prayer is and how to pray effectively. Let's take a moment to learn from a story Jesus shared, showing the difference between two people who resemble the individuals in the Matthew 6 passage.

Read Luke 18:9–14.

#### **QUESTION**

How were these two people similar? How were they different?

#### **QUESTION**

How does their example demonstrate what Jesus taught us about the right and wrong way to pray?

Let's look more closely at the tax collector. When he prayed, he also confessed he was a sinner. Rather than focusing on those around him, he took an honest look at his own life. A key part of prayer should be looking at our life and asking God for His help.

#### **QUESTION**

Why do you think this man began with confessing his sin?

## **QUESTION**

Do you think confessing sin should be a part of everyday prayer? Why or why not?

### **Jesus Taught Us How to Pray**

Okay, now that we've seen an example of what prayer may look like, let's jump back to what Jesus taught on prayer.

Read Matthew 6:9–15.

## **QUESTION**

Jesus began with, "Our Father." What does this show us about how we should pursue God?

When we think of God as our Father, we pursue a personal relationship with Him as one who deeply cares for us. Jesus invites us to talk with God as we would a good father.

## **QUESTION**

What do you think Jesus meant when He said, "May your name be kept holy"?

## **QUESTION**

What are the requests made to God in this prayer?

## **QUESTION**

How do you think this script for prayer equips us when we pray?

While there's nothing wrong with repeating Jesus' prayer, His point was to make a template to help us know the types of things we need to pray for. When you think about Jesus' prayer, think about how you can use those pieces to create your own conversation with God.

### **Pursue God through Fasting**

Read Matthew 6:16–18.

Jesus continued teaching us on prayer by including fasting. This helps us understand an additional step we can take to pursue God. Fasting is giving up eating or other things in order to devote time to focus on God. Rather than doing the thing you're giving up, take that time to pray and pursue a deeper connection with God.

## **QUESTION**

In addition to giving up food, what other ways could we fast?

There are many options to consider for fasting. Social media, music, video games, and other forms of entertainment are just a few things we could give up to make time to pursue God.

## QUESTION

Why do you think Jesus linked prayer and fasting together in these verses?

## QUESTION

How do you think fasting could help you to pursue God?

## Did You Know?

During the days of the New Testament, fasting became a popular contemplative measure surrounding sin. In one of the popular Jewish writings of Jesus' day, a work known as *Wisdom of Solomon*, fasting is described as a way to atone and reflect on unintentional sins in one's life. This same sentiment carried over through other works such as the Dead Sea Scrolls and the writings of Josephus.

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## Reflect

### I Pursue God

Prayer and fasting are not things to be afraid of, especially since Jesus specifically directed us to do both. But remember that our goal in doing them shouldn't be to be noticed by others. There may be an occasion where you're asked to pray in public, like here or before a meal. When you do, remember that the point is connecting with God, not showing off. Jesus is not looking for flashy, long prayers. He is asking you to come to Him humbly with a sincere heart. When we pursue a relationship with Him in this way, we'll come ready to listen more than to speak.

### Listen to God

Let's pause and listen to what God might want to say to us about what we have read and shared. Answering the following questions is completely voluntary. These questions are meant to serve as a conversation between you and God. However, you may want to share your response with the group, but no one should feel obligated.

- *Pause for a few moments of silent reflection before asking students if they want to share.*

## QUESTION

What is God saying to you when it comes to learning how to pray?

## QUESTION

How can you take what you've learned today and apply it to your pursuit of God?

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## Activate

Jesus said, “Pray like this” and “when you fast.” This tells us that He expects we *will* pray and fast, not that we might. This week, put what we’ve discussed into practice. Plan on fasting a meal or activity, and spend that time praying and pursuing your Father in heaven.

### Salvation Opportunity

*Include this if you think there may be some in the group who do not have a personal relationship with Jesus.*

Perhaps you’ve never pursued a relationship with God before. This is a great day to begin that relationship with the Father who genuinely loves you and wants to talk with you. He longs to hear from you. This begins by putting your trust in Him.

**Is there anyone here that we can pray for who doesn’t have a relationship with Jesus or wants to renew their relationship with Him?**

*Take a moment to acknowledge those who respond, and thank them for their desire to make things right between themselves and God. Pray with them as we close in prayer or after the group time is over. Following group time, talk more about where they are in their walk with God and how you might be able to help.*

### Conclusion

Prayer to God doesn’t have to be loud, long, or in public. He wants to have private conversations with you that are honest and sincere. The God who created everything wants to connect with you and form a relationship. Make it a priority to set aside time for conversations in your pursuit of a better relationship with Him.

### Prayer

God, thank You for desiring to be close to us. You are never far away or disconnected from us. Thank You that as we pursue You, we know that You pursued us first a long time ago. Help us this week as we continue our journey in learning how to pray. Lord, teach us to pray. We ask this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

I look forward to seeing each of you next time as we continue our journey through God’s Word. Don’t forget the personal devotions available on the Bible Engagement app this week too.