GROWING DISCIPLES – Pray In Faith

Week 3: Responding Prayers

"Through Him [Jesus] let us continually offer up to God a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of our lips that confess His name."—Hebrews 13:15

OVERVIEW OF WEEK 3

Day 1: Confession: Responding to God's Holiness

Day 2: Praise: Responding to God's Attributes

Day 3: Worship: Responding to God's Glory

Day 4: Thanksgiving: Responding to God's Riches

Day 5: Responding Together

VERSE TO MEMORIZE

"Through Him [Jesus] let us continually offer up to God a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of our lips that confess His name" (Hebrews 13:15).

DISCIPLESHIP HELPS FOR WEEK 3

"Prayers of Confession"

"Prayers of Praise"

"Prayers of Worship"

"Prayers of Thanksgiving"

PREVIEW OF WEEK 3

This week you will—

- identify aspects God has revealed about Himself: His holiness, His attributes, His glory, and His riches;
- learn how to respond in prayer to God's aspects;
- understand that the purpose of responding prayers is to help you become the person God has planned for you to be;
- become more like God as you begin to respond to Him in confession, praise, worship, and thanksgiving;
- study in detail the four types of responding prayers.
 - Confession: responding to God's holiness
 - Praise: responding to God's attributes
 - Worship: responding to God's glory
 - Thanksgiving: responding to God's riches

Day 1: Confession: Responding to God's Holiness

Scripture-Memory Verse

"Through Him [Jesus] let us continually offer up to God a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of our lips that confess His name" (Hebrews 13:15).

God is holy. He is separate, pure, and righteous. God reveals His *holiness* because He wants you to be holy as He is holy: "It is written, 'Be holy, because I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16). Yet we cannot be holy apart from God's work in us. When God revealed Himself to persons in biblical accounts, one of the first qualities they recognized was His holiness.

(1)) 1	Гurn	in	your	Bible	and	read	<u>Isaiah</u>	<u>6:1-7</u> .	Which	of	the	following	describes	Isaiah's
res	por	nse to	Go	od's h	oliness	?									

- a. He realized his sin in the presence of God's holiness and cried out.
- b. He was proud to be in God's presence and boasted of his own goodness and righteousness.
- 2 How did God (through the seraphs) respond to Isaiah's cry?
- a. God killed Isaiah in His anger.
- b. God cleansed and forgave Isaiah in His love and mercy.

Confronted with God's holiness, Isaiah cried out because of his sin (1-a). He agreed with what God already knew to be true. Isaiah had no reason to feel pride. God responded in love and mercy by taking away Isaiah's sin. Isaiah was cleansed and forgiven (2-b). Then he could be useful to God (see Isaiah 6:8-13).

Confession

The Greek word for *confess* means *speak the same thing* or *agree with*. In one way all prayer is agreeing with God. *Confession* is agreeing with the truth. When you sin, God feels sadness or grief. You tend to feel guilty because of your sin. Satan, as "the accuser of our brothers" (Revelation 12:10), reminds you of your sin so that you will feel guilty. Your guilt may cause you to run away or hide from God, as Adam and Eve did in the garden of Eden.

God is more interested in your agreeing with Him and returning to a love relationship with Him. He prefers that you feel the grief that He feels. When you have a broken heart over your sin, you will want to do something about it: "Godly grief produces a repentance not to be regretted and leading to salvation" (2 Corinthians 7:10). Confession is agreeing with God about the real you and responding to God's holiness. Prayers of confession include seeking God's cleansing and forgiveness.

(3) What emotion does God want you to feel about your sin?

In Proverbs 28:13 and 1 John 1:9 below, underline God's promises if we confess our sins.

"The one who conceals his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them will find mercy."—Proverbs 28:13

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."—1 John 1:9

Read Hebrews 4:16 below. How should we approach God to receive His mercy and grace?

"Let us approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us at the proper time."—<u>Hebrews 4:16</u>

The New Testament uses the word forgiveness in two ways. One is the legal sense of forgiveness. Jesus' death on the cross takes care of every sin a believer ever commits: past, present, and future. His sacrifice was all-sufficient. When you sin, you know it is already forgiven from a legal standpoint.

Sin in your life, however, stops the process of becoming like God. Sin breaks your fellowship and intimacy with God. 1 John 1:9 speaks of the relational sense of forgiveness. When you respond to God's holiness by agreeing with Him about your sin, He promises to give mercy, forgiveness, and cleansing. He restores the relationship of intimacy. <u>Hebrews 4:16</u> encourages you to seek this mercy with boldness and confidence. Hebrews 10:19-22 describes the way you can enter God's presence:

Since we have boldness to enter the sanctuary through the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that He has inaugurated for us, through the curtain (that is, His flesh); and since we have a great high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed in pure water.

Because of Jesus you can enter God's presence with boldness and assurance. Develop the habit of agreeing with God so that when you sin, you are grieved and you immediately agree with Him about your sin and seek His forgiveness and restoration of fellowship.

igcap Pray, asking God to reveal sin in your life that hinders your relationship with Him. Use the sample prayer of confession below to agree with God about your sin. Be specific. Seek God's cleansing and restoration. Ask Him to make you holy, as He is holy. Also see biblical examples of confession in (Discipleship Helps).

Sample Prayer of Confession

Lord, I don't feel what You feel, but I would like to. Help me feel the divine grief that You feel about my sin. Father, what I have done is not like You. And it is not like the real me that I am becoming in You. I want to agree with You about my sin and to become more like the real me, the eternal me that You want me to become. Cleanse me and restore me. Continue Your work in me. Make me holy, as You are holy. Amen.

Day 2: Praise: Responding to God's Attributes

Today's Prayer Promise

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." ($\underline{1 \text{ John } 1:9}$)

1 According to yesterday's les	son, what is one kind of responding prayer that helps prepare
you to enter God's presence?	

One way to prepare to enter the throne room of heaven in prayer is confession. Through confession you receive cleansing and are restored to a right relationship with God. Confession is agreeing with God about the real you. You may object, "You don't know the real me. I don't want to be like the real me." Just one minute! The world tells you that you are a product of your past. If you agree with the world, that is the limit of the kind of person you will be—and that may not be very good. Christianity, however, teaches that you are a product of your future—what you are becoming. God is molding you into the image of His Son, Jesus Christ. As a Christian, you are becoming like Him. You are growing toward what you will be in eternity. Think of yourself in terms of eternity. This is the self about whom you want to agree with God in prayer.

Pause to pray. Fix in your mind an image of what Jesus is like—pure, loving, kind, holy, wise, patient, humble, and gentle. Spend time in confession. Agree with God that the person you are becoming is more like Jesus in these ways.

A second kind of responding prayer is praise. In many different ways God reveals to you what He is like. His character traits are called His attributes. Praise is lifting up the attributes of God. You tend to become like what you value or praise. By lifting up God's attributes in praise, you respond to God by becoming more like Him.

2 Read below the examples of praise. Pray them as you read. Circle or underline God's attributes.

Examples of Praise

"I will thank the LORD for His righteousness" (Psalm 7:17).

"Be exalted, LORD, in Your strength; we will sing and praise Your might" (Psalm 21:13).

"I trust in God's faithful love forever and ever. I will praise You forever for what You have done." In the presence of Your faithful people, I will put my hope in Your name, for it is good" (Psalm 52:8-9).

"My lips will glorify You because Your faithful love is better than life. So I will praise You as long as I live" (Psalm 63:3-4).

"LORD, the heavens praise Your wonders—Your faithfulness also" (Psalm 89:5).

Do you see that praise focuses on who God is or what He is like? He is righteous, most high, strong and mighty, merciful, good, loving, wonderful, and faithful. These are just a few of God's attributes.

Read the list of God's attributes below. Circle the ones that are particularly meaningful to you.

Attributes of God

- able
- almighty
- attentive
- awesome
- beautiful
- blameless
- blessed
- enthroned
- eternal
- exalted
- faithful
- first
- flawless
- forgiving
- gentle
- glorious
- good
- gracious
- healing
- holy

- invisible
- jealous
- just
- kind
- last
- light
- living
- majestic
- merciful
- mighty
- patient
- peaceful
- perfect
- protective
- pure
- radiant
- righteous
- spirit
- strong
- supreme

- sure
- tender
- true
- unique
- wise
- wonderful
- abounding in love
- all-knowing
- all-powerful
- compassionate
- ever present
- has authority
- has integrity
- indescribable
- slow to anger
- understanding
- unfailing love
- worthy of praise

4 Fill in the blanks to describe a second kind of responding prayer.					
P _	is responding to God's a				
(5) Which is the purpose of responding prayers like praise?					
0	a. I identify with God by working with Him in His kingdom.				
0	b. I identify with God by becoming like Him.				

When you pray, take time to offer praise to God. Respond to God's attributes by lifting them up. God wants you to become like Him. As you praise Him, ask Him to help you become more like Him. Allow God to remove every characteristic that is not like Him.

Praise is not just for the good times in your life. The writer of Hebrews said, "Through Him [Jesus] let us continually offer up to God a sacrifice of praise" (<u>Hebrews 13:15</u>). Praising God for who He is and for what He is like should be an attitude of your heart. You can praise Him continually.

Praise is insisting on the truth.

Paul and Silas, for example, were beaten and thrown into jail for taking a stand for Jesus Christ. Would you praise God at a time like that? Read what they did: "About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them" (Acts 16:25). Praise is insisting on the truth of God's nature regardless of the circumstances. God never changes. He is always worthy of our praise.

You will find that prayers of praise and worship are closely related. Praise focuses on His attributes. Worship focuses on the evidence of His attributes—His glory. Praise and worship prayers blend together as you pray.

Using the attributes listed in this lesson and the biblical examples in (*Discipleship Helps*), spend a few minutes praising God. You may want to use some of the biblical words for praise and worship below.

Biblical Words for Praise and Worship

praise	exalt	laud
hallelujah	rejoice	worship
alleluia	exult	adore
hosanna	ascribe	honor
magnify	bless	glorify

Day 3: Worship: Responding to God's Glory

Today's Prayer Promise

"Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it" (Psalm 81:10).

(1) List the first three kinds of responding prayers.

A third kind of responding prayer is worship. In the New Testament the Greek word for *worship* derives from root words meaning *to kiss toward*. It is an act of obeisance, homage, reverence, or love.

1. C		
2. P		
3. W		

God is not like any other. He reveals to us His beauty, brightness, and splendor—His glory—as He shows His attributes. God's actions reveal His glory. The Bible indicates that the heavens and the earth declare God's glory. Creation is the evidence of God's great creative power, His beauty, His wisdom, and much more.

You respond to God's glory through prayers of worship.

When God reveals His glory, you recognize His worth—His surpassing value. You want to fall down and worship Him, love Him, and adore Him. You long to be with Him. You respond to God's glory through prayers of worship. You worship by expressing your reverence, honor, love, and adoration for God.

Read in (*Discipleship Helps*) some prayers of worship from the Bible. Pray them as you read them. Think of God's beauty and majesty as you pray.

2 Write your own one-sentence prayer of worship.

Prayers of worship and praise go together. As you pray, you will find yourself focusing on God's attributes and praising Him. When you reflect on who God is and how He has revealed Himself, you will worship and adore Him. Worship begins with reverence for God.

Expressing Prayers of Worship

- 1. Describe your reverence for God.
- 2. Magnify the Lord.
- 3. Exalt the Lord.
- 4. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due Him.
- 5. Bless the Lord.
- 6. Glorify the Lord.

Here are some ways you can express prayers of worship.

- 1. Describe your holy reverence for God. Acknowledge and honor His presence. Do not treat God's presence casually or lightly.
- 2. Magnify the Lord. Make Him bigger. The word *magnify* indicates perspective. You cannot make God bigger than He is. However, when you decrease yourself and magnify Him, He increases. That is what Mary did when she prayed: "My soul doth magnify the Lord. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden" (<u>Luke 1:46</u>, <u>48</u>, KJV). Focus on God's greatness in comparison to who you are.
- 3. Exalt the Lord. Make Him higher. John said of Jesus, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).
- 4. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due Him. Give God proper credit for what He has done. Do not accept His glory as your own.
- 5. Bless the Lord. Speak well of Him.
- 6. Glorify the Lord. Give Him honor and glory in what you say.

Read below the sample prayers of worship. Underline those that express your feelings of worship. Now pray them to the Lord.

Sample Prayers of Worship

- I bless You, Lord.
- Honor and majesty belong to You.
- I stand in awe of Your greatness and power.
- I love You because You first loved me.
- I long to be with You, Lord. I hunger and thirst for You.
- I would rather be a doorkeeper in Your house than live as a rich person with the wicked.
- I glorify Your name because You have done great things.
- The heavens declare Your glory, Lord. I worship You in the splendor of Your holiness.
- The earth is full of Your glory, Lord. Your wisdom, knowledge, and power are beyond my understanding.
- Lord, Your splendor and majesty are glorious. I worship You.
- I long to be with You in eternity. I yearn for my redemption to be complete in Christ.
- I desire intimate fellowship with You.

Prayers of worship are responses to God's glory. Because God is spirit, you must worship God in spirit. The opposite of spirit is flesh, which can taint worship when you focus on self. Pride and arrogance before God prevent true worship. The real test in worship is this: Who is first? Who is foremost? To worship in spirit, think of God first. Seek to meet God, to see Him, to think about Him, to please Him, to fix your mind on Him. Flesh will lead you astray. Spirit will always lead you to God's supremacy. God's glory is very sacred. You dare not give His glory to another or take it for yourself, for God said:

I am Yahweh, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another (Isaiah 42:8).

God's glory, demonstrated in your life, is the greatest good that can come to you. His glory is best demonstrated when your life reflects His character. The way you live your life can demonstrate worship to God by glorifying Him. God wants you to attain maturity, to reach the measure of the stature of Christ, and to become complete in Christ. When you worship the Lord, God works in you to make you more like Him.

Close today's study by worshiping the Lord. Focus on Him as you express your reverence, awe, love, and adoration. Use the words at the end of day 2 if you wish.

Day 4: Thanksgiving: Responding to God's Riches

Today's Prayer Promise

"Every generous act and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father" (<u>James 1:17</u>).

Squeezing toothpaste onto my toothbrush one morning, I (T. W.) realized that I had never thanked God for toothpaste. Come to think of it, I had never thanked Him for my teeth. I wondered, What if my blessings tomorrow depended on my thanksgiving today? It would mean that if I did not thank God for air and lungs today, there would be no air tomorrow, and my lungs would collapse!

Few of us realize our total dependence on God. We fail to acknowledge God as the source of everything we have. He is our source for abundant living, bestowing on us material and spiritual blessings according to His grace.

1 Read today's prayer promise, <u>James 1:17</u> . Where does every generous act and perfect gift
come from?

2 Read <u>Ephesians 1:3-9</u>, <u>11</u> below and underline some spiritual blessings God has given you. We've underlined one for you.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, in Christ; *He chose us in Him*, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love He predestined us to be adopted through Jesus Christ for Himself, according to His favor and will, to the praise of His glorious grace that He favored us with in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace that He lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure that He planned in Him In Him we were also made His inheritance, predestined according to the purpose of the One who works out everything in agreement with the decision of His will."— Ephesians 1:3-9, 11

Every good gift comes from God. He has blessed you with all spiritual blessings. God has chosen and adopted you as a child, has forgiven your sins, has given you wisdom and understanding, has revealed His will, and has given you an inheritance.

When God reveals Himself by giving blessings to you, thanksgiving to Him is a natural response. Thanksgiving is not just an act or a statement. It is an attitude of gratitude. Thanksgiving indicates a relationship between God as source and you as receiver. Prayers of thanksgiving indicate one of the most important characteristics of your relationship with God. Your relationship can grow only when you properly acknowledge that you are the receiver and God is the Giver.

3 Read Ephesians 5:20 and Philippians 4:6 below. What does Paul say about gratitude?

"... giving thanks always for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."—<u>Ephesians 5:20</u>

"In everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God."—Philippians 4:6

- a. Thank God for only the good things in life.
- b. Thank God for every situation—both good and difficult.
- c. Thanksgiving is not important unless you want something.

Paul tells us always to be thankful in every situation (b). This is difficult for most of us. We think of gratitude merely as a reaction to a favor, not to unpleasant events. Properly expressing gratitude means that you thank God in all circumstances—large and small, good and bad. Response to God in gratitude should be a continuous attitude of your heart: "Give thanks in everything, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

Learning to be content in whatever state in which you find yourself helps you submit to God's sovereignty. He wants you to develop gratitude for all you have rather than to focus on what you do not have. Thanksgiving is responding to God for the blessings He has bestowed on you.

Gratitude is a response not only to what God does but also to who God is.

Gratitude is a continuous attitude about your relationship with the One who continuously gives to you, supplies your needs, and brings you joy. Gratitude is a response not only to what God does but also to who God is. Gratitude is the heart's response to God's goodness—not merely to the gifts of His goodness but also to His quality of goodness.

4 What quality of God encourages our gratitude?	

5 Turn to (*Discipleship Helps*) and read the examples of thanksgiving. In the space provided on those pages, list from Scripture some things for which you can thank God.

God's nature is good. His will and work are always good. You can thank God for even the difficult or trying experiences in life, knowing that He can work through those for your good (see Romans 8:28 below). Here are some other things for which you can thank God: spiritual riches, honor, strength, His nearness, His wonderful works, joy and gladness, freedom, daily provision, a call to be involved in His work, and wisdom.

"All things work together for the good of those who love God: those who are called according to His purpose."—Romans 8:28

6 Read the list of subjects for thanks below. List other things, persons, or experiences for which you can give thanks.

Subjects for Thanks

- Redemption, mercy, grace, forgiveness
- Meaningful spiritual experiences
- Family, relatives, friends, and church
- Provision for your needs
- Persons and events that have had spiritual impacts on your life

Pray through your lists and use the Scriptures on (*Discipleship Helps*) to express your gratitude to God for His goodness and for all He is and does for you. Be alert to ways to express your gratitude to God today.

Day 5: Responding Together

Today's Prayer Promise

"Come, let us discuss this," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are as red as crimson, they will be like wool" (<u>Isaiah 1:18</u>).

You will spend most of this week's prayer session in responding prayers. Today you will prepare for your small-group prayer session.

Preparing to Confess

In <u>Isaiah 1:18</u>, today's prayer promise, God invites you to reason together with Him about your sin. No matter how bad the sin appears, He can cleanse and forgive! Confession is a way to respond to God's holiness by agreeing with Him and turning away from your sin. As you do, God makes you holy—set apart for His work.

Sometimes sin needs to be confessed publicly (see Nehemiah 9:1-3 below). This is especially true when a group has sinned. We call this corporate sin.

"The Israelites assembled; they were fasting, wearing sackcloth, and had put dust on their heads. Those of Israelite descent separated themselves from all foreigners, and they stood and confessed their sins and the guilt of their fathers. While they stood in their places, they read from the book of the law of the LORD their God for a fourth of the day and spent another fourth of the day in confession and worship of the LORD their God."—Nehemiah 9:1-3

(1)	(1) Check sins that could be church sins or group sins rather than individual sins. Some could						
be l	be both.						
	pride		greed				
	murder		unbelief				
	robbery		unforgiveness				
	sexual immorality		shifting priority from God				
	envy		lying				
	adultery		gossip				
	bribery		bitterness				
	tolerating evil		neglecting the needy				

Nearly all of these could be sins of a church or a group. Some, however, like murder, robbery, sexual immorality, adultery, bribery, lying, and gossip, are more likely to be individual sins. James 5:16, below, commands us to confess our sins to one another. Healing and deliverance can

come when others pray for you about an area of sin, weakness, need, or fault. Take care, however, when you confess sin publicly, it is not recommended to openly confess sins to those who are not in close relationships with you or those who may be spiritually immature. It is my recommendation to follow some guidelines below when confessing sin(s) to others.

"Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The intense prayer of the righteous is very powerful."—James 5:16

Guidelines for Confession

- 1. Confession should be directed by the Holy Spirit.
- 2. Limit group confession to what is corporately (as a group) agreed on as sin.
- 3. Corporate confession is not accusation of others but agreement with God and with one another that the action confessed is sin.
- 4. Confession includes sins of omission and commission.
- 5. The purpose of confessing personal sin is to secure forgiveness or to enlist prayer support.
- 6. Any sin that has caused damage to a group should be publicly confessed.
- 7. The circle of confession should be as wide as the circle of damage done by the sin.
- 8. Confession should not be public when it would hurt other persons or lead to anger or lust.

(2) Confession also includes agreeing with God about truth. Turn to (Discipleship Helps) and read two examples of the confession of truth. Now read the list of sample prayers of the confession of truth below. In (Discipleship Helps), list other truths you can confess about God or about who you are in relation to God.

Sample Prayers of the Confession of Truth

- Sin no longer has dominion over me.
- You have dressed me in robes of Your righteousness.
- You are Lord and Master; I am Your servant.
- You are my Father; I am Your child.
- You are Sovereign; my answer is yes.
- You are Truth; You are my Way and Life.
- I walk in victory with Christ.
- Greater is He who is in me than he who is in the world.

Preparing to Praise

During your group prayer time this week, you will respond to God's attributes in praise. You might use statements like these: "I praise You, Lord, for You are. ... " "I magnify Your name because You are. ..."

3 List four or more attributes of God for which you can praise Him. If you need to, skim Psalms to find some of His attributes.				
Preparing to Worship				
4 Turn to (Prayers of Worship) in the Discipleship Helps and select an example of worship that is meaningful to you. Underline what the Scripture describes of God's glory.				

Preparing to Give Thanks

5 Review the lists on pages 41 and 99 of things for which you can express thanks to God. Draw a star beside those for which you are particularly thankful.

Life Group Participants Guide

Session 3: Responding Prayers

Openi	ng Prayer
This V	Veek's Prayer Focus: Worship
	g our session we will be using Scriptures and sample prayers as we worship the Lord and as to Him our awe, admiration, and love.
Reviev	wing Week 3 and Sharing Responses
1.	Name and describe four kinds of responding prayers. Explain how these prayers can help you become more like the Lord.
2.	What is the difference between God's attributes and His glory? Give examples of each. (Day 2)
3.	What are some ways to express prayers of worship? (Day 3)
4.	What are some ways God has blessed us with spiritual blessings? (Day 4, activity 2)
5.	Read and discuss the guidelines for the confession of sin. (Day 5)
T4	ating with the Carintones
	write below Hebrews 13:15 and quote it for your group if you have an opportunity.
2.	What verse, prayer promise, or other Scripture has been most meaningful or challenging to you this week and why?

3. What truth about prayer has been most meaningful or practical this week?

Praying Together

- 1. If you are comfortable enough with your group share any struggle you may have and need for prayerful support, confess this to your group or another prayer partner in your group, follow the guidelines on (Day 5).
- 2. Use the helps sheet in (Discipleship Helps Prayer & Praise) to praise and worship the Lord and give Him thanks. Don't rush. Enjoy this time with the Lord.
- 3. As time permits, pray for each other to grow stronger in the Lord.

Closing Prayer

Volunteer to read the following benediction from <u>Jude 24-25</u>: "To Him who is able to protect you from stumbling and to make you stand in the presence of His glory, blameless and with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power, and authority before all time, now, and forever. Amen."