

Our response to receiving God's love will naturally result in love flowing through us.

Matthew 22:37-39 NIV - 37 Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'

There are many bible passages that tell us God's will regarding what we should do (be transformed, give thanks, do good) and what not to do (avoid foolishness, abstain from immorality). But if you want a simple test to see if something is in God's will, use the verse above. Before you act, ask yourself, "Are you demonstrating love for God or your neighbor in whatever you do?" When the answer no, then you aren't doing God's will. *Try applying that test on a simple decision you might have be facing.*

3. How We Relate to God

*Matthew 6:9a NIV – 9a "This, then, is how you should pray: " 'Our Father in heaven,
Psalm 46:1 NIV - 1 God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.*

Let's return to the beginning of the Lord's prayer. God is "Our Father". Yes, we recognize he is holy, compassionate long-suffering, righteous, loving, and merciful. But we experience the love of Our Father for His children. According to Ps 46 Our Father is an ever-present help. *Does anyone in your group need help from God? Share any prayer requests and bring them before God.*

WRAP-UP

We can approach God confidently in prayer because we know Him as a Loving Father, and we know that He is holy, compassionate, gracious, long-suffering, faithful and forgiving. He is good.

MEMORY VERSE

Psalm 46:10a NLT - 10 "Be still, and know that I am God!..."

Challenge – Ask God to reveal more of Himself to you this week. Spend quiet time in Prayer reflecting on the many facets of God's nature.

Be Still and Know

Teach Us to Pray #2

INTRODUCTION

During the weeks leading up to Easter we are focusing our study on prayer. Jesus Himself gave us the outline for how to pray in what we know as the Lord's Prayer. Most of us have come to realize that Jesus wasn't interested in us merely memorizing and repeating the words of that prayer. He wanted us to understand more about God and our relationship and dependence on Him revealed through that prayer. We all can relate to the basic message, that we need food (daily bread), forgiveness (our debts) and protection (from evil). But until we experience what God is like and His relationship to us, we have little reason to trust Him and believe that He is able or willing to do this for us. So, we begin by setting aside all the things that distract us, and seek to know God- personally, experientially, authentically, to the degree we are able, and as our knowledge of God grows, we are drawn to Him through prayer.

Ice Breaker – don't skip this question!

*What comes to mind when you think of God- share a description using his names, attributes, adjectives, positions/relationships...
Your group can compile all of your answers into one list.*

Key Passage

Psalm 46:10a NLT - 10 "Be still, and know that I am God!..."

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. God's Nature

Matthew 6:9 NIV - 9 "This, then, is how you should pray: " 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,

What do we mean when we say God's name is hallowed? God's name (which represents who He is), is pure, undefiled, set apart from anything common. There is an intrinsic recognition of holiness by everyone. Let's look at the reaction of Isaiah when he saw a vision of the Lord.

Isaiah 6:3, 5 NIV - 3 And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." ... 5 "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty."

Proverbs 9:10 NIV - 10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

When we grasp who God is, we see something else clearly too: our sinfulness. God's infinite holiness casts our dirty sinfulness into stark relief. You cannot gaze upon the holiness of God without being overcome.

How does Isaiah respond in the presence of the Almighty? If our answer to the ice breaker question (pg. 1) didn't include "Holy" then we don't have a complete picture of who God is. In what ways can we express our recognition of God's holiness in our words, posture, or actions?

Thankfully God has chosen to reveal Himself to us. He does that in several ways including through His creation, His Word, and the person of Jesus. However, our understanding of who God is, is limited. The finite human mind cannot contain a complete understanding of the eternal and infinite God. But we can consider a few of God's key attributes to catch a glimpse of who God is.

Exodus 34:6-7a NIV - 6 And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, 7 maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished..."

God himself declared who He is before Moses in Exodus 34. Were all of these attributes on your list from the ice breaker? Which of these bring you the greatest comfort? Do any cause you concern or confusion?

- Compassion- to have pity, a feeling of distress through the ills of others.

God feels our pain, sympathizes, and is moved by our suffering. Even when we don't understand why we go through difficult circumstances, it doesn't mean God has abandoned us. *Has there been an instance when you felt that God was absent when you were hurting? Did you know that He felt your pain, and suffered too?*

- Gracious- God extends unmerited favor. God showers us with gifts. In fact, the bible says every good and perfect gift is from His hand. Of all His gifts, God's presence in our lives and Jesus' sacrifice are the greatest. *What are some of the many gifts God has blessed you with that you know you didn't earn?*

- Slow to Anger- Long-Suffering, not eager to punish. Sometimes people misinterpret God's holiness and justice for eagerness to punish, but that is not the case at all.

Joel 2:13 NIV - 13 Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity

God's key attributes are repeated in Joel 2:13 and include a call to return and that he relents from sending calamity. God is one integrated whole. His various attributes do not contend with one another. All of them are completed and seamless in the very nature of God. He is the perfect blend and balance of all. What then do we see as the relationship between God's abundant love and His wrath (anger)? Between His compassion and judgment (sending calamity)?

- God is Just- He doesn't leave the guilty unpunished. God may be slow to anger, but he is also a righteous judge. There are consequences to evil or sinful actions. Justice demands that the price must be paid. But God has a perfect solution by balancing justice with mercy. The penalty of our sins was mercifully placed on Jesus at Calvary. Our sins were rightly judged, and the price was paid in full. Through Christ's atonement, we are justified, so that we are no longer guilty and no longer facing God's judgment. *Pause for a moment to offer prayers of thanks for God's mercy and forgiveness that bought you eternal life.*

2. God's Will

1 John 4:8, 16 NIV - 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ... 16 And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.

How can we know God's will? First, we must know God, and we see from this verse that involves experiencing God's love for us personally. It's not enough to know about God. We must experience Him first-hand. This takes time spent in His presence. God is always ready to join us when we are still and create a space to meet with Him.

For just one minute- stop moving, stop talking, sit quietly in God's presence in silent prayer remembering how much God loves you.