

# Abiding Prayer: A Six-Week Study

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## How to Use This Study

### For Group Study:

This guide is designed to encourage honest conversation and shared discovery. Groups can meet weekly and follow this rhythm:

- Open in prayer.
- Read the Scriptures aloud together.
- Have one person read the short teaching section.
- Work through the guided questions. Allow space for each person to reflect and respond. Don't rush; choose a few questions if time is short.
- Close in prayer, possibly using the week's theme as a focus (e.g., prayers of surrender, boldness, or expectation).

Encourage group members to read the Scripture passages again on their own during the week and to continue praying in light of what they've learned.

### For Personal Study:

If you're going through this study on your own, set aside quiet time each week to read, reflect, and pray. Here's a simple approach:

- Read the Scripture passages slowly and prayerfully.
- Journal your thoughts and insights.
- Read the teaching section to deepen your understanding.
- Answer the guided questions honestly—write out your responses or pray through them.
- End your time in prayer, asking God to help you abide in Him and grow in your prayer life.

## Overview

### Week 1: Abiding In Christ

- Scripture: John 15:1–11
- Theme: Abiding in Christ as the foundation of prayer

### Week 2: Boldness in Prayer

- Scripture: Genesis 18:16-33
- Theme: Abraham's example of boldness based on faith in God's character

### Week 3: Desiring God's Will

- Scripture: Psalm 13, 42, 86
- Theme: Aligning our prayers with God's heart and purposes

### Week 4: Aligning with God's Character

- Scripture: Exodus 32:7-14
- Theme: Moses' example of aligning with God's Character to pray for his will

### Week 5: Surrendering our Will

- Scripture: Matthew 6:9–13, 26:39-42
- Theme: Letting Jesus' prayers shape our own

### Week 6: Expectant Prayer

- Scripture: James 5:13-18, 1 Kings 18: 1, 41-46
- Theme: Abiding prayer anticipates God's will, expecting Him to move

# Abiding in Christ: The Foundation of Powerful Prayer

Week 1



## Introduction

What if prayer wasn't just about asking God for things, but about drawing close enough to Him that His desires became your own? In John 15, Jesus invites us to "Abide in me." It's not just about spiritual activity or outward obedience. Abiding is about remaining in a close, continual relationship with Jesus, so close that, like a branch to a vine, we cannot live or bear fruit apart from Him.

This is the foundation of powerful prayer. We are not asking God to get on board with our plans, but we are so aligned with His heart that we begin to pray His plans into reality. When we remain in Christ by spending time in His Word and surrendering to him, our hearts are shaped by His. This is not a formula for getting what we want; it's an invitation to want what He wants.

## Passage: John 15:1-11

In John 15:7, Jesus says:

*"If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you."*

This verse should not be pulled out of context and treated like a blank check. Jesus isn't offering an easy life. He's offering a relationship. The condition for answered prayer here is clear: abiding. When we live in daily dependence on Jesus, letting His Word shape our thinking, our asking changes. Our requests begin to reflect His heart, His purposes, His priorities. The result is that we bring God glory and bear fruit that others can see (John 15:8).

Abraham, Moses, Elijah—these weren't just faithful people. They were people who knew God, walked with Him, and prayed in alignment with His character. They didn't manipulate God; they knew Him deeply and were bold enough to ask for what would bring Him glory.

You don't need to be a prophet to pray this way. You need a close walk with Jesus. This week, we'll reflect on what it means to abide—and how that changes how we pray.

## Guided Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What stands out to you most in John 15:1-11?
2. Why do you think Jesus ties answered prayer to abiding in Him and His words abiding in us?
3. Can you think of a time when your desires changed because you grew closer to God than before?
4. How would you describe your current "abiding" in Christ? What does it practically look like in your life?
5. What's one way you want to grow in abiding with Jesus this week? How might that shape your prayers?

# Boldness in Prayer: Abraham

Week 2



## Introduction

Abraham's conversation with God over Sodom is one of the boldest prayers in Scripture. He didn't shrink back; he drew near and reasoned with God. This example of prayer can be confusing if we fail to see why he was bold enough to pray for God to change his plans.

Abraham's boldness didn't come out of nowhere. It came from an abiding relationship. In James 2:23, we see that God calls Abraham His friend. And it's this relational closeness that gives Abraham the courage to ask again and again for mercy.

This is the kind of boldness that abiding produces. When we walk with God, we know His heart. And knowing His heart gives us confidence to intercede, not out of entitlement, but out of deep trust in His character.

## Passage: Genesis 18:16-33

Abraham's prayer isn't polished or poetic. It's raw, persistent, and deeply relational. He appeals to God's character: "*Will not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?*" (v. 25). He intercedes not only for his nephew Lot but for the whole city. Abraham's concern reflects the very heart of God: that none should perish (2 Peter 3:9).

Notice how Abraham keeps pressing: what about 50? 45? 40? 30? 20? 10? And each time, God responds with patience and mercy. Abraham wasn't manipulating God; he was aligning with God's desire to save. This passage reminds us that persistent, bold prayer isn't presumption, it's the privilege of those who walk closely with the Lord.

This kind of intercessory prayer is a natural outflow of abiding. When we know God and trust Him, we pray boldly, not because we are confident in ourselves, but because we are confident in Him.

## Guided Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What do you observe about Abraham's tone and approach as he talks to God in Genesis 18?
2. How does Abraham's prayer reflect both reverence and boldness?
3. When God agrees to Abraham's requests, is he changing or is rewarding Abraham for aligning with his character? What's the difference?
4. What does this passage teach you about God's character—and how does that affect the way you pray?
5. Who might God be inviting you to intercede for this week? What bold prayer would align with God's heart for them?



# Desiring God's Will: The Psalmists

Week 3



## Introduction

If you want to learn how to pray, spend time in the Psalms. These songs and prayers of ancient worshipers teach us how to bring our full selves before God—our joy, sorrow, fear, repentance, and longing. But they don't just show us how to pray; they shape what we desire as we pray.

Again and again, the psalmists ask boldly—but their requests are rooted in a longing for God's will, glory, and presence. When David prays, *"Create in me a clean heart"* (Psalm 51:10), or *"Lead me in the way everlasting"* (Psalm 139:24), he's not chasing personal gain, he's pursuing alignment with God.

David says in Psalm 37:4, *"Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart."* That's not a formula for getting what we want—it's a picture of transformation. As we delight in God, our desires begin to reflect His own. Our delight is him and he gives us more of himself.

That's the beauty of abiding. Over time, the more we walk with God, the more we want what He wants.

## Passage: Psalm 13, 42, 86

The Psalms are honest. They don't hide the pain of waiting, the confusion of suffering, or the sting of injustice. But they always circle back to trust—*"But I trust in your unfailing love..."* (Psalm 13:5). This shift from raw emotion to confident worship reveals a heart being shaped by abiding.

Even in lament (Psalm 42), the psalmists wrestle honestly but ultimately affirm God's goodness and sovereignty. This is what it means to pray according to His will: not denying our real emotions, but surrendering our deepest longings to His greater purpose.

The Psalmist seem to trust God fully, yet they ask for deeper faith. *Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name* (Psalm 86:11). When we abide in Christ, we will grow as the Holy Spirit leads us into deeper spiritual maturity.

## Guided Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. How do the Psalms show the connection between honesty and trust in prayer?
2. What stands out to you about the way David or other psalmists express their desires?
3. How does prayer like Psalm 42:3-4 help us understand commands like James 1:2-4?
4. What does it look like to ask God to grow your faith? How might that shape your desires?
5. Choose one psalm to pray this week. What does it teach you about praying in alignment with God's will?

# Aligning with God's Character: Moses

Week 4



## Introduction

Like Abraham, Moses prays for God to alter a plan for justice and God grants Moses' request. The people of Israel have sinned by worshiping a golden calf, and God is ready to bring judgment. But Moses stands in the gap, not pleading the people's innocence, but appealing to God's own character: his faithfulness, mercy, and promises. This moment is one of the clearest pictures in Scripture of intercession: going before God on behalf of others. And it shows us something powerful: our prayers aren't based on our merit or the merit of others, but on who God is. And when we ask from an abiding heart for God's character and attributes to be demonstrated, he rewards our faith. This is the power of the prayer of a righteous person.

## Passage: Exodus 32:9-14

When Moses intercedes for Israel, he does three important things:

1. He acknowledges God's power and the miraculous work he has done (v.11). He expresses his awe of God's might.
2. He appeals to God's reputation among the nations (v. 12). He reminds God of the bigger story He's writing.
3. He reminds God of His promises (v. 13). He trusts that God keeps his promises and will never break them.

Moses' boldness isn't disrespectful—it's relational. He knows God's heart. And because he abides with God, he can confidently ask for mercy. His reminders are not about God's forgetfulness, but about Moses's demonstration of faith in God's character.

Intercession isn't about convincing God to care; it's about aligning with His mercy, compassion, and purposes. When we pray for others in this way, we reflect the very heart of Christ, our great Intercessor (Hebrews 7:25).

## Guided Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. How does Moses' prayer reflect his understanding of God's character?
2. What are the differences between praying for circumstantial change and praying for God's will?
3. Why did Moses remind God of his own promises and reputation? What does that look like in our prayers?
4. In what ways can intercessory prayer help shape our hearts to be more like Jesus?
5. Is there someone in your life you might need you to "stand in the gap" this week? How will you pray for them?

# Surrendering Our Will: The Prayers of Jesus

Week 5



## Introduction

In the garden of Gethsemane, facing betrayal, abandonment, and the agony of the cross, Jesus prays, *"My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."* This is the ultimate prayer of surrender.

In this moment, we see both the deep anguish of Christ and the perfect trust He places in the Father. He brings His real emotions, real desires, and real pain to God, but He doesn't stop there. He aligns Himself with the Father's will, even when it costs Him pain.

In the Lord's Prayer, we also see surrender. Even in teaching His followers to pray, Jesus models a posture of surrender—inviting us to bring our needs before God while entrusting the outcomes to Him.

## Passage: Matthew 6:6-13 and 26:39-42

Surrender is one of the hardest parts of prayer, and one of the most essential. Jesus didn't hide His desire for another way. He asked. And still, He submitted.

This challenges the prosperity gospel narrative head-on. Jesus was perfectly aligned with God's will, and yet He still suffered. His "yes" to God didn't lead to comfort, but to crucifixion—and then to resurrection.

True abiding means trusting God's will even when it leads through suffering. It means surrendering not only our desires, but our outcomes.

We also see this surrender modeled in how Jesus taught His disciples to pray. In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus praises God, asks for God's will to be done (even though it always is!), and brings practical requests: daily provision, forgiveness, and protection. He reminds us we are forgiven—and called to forgive. He asks for protection from evil but not protection from trials or discomfort. This pattern reinforces surrender and trust in every part of our lives.

Jesus invites us to pray this way: honestly, relationally, and with complete trust in the Father's goodness.

## Guided Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What do you notice about Jesus' emotional and spiritual posture in the garden?
2. In Matthew 6, Jesus says that your Father will reward your humble prayers and that he already knows your needs before you ask. How should these truths shape your prayers?
3. How does the Lord's Prayer reflect surrender to God's will in everyday life?
4. What makes it difficult to pray, "Not my will, but Yours be done"?
5. How does praying with both honesty and surrender shape your trust in God's character?



# Expectant Prayer: Elijah

Week 6



## Introduction

When we abide in Jesus, we not only align with God's will but also gain confidence to pray boldly, knowing He hears and responds. Biblical prayers show us that expectation in prayer is not about demanding outcomes—but trusting God's power and purpose.

## Passages: James 5:13-18 1 Kings 18: 1, 41-46

Abiding in Jesus is not passive—it fuels action. Scripture invites us to pray with boldness, not based on our own righteousness, but on God's character and promises. James' letter tells us to pray for each other. And it promises that as we stand in the righteousness Jesus has given us, our prayers are as powerful as Elijah's.

Elijah didn't make it rain; he believed God when He said rain was coming and he kept praying until he saw the first cloud. James reminds us that Elijah was "a man with a nature like ours." That truth is freeing. Elijah wasn't superhuman. He simply took God at His word and remained steadfast in prayer. God told Elijah he would send rain (1 Kings 18:1). Elijah believed him and asked him to do what he said he would do. James says this is an example to us of powerful righteous prayer. Our confidence in prayer is rooted in the same foundation as Elijah's: abiding in Christ, trusting God's promises, and persisting in faith-filled intercession.

This kind of expectation doesn't mean we treat prayer like a vending machine or expect God to fulfill our every want. It means we stand in faith, watchfully waiting, because we trust God is good and His will is perfect even when His answers are slow, unexpected, or challenging.

## Guided Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Remember in week 1, Jesus said in John 15 that when we abide in him and his words abide in us, we can ask the Father for whatever we wish and it will be done for us. How should this lead us to pray with expectation?
2. In James 5, how does the example of Elijah challenge or encourage you in your own prayer life?
3. How do you see persistence and faith working together in Elijah's prayer?
4. Describe a time you prayed with expectation and God answered—whether in the way you hoped or not. What did you learn from that experience?
5. What helps you remain confident when God seems silent or slow to respond?
6. How has this study grown your understanding of how abiding and aligning shape your prayers?



