

Lesson #4: Praying Willingly – United in Prayer 2026 – Teen Lessons

Primary Text: Matthew 26:36-46

Intro: This text is a prayer offered by Jesus himself, the famous Gethsemane prayer in the garden before he was betrayed, arrested, and crucified. It is one of the most vulnerable prayers of love and surrender to God's will.

Key Point: *Willingness* is foundational in prayer, because if we aren't willing to be changed through prayer then perhaps, we have missed the point. And yet willingness is also the goal of prayer, that over time we learn to pray completely: "not my will, but yours."

READ and DISCUSS: Matthew 26:36-46

- Jesus prays this prayer before facing his ultimate trial, and he chooses to bring some friends along. **How might your circle of friends help you with your willingness to pray?** Do you have people like that in your life?
- Jesus prays, **"Not as I will, but as you will"** (v. 39). What do you think Jesus means by this? How is this an example of praying willingly?
- **Jesus clearly expresses what He wants ("let this cup pass from me"), yet He ultimately submits to the Father's will.** What does this teach us about the difference between honestly telling God what we want and being willing to accept God's will?
- Jesus tells His disciples, **"Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation"** (v. 41). Why do you think prayer is connected to resisting temptation?
- **Why do you think Jesus repeats essentially the same prayer three times?** What does this teach us about persistence in prayer?

READ and DISCUSS: Matthew 6:9-13

- The Lord's Prayer is one that has been repeated for thousands of years, and is both simple yet profound. This prayer has a way of teaching us to pray willingly, both through repetition and through the words expressed here. **After reading this prayer, in what ways can it teach us to pray "willingly?"**
- **Jesus begins the prayer by focusing on God's name, kingdom, and will before asking for personal needs.** What does that order teach us about what should come first in our prayers?
- Jesus teaches us to pray, **"Your kingdom come, your will be done."** What does it actually mean to ask God for *His will* to be done?

- **How is “Your will be done” connected to Jesus’ prayer in Matthew 26:39, “Not as I will, but as you will”?** What do these passages teach us about praying willingly?
- The Lord's Prayer includes **“Give us this day our daily bread.”** How does asking God to provide for our needs require us to surrender control and depend on Him?
- Jesus teaches us that our forgiveness from the Father is directly linked to our willingness to forgive others. **What might this teach us about how our relationship with God is connected to our relationship with others?**

APPLICATION: Practicing Prayers of Willingness

- **The Lord's Prayer teaches us to ask for daily provision rather than trying to control everything ourselves.** How might daily, repetitive prayer change the way you pray to God?
- **What is something you're currently asking God to do your way?** What would it look like to honestly pray, “Your will be done” about that situation?
- What is one decision you're facing where you could intentionally ask, **“God, what would You want me to do?”** before deciding what you want to do?
- **What makes it difficult for you to trust God's plan when it conflicts with your own plans?** What could help you grow in trusting Him?
- **What would change in your prayer life if you** started viewing prayer less as getting God to do what you want, and more as becoming willing to do what He wants?

Song Suggestions:

- The Lord’s Prayer (It’s Yours)
- All to Jesus I Surrender
- Lay Your Burdens Down (Here in This Place)
- Sanctuary

Possible Activity: Praying through the Lord’s Prayer

- Put the text of the Lord’s prayer on a board/screen, or have students use their Bibles. During this exercise, divide the Lord’s Prayer into the 5 verses below, and pray as a group five times, using each verse as a prompt for your prayer time:
 - Our Father in heaven, your name be honored as holy.
 - Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
 - Give us today our daily bread.
 - And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
 - And do not bring us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.