

Lenten Prayer Group Guide

Week 6

As usual, there are four sections to this guide in addition to the option to listen to or sing a song. Plan to spend about a quarter of your time on each section, adjusting accordingly whether or not you choose to use the song.

Also, it is important that you make sure that everyone understands at the beginning of each prayer time that anything said during the time is confidential and should not be shared outside the group without permission.

Praise

Praising God helps us to focus on who He is and to be more aware of His presence with us.

The following verses are John the Baptist's response when his disciples were asking him about how Jesus' ministry seemed to be experiencing greater success than John's. Let's use these verses now to praise Jesus

Go around your group having each person read a single verse from the passage and immediately follow their reading with a brief prayer of praise to God. Feel free to go through the passage multiple times as you have time.

John 3:30-36 (NLT)

30 He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less.

31 He has come from above and is greater than anyone else. We are of the earth, and we speak of earthly things, but he has come from heaven and is greater than anyone else.

32 He testifies about what he has seen and heard, but how few believe what he tells them!

33 Anyone who accepts his testimony can affirm that God is true.

34 For he is sent by God. He speaks God's words, for God gives him the Spirit without limit.

35 The Father loves his Son and has put everything into his hands.

36 And anyone who believes in God's Son has eternal life.

Consecration

The following is a harmonization of the account of the burial of Jesus based on Matthew 27:60, Mark 15:43, Luke 23:50-52, and John 19:38-41 (NLT).

Now there was a good and righteous man named Joseph, who had been a secret disciple of Jesus (because he feared the Jewish leaders). He was an honored member of the Jewish high council, but he had not agreed with the decision and actions of the other religious leaders. He was from the town of Arimathea in Judea, and he was waiting for the Kingdom of God to come. He took a risk and went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. With him came Nicodemus, the man who had come to Jesus at night. He brought about seventy-five pounds of perfumed ointment made from myrrh and aloes. Following Jewish burial custom, they wrapped Jesus' body with the spices in long sheets of linen cloth. The place of crucifixion was near a garden, where there was Joseph's own new tomb, which had been carved out of the rock and never used before. Then Joseph rolled a great stone across the entrance and left.

The last two weeks we've lingered, watching Jesus consecrate Himself by making the choice to die on the cross and then to follow through with it.

As a group, takes some time to discuss the following questions.

- What example of consecration, the act of giving something to God, in this story?
- What was Joseph's response to Jesus' sacrifice?
- How has this ultimate sacrifice of Jesus affected your life? How have you changed or done things differently because of it?

Take some time now for each person to pray in response to these thoughts.

Confession

By doing this Joseph of Arimathea was identifying himself with Jesus in a self-sacrificial way; he abandoned his comfort and reputation. This can be contrasted with Peter, when he denied Jesus in fear of being identified with Him.

Jesus told a parable of two sons, one who says he will obey his father, but then does not follow through and the other who disobeys at first, but then changes his mind and does what his father asked of him. Jesus indicates that we want to be like the second son, the one who actually **does** his father's will.

Peter was emphatic that he would die for Jesus, but then he denied three times that he even knew Him. Joseph believed in Jesus secretly, but later decided to make his love for Jesus publicly known by asking for His body.

Have you ever failed to follow through on something or to step out in faith because you were afraid or didn't want to be uncomfortable? Let's take some time to bow before Jesus now, humbly acknowledging where we have fallen short.

Asking

As John the Baptist said in John 3:30, Jesus must increase and we must decrease. The appropriate response to Jesus is to bow down. Philippians 2:10 says that every knee will bow before Him. As we bow down, as we go lower, we get ourselves out of the way so others can see Him more clearly.

Take a moment to be quiet and to consider the following questions.

- What do you need to surrender? Your comfort? Your fears?
- How can you decrease so that Jesus increases more in your life? How about our church?

Let's pray now that we, as individuals and as a church, would love Jesus so much that we would surrender ourselves and our comfortable lives, getting out of the way so that Jesus can be on full display for the world to see!

Song *(optional)*

Conclude with a song of intent. Click on the song title to hear the song.

Abandoned

Verse 1:

Something isn't adding up
This wild exchange You offer us
I gave my worst, You gave Your blood
Seems hard to believe

Verse 2:

You're telling me You chose the cross?
You're telling me I'm worth that much?
If that's the measure of Your love
How else would I sing but...

You Must Increase

I lift you high and bow down low
How high can You be?
How low can I go?
I lift You high and bow down low
How high can You be?
How low can I go?

You must increase I must decrease, Lord
I'll bow down and You will be adored

Song by Matt Redman
Source: Musixmatch

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Abandoned *(continued)*

Chorus:

Completely, deeply, sold out sincerely, abandoned
I'm completely, freely, hands to the ceiling enamored
My one life endeavor
To match Your surrender
To mirror not my will but Yours
I'm completely, deeply, don't care who sees me abandoned
Oh I surrender all

Verse 3:

I just can't get over it
What kind of self control is this
You had angels at Your fingertips
But on the cross You remained

Verse 4:

I can't repay that kind of love
But I can praise with everything I've got
Since death had all its power robbed
Then just like the grave...

Bridge:

The whole of my heart
The best of my soul
Each phase of my life
Each breath in my lungs
Consider it Yours, Lord
Consider it Yours, Lord
The failures I hide
The victories I don't
The battles I fight
Each crown that I hoard
Consider it Yours, Lord
Consider it Yours, Lord
All the glory forever
The grave that you won
The praise of the heavens
The kingdom to come
Consider it Yours, Lord
Consider it Yours, Lord