

PRAY 4•40

A 13-WEEK BIBLE CLASS SERIES

Forty Bible stories of ordinary people doing extraordinary things,
each with a short prayer to make that quality your own,
in thirteen 50-minute lessons.

Be careful what you ask for. You just may get it.

WWW.PRAY440.COM

Pray 4:40 Bible Class Series

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BEFORE YOU BEGIN

How to Use This Series

Pray 4:40 is a collection of forty short prayers. Each one tells a Bible story of an ordinary person doing something extraordinary, then prays for that quality: faith, patience, courage, kindness and more. This series turns all forty into thirteen 50-minute classes, with three prayers per class (four in the last).

The lessons run roughly in Bible order, from Genesis to the early church in Acts. Each lesson stands on its own, so you can rearrange them to fit your calendar. Keep Lesson 1 first and Lesson 13 last: one introduces the series and the other wraps it up. Seasonal fits are suggestions only.

EVERY CLASS FOLLOWS THE SAME RHYTHM

SEGMENT	3-PRAYER LESSONS	LESSON 13 (4 PRAYERS)
Opening: welcome, hook question, opening prayer	5 min	5 min
Each prayer: story, scripture, discussion, pray it together	12 min each	9 min each
Closing: tie the theme together, weekly challenge, closing prayer	9 min	9 min
Total	50 min	50 min

Each prayer segment uses the prayer's own parts: tell the story, read the Look It Up passages, share the Free Bonus, ask a discussion question or two, then pray the prayer aloud together.

WHAT TO BRING

Bibles (the lessons quote the NIV, but any translation works), and printed copies of that week's prayers. All 40 prayers are free to read and print at www.pray440.com, along with a free PDF of the full collection.

Series at a Glance

Numbers in parentheses are the prayer numbers on pray440.com. Every prayer is used once.

#	THEME	PRAYERS	KEY PASSAGE	OPTIONAL SEASONAL FIT	PG.
1	Lord, Teach Us to Pray	Prayer-Ability (29), Listening (13), Serenity (40)	Luke 11:1	Series opener	5
2	Walking by Faith	Daily Walks (1), Obedience (2), Faith (3)	Hebrews 11:5-8		7
3	God at Work Behind the Scenes	Persistence (5), Favor (6), Purpose (23)	Genesis 50:20		9
4	Passing the Torch	Leadership (7), Strength & Courage (8), Endurance (9)	Joshua 1:9	First Sunday of Advent	11
5	Saying Yes to God	Confidence (10), Humility (18), A Willing Heart (20)	Isaiah 6:8		13
6	The Family Tree of the King	Noble Character (11), Friendship (14), Wisdom (16)	Matthew 1:5-6	Advent	15
7	Comfort for the Weary	Patience (4), Rest (17), Tears (31)	Matthew 11:28	Weeks after Christmas	17
8	Faith in a Foreign Land	Deliverance (21), Faithfulness (22), Determination (24)	Daniel 3:17-18		19
9	Songs of Faith	Hope (12), Joy (15), Trust (25)	Luke 1:46-48	Sunday before Christmas	21
10	A Fresh Start	Second Chances (19), A Changed Heart (32), Self-Forgiveness (34)	Lamentations 3:22-23	First Sunday of the new year	23
11	A Thankful Table	Gratitude (30), A Generous Heart (33), Hospitality (39)	Luke 17:15-16	Sunday before Thanksgiving	25
12	Love in Action	Compassion (27), Forgiveness (36), Kindness (38)	Luke 10:36-37		27
13	From His Feet to the Streets	Devotion (28), Teamwork (26), Encouragement (35), Boldness (37)	Acts 4:13	Series closer	29

LESSON 1

Lord, Teach Us to Pray

BIG IDEA: Prayer is a conversation with God. We talk, we listen, and we accept his answer. Three of the best-known prayers anywhere show the way.

PRAYERS: Pray 4 Prayer-Ability (29, The Disciples) · Pray 4 Listening (13, Samuel) · Pray 4 Serenity (40, Paul)

THREAD: Luke 11:1, “Lord, teach us to pray.” This lesson introduces the series: 13 classes, all 40 Pray 4:40 prayers.

OPENING · 5 min

1. Read the Pray 4:40 motto: “Be careful what you ask for. You just may get it.” Each week we read Bible stories of ordinary people doing extraordinary things, then pray for that quality ourselves.
2. Hook: “What makes prayer hard for you? Finding the words, finding the time, or knowing whether anyone is listening?”
3. Opening prayer.

PRAY 4 PRAYER-ABILITY · 12 min

POINT: Prayer is a conversation with God. Just pray, pray often, keep praying.

1. Pop-quiz on slips of paper: “If you could ask Jesus to teach you one thing, and only one thing, what would it be?” Give 30 seconds.
2. Luke 11:1: “Lord, teach us to pray.” Not walking on water, healing or feeding 5,000. Just prayer.
3. Compare Luke 11:2-4 with Matthew 6:9-13. Short, sweet, to the point: a masterpiece of simplicity.
4. Three rules: Just Pray · Pray Often (1 Thessalonians 5:17) · Keep Praying (Luke 18:1).
5. Free Bonus: “Prayer-Ability” is a made-up word. Please don’t tell the author’s high school English teacher.
6. Discuss: What keeps us from praying often? If you run out of words, borrow His.
7. Pray it together.

PRAY 4 LISTENING · 12 min

POINT: Listening is prayer with the volume turned down.

1. Young Samuel, living at the temple with old Eli, hears his name called three times in the night (1 Samuel 3).
2. Eli realizes it is God. Read 1 Samuel 3:10: “Speak, for your servant is listening.”
3. Most of our prayers run one way: we do the talking and leave before God can answer.
4. Read James 1:19: quick to listen, slow to speak.

5. Free Bonus: Samuel was the answer to his mother Hannah's prayer and anointed Saul and David; two ears and one mouth, so we can listen twice as much as we speak.
6. Discuss: What drowns out God's voice in your week?
7. Pray it together, then sit in silence for 30 seconds.

PRAY 4 SERENITY · 12 min

POINT: Sometimes "no" just means "no." When it does, serenely accept it.

1. "But Dad, I just want to ..." Every child has heard "no."
2. Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-8. Three times Paul pleaded for his "thorn in my flesh" to be removed.
3. Read 2 Corinthians 12:9: "My grace is sufficient for you." No relief, but grace in its place.
4. Free Bonus: the Serenity Prayer, credited to Reinhold Niebuhr and adopted by Alcoholics Anonymous in the 1940s. Read the longer version from the prayer page together.
5. Discuss: Is there a "no" from God you're still arguing with?
6. Pray it together.

CLOSING · 9 min

1. Tie it together: the disciples asked to be taught, Samuel learned to listen, and Paul learned to accept. Talk, listen, accept.
2. Preview the series: 13 weeks, all 40 prayers. Hand out the free PDF from pray440.com.
3. Weekly challenge: pray the three prayers, one a day, and end each prayer time with a minute of silence.
4. Pray the Lord's Prayer together (Matthew 6:9-13).

LESSON 2

Walking by Faith

BIG IDEA: Three generations of one family, three steps of faith: walk with God, do what he says before it makes sense, and go when he says “go.”

PRAYERS: Pray 4 Daily Walks (1, Enoch) · Pray 4 Obedience (2, Noah) · Pray 4 Faith (3, Abraham)

THREAD: Hebrews 11:5-8 names all three, back to back.

OPENING · 5 min

1. Hook: “Have you ever followed a GPS that kept saying ‘Recalculating?’”
2. Read Hebrews 11:5-8 aloud. Point out the three names the class will meet today.
3. Opening prayer.

PRAY 4 DAILY WALKS · 12 min

POINT: Walk with God every day until your steps fall in rhythm with his.

1. Two people walking side by side fall into step, “in-phase,” whatever their height. Imagine being in step with God.
2. Read Genesis 5:21-24. Enoch walked faithfully with God 300 years, “then he was no more, because God took him away.”
3. Retell the prayer’s imagined invitation: “We are closer to My home than yours. Why don’t you just come home with Me?”
4. Free Bonus: Einstein worked out relativity on walks home with his friend Michele Besso. Enoch was Methuselah’s father and Noah’s great-grandfather, and one of two people the Bible says did not die (the other is Elijah).
5. Discuss: What helps you stay in step with God day to day? What throws you out of step?
6. Pray it together.

PRAY 4 OBEDIENCE · 12 min

POINT: Obedience is doing what God asks before it makes sense.

1. “Why?” “Because I said so.” Every parent knows it.
2. God told Noah to build a boat about 450 feet long, on dry land. Read Genesis 6:22: “Noah did everything just as God commanded him.” Not some things. Everything.
3. It didn’t make sense until the rain started. Then it made perfect sense. Read Genesis 9:13 (the rainbow).
4. Free Bonus: 300 × 50 × 30 cubits; Noah was 600 when the flood came (Genesis 7:6); walking with God ran in the family.
5. Discuss: Has God ever asked you to do something that only made sense later?

6. Pray it together.

PRAY 4 FAITH · 12 min

POINT: Faith is following God when the only directions you have are “go.”

1. God’s directions to Abram: “Go ... to the land I will show you” (Genesis 12:1). No address. He was 75 (12:4).
2. Read Genesis 15:5-6. Abram believed, and God “credited it to him as righteousness.” The prayer’s accountant’s view: no deposit of good deeds, yet the account credited in full.
3. He waited 25 years for Isaac. Free Bonus: Isaac means “he laughs”; Genesis 15:6 is quoted in Romans 4:3, Galatians 3:6 and James 2:23.
4. Discuss: Where is God saying “go” without showing you the whole map?
5. Pray it together.

CLOSING · 9 min

1. Tie it together: Enoch walked, Noah built, Abraham went. Read Hebrews 11:6.
2. Weekly challenge: take a daily walk this week and pray as you go; pray one of the three prayers each day.
3. Closing prayer.

LESSON 3

God at Work Behind the Scenes

BIG IDEA: A limp, a pit and a palace. In each, God was working when nobody could see it.

PRAYERS: Pray 4 Persistence (5, Jacob) · Pray 4 Favor (6, Joseph) · Pray 4 Purpose (23, Hadassah/Esther)

THREAD: Genesis 50:20: “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good.” The book of Esther never names God, yet his hand is on every page.

OPENING · 5 min

1. Hook: “Name a time something looked like bad luck and turned out to be the best thing that ever happened to you.”
2. The Purpose prayer’s claim: you will never find luck in the Bible. Today’s three stories test it.
3. Opening prayer.

PRAY 4 PERSISTENCE · 12 min

POINT: Hang on. Don’t let go until you get your blessing.

1. Wrestling: no timeouts, no substitutions. Now picture an all-night match against God.
2. Setting: Jacob, 20 years away, about to meet Esau and 400 men. Read Genesis 32:24-28.
3. Hip wrenched, Jacob still says, “I will not let you go unless you bless me.” New name: Israel.
4. The next day Esau ran to meet him and embraced him. Luke 18:1: always pray and not give up.
5. Free Bonus: Peniel, “face of God” (Genesis 32:30); the nation of Israel takes its name from this match.
6. Discuss: What are you wrestling with God about right now? Is a limp too high a price for a blessing?
7. Pray it together.

PRAY 4 FAVOR · 12 min

POINT: God’s favor doesn’t keep you out of the pit. It keeps you from being defeated by the pit.

1. Jacob’s favorite son, the ornate robe, the dreams. Pit, slavery, prison: not exactly a winning streak.
2. Read Genesis 39:2 and 39:21: “The LORD was with Joseph.” Favor is God’s presence in your circumstances before they change.
3. Prisoner to second in Egypt in a single day; his brothers bow, just like the dream. Read Genesis 50:20.
4. Free Bonus: “coat of many colors” (KJV) vs. “ornate robe” (NIV); the Andrew Lloyd Webber musical; Dolly Parton’s song.

5. Discuss: Where have you seen God with you in a pit before he got you out?
6. Pray it together.

PRAY 4 PURPOSE · 12 min

POINT: Everything happens for a purpose, even when you can't see it for years.

1. No luck in the Bible. Casting lots was a way of asking God; even the soldiers' lots at the cross fulfilled Psalm 22:18 (Matthew 27:35; John 19:23-24).
2. The orphan Hadassah becomes Queen Esther. Five years later, Haman's decree shows why.
3. Read Esther 4:14: "who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?"
4. Free Bonus: the four-leaf clover's faith, hope, love and luck, next to 1 Corinthians 13:13's faith, hope and love.
5. Discuss: Where might you be "for such a time as this"?
6. Pray it together.

CLOSING · 9 min

1. Tie it together: Jacob's limp, Joseph's pit and Esther's palace were all God's work behind the scenes. Reread Genesis 50:20.
2. Weekly challenge: each evening, write down one place you saw God at work that day.
3. Closing prayer.

LESSON 4

Passing the Torch

BIG IDEA: One generation hands off to the next. Moses learns to share the load, Joshua takes the job with God beside him, and Caleb is still taking mountains at 85.

PRAYERS: Pray 4 Leadership (7, Moses) · Pray 4 Strength & Courage (8, Joshua) · Pray 4 Endurance (9, Caleb)

THREAD: Joshua 1:9, God's charge to the new leader as the torch passes from Moses.

SEASONAL NOTE (OPTIONAL): Fits the first Sunday of Advent.

OPENING · 5 min

1. Hook: "What is the hardest job in the world?" The Strength & Courage prayer's answer: following a legend, like Jay Leno taking over *The Tonight Show*.
2. Read Joshua 1:9 aloud. Introduce the three names.
3. Opening prayer.

PRAY 4 LEADERSHIP · 12 min

POINT: Leadership is listening to good advice, raising up other leaders, and sharing the load.

1. Moses had a problem: he was doing everything, judging disputes from morning until night.
2. Read Exodus 18:17-18. Jethro: "The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone."
3. Read Exodus 18:13-26: capable leaders over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens; only the hard cases to Moses.
4. Moses was a reluctant leader from the start (his excuses at the burning bush, Exodus 3-4).
5. Free Bonus: Jethro is also called Reuel (Exodus 2:18); business schools still teach his "delegation" and "span of control"; Charlton Heston in *The Ten Commandments* (1956).
6. Discuss: Where are you carrying the whole load alone? Who is your Jethro, and who could you raise up?
7. Pray it together.

PRAY 4 STRENGTH & COURAGE · 12 min

POINT: Courage is not the absence of fear. Courage is the presence of God.

1. God gave Joshua the hardest job in the world: following Moses.
2. Read Joshua 1:6-7 and 1:9. God says "Be strong and courageous" three times in nine verses; the people say it a fourth time (1:18).
3. Read Deuteronomy 31:6: he will never leave you nor forsake you. At the end Joshua said, "as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15).

4. Free Bonus: Moses renamed Hoshea “Joshua,” the LORD is salvation (Numbers 13:16); in Greek it’s the same name as Jesus.
5. Discuss: What job feels too big for you? What changes if courage means God’s presence instead of no fear?
6. Pray it together.

PRAY 4 ENDURANCE · 12 min

POINT: Endurance isn’t just surviving the wilderness. It’s coming out the other side still believing, still strong, and still ready for a fight.

1. “How old is too old?”
2. Read Numbers 13–14. Of twelve spies, only Caleb and Joshua said “We can.” Caleb “has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly” (Numbers 14:24).
3. Forty-five years later, read Joshua 14:10–12: “eighty-five years old ... still as strong today.” He asks for the hill country where the giants lived.
4. Read Isaiah 40:31.
5. Free Bonus: Hebron became Caleb’s inheritance (Joshua 14:13–14); the KJV’s “give me this mountain” (14:12).
6. Discuss: What mountain is still ahead of you?
7. Pray it together.

CLOSING · 9 min

1. Tie it together: Moses shared the load, Joshua took the torch with God beside him, Caleb still carried it at 85. The torch passes; the One who goes with us does not change. Reread Joshua 1:9.
2. Weekly challenge: name one person to raise up and one load to share; face one “too big” task with Joshua 1:9 in your pocket.
3. Closing prayer.

LESSON 5

Saying Yes to God

BIG IDEA: One man hid, one was too proud, and one volunteered. God isn't looking for the most qualified. He's looking for the most willing.

PRAYERS: Pray 4 Confidence (10, Gideon) · Pray 4 Humility (18, Naaman) · Pray 4 A Willing Heart (20, Isaiah)

THREAD: Isaiah 6:8: "Whom shall I send? ... Here am I. Send me!"

OPENING · 5 min

1. Hook: "Remember when the teacher asked for a volunteer? Who raised a hand, and who looked at the floor?"
2. Read Isaiah 6:8. Today we meet a man hiding in a winepress, a general on a chariot, and a prophet who raised his hand.
3. Opening prayer.

PRAY 4 CONFIDENCE · 12 min

POINT: Real confidence comes from knowing that God is with you.

1. Gideon was hiding, threshing wheat in a winepress so the Midianites wouldn't take it (Judges 6).
2. Read Judges 6:12: "The LORD is with you, mighty warrior." God called the man in hiding a mighty warrior.
3. Read Judges 6:15: "I am the least in my family." The fleece, then an army cut from 32,000 to 300, armed with trumpets, jars and torches (Judges 7).
4. Read Philippians 4:13.
5. Free Bonus: "putting out a fleece" comes from this story; Gideons International is named for him.
6. Discuss: Where do you feel like "the least in my family"? What changes if "The LORD is with you" is true?
7. Pray it together.

PRAY 4 HUMILITY · 12 min

POINT: Humility is being willing to do the small, simple thing God asks, even when you think you deserve something bigger.

1. Naaman was a big deal: a respected army commander, with leprosy.
2. A captive Israelite servant girl points him to Elisha. Naaman arrives with silver, gold and fine clothes. Elisha doesn't even come out: "Wash seven times in the Jordan."
3. Read 2 Kings 5:13-14. His servants talk sense into him; he dips seven times and is healed.

4. Read James 4:10.
5. Free Bonus: Jesus mentioned Naaman in his first sermon in Nazareth (Luke 4:27); Elisha refused the gifts, but his servant Gehazi took some and paid for it.
6. Discuss: What simple thing might God be asking of you that feels too small? “Sometimes the biggest step of faith is climbing down off your chariot.”
7. Pray it together.

PRAY 4 A WILLING HEART · 12 min

POINT: God isn’t looking for the most qualified. He’s looking for the most willing.

1. Isaiah sees the Lord on a throne, seraphim calling out praise (Isaiah 6:1-4).
2. Read Isaiah 6:5: “Woe to me! ... I am ruined!”
3. A coal touches his lips and his guilt is taken away (Isaiah 6:6-7). God handled his qualifications with one coal.
4. Read Isaiah 6:8 again. God didn’t ask “Who is qualified?” He asked “Who will go?”
5. Free Bonus: the hymns “Holy, Holy, Holy” and “Here I Am, Lord” (1981); the Ethiopian official was reading Isaiah when Philip ran up to him.
6. Discuss: Which “I’m not qualified” excuse do you use most?
7. Pray it together.

CLOSING · 9 min

1. Tie it together: Gideon came out of hiding, Naaman came down off his chariot, Isaiah raised his hand. Reread Isaiah 6:8.
2. Weekly challenge: each day pray “Here am I. Send me!” and watch for the chance God gives you.
3. Closing prayer (optionally sing “Here I Am, Lord”).

LESSON 6

The Family Tree of the King

BIG IDEA: Ruth, David and Solomon are all in Jesus' family tree. Ruth was faithful in small daily things, Jonathan's friendship with David cost him something, and Solomon asked God for the right gift.

PRAYERS: Pray 4 Noble Character (11, Ruth) · Pray 4 Friendship (14, David & Jonathan) · Pray 4 Wisdom (16, Solomon)

THREAD: Matthew 1:5-6.

SEASONAL NOTE (OPTIONAL): Fits Advent.

OPENING · 5 min

1. Hook: "Has anyone traced a family tree? Who's the most surprising name on yours?"
2. Read Matthew 1:5-6 aloud. Point out Ruth, David and Solomon.
3. Opening prayer.

PRAY 4 NOBLE CHARACTER · 12 min

POINT: Meet each day with noble character, no matter what. The little things matter, and they build character.

1. Ruth is one of two women with an Old Testament book named for her (the other is Esther) and one of four women named in Jesus' genealogy.
2. After her husband died, she stayed with her mother-in-law and worked long hours in the fields. Nothing newsworthy or epic.
3. Life can be "so boring, so tedious, and most of all so daily." Her daily faithfulness earned her a reputation as a woman of noble character (Ruth 3:11).
4. Free Bonus: the same Hebrew phrase appears in Proverbs 12:4 and 31:10 ("A wife of noble character who can find?").
5. Discuss: Which small, daily faithfulness is hardest for you to keep up?
6. Pray it together.

PRAY 4 FRIENDSHIP · 12 min

POINT: A true friend cheers for you, even when it costs them something.

1. What is a friend? Someone who helps you move, shows up at the hospital, knows all about you and likes you anyway.
2. Read 1 Samuel 18:1-4. Jonathan, next in line for the throne, gives David his robe, sword, bow and belt.
3. If David lived, Jonathan would never be king. He helped David anyway (1 Samuel 18-20).

4. A true friendship outlives the friends: David gives Jonathan's son Mephibosheth a permanent seat at the king's table (2 Samuel 9).
5. Free Bonus: "How the mighty have fallen!" (2 Samuel 1:25-26); Proverbs 18:24; John 15:13.
6. Discuss: Who has cheered for you when it cost them? Whose success can you cheer for this week?
7. Pray it together.

PRAY 4 WISDOM · 12 min

POINT: Wisdom isn't something you get once. It's something you ask for every day.

1. "If a genie gave you one wish, what would you ask for?"
2. Read 1 Kings 3:5-9. Solomon asks for "a discerning heart." God adds riches and honor.
3. The test: two women, one baby (1 Kings 3:16-28).
4. "Be careful what you ask for. You just may get it." Read James 1:5. Just ask.
5. Free Bonus: 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 songs (1 Kings 4:32); the Queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10); his heart later turned (1 Kings 11:4), which is why wisdom must be asked for daily.
6. Discuss: Where do you need a discerning heart this week?
7. Pray it together.

CLOSING · 9 min

1. Tie it together: Ruth was faithful, Jonathan loved at a cost, Solomon asked for wisdom. All three belong to the story of the King. Read Matthew 1:5-6 and 1:16.
2. Weekly challenge: one unnoticed faithful act a day; cheer for one friend; begin each morning asking for wisdom.
3. Closing prayer.

LESSON 7

Comfort for the Weary

BIG IDEA: God doesn't scold the worn out or the grieving. He listens to Job's questions, lets Elijah sleep, and weeps beside Mary and Martha.

PRAYERS: Pray 4 Patience (4, Job) · Pray 4 Rest (17, Elijah) · Pray 4 Tears (31, Jesus)

THREAD: Matthew 11:28: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

SEASONAL NOTE (OPTIONAL): A good fit for the weeks after Christmas, when many people are tired or grieving.

OPENING · 5 min

1. Hook: "What does 'running on empty' look like for you?"
2. Read Matthew 11:28. Today we meet one man who held on, one who ran out of strength, and Jesus at a friend's tomb.
3. Opening prayer.

PRAY 4 PATIENCE · 12 min

POINT: Patience is not keeping quiet. Patience is holding on.

1. "We've all been there. On hold. Again."
2. In one day Job lost his livestock, his servants and all ten children, then his health. Read Job 1:21.
3. For about 35 chapters he asked "why," but he never turned his back on God. Read Job 19:25: "I know that my redeemer lives."
4. Read Job 42:10: God restored his fortunes twice over.
5. Free Bonus: "the patience of Job" is the KJV of James 5:11; his friends did their best work in silence for seven days (Job 2:13); Handel's "I Know That My Redeemer Liveth."
6. Discuss: Is it all right to ask God "why"? What does holding on look like for you right now?
7. Pray it together.

PRAY 4 REST · 12 min

POINT: Rest isn't laziness. Rest is how we hear the whisper.

1. "Your phone tells you when it needs a rest." Battery at 1%.
2. Fresh from victory on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18), Elijah runs from Jezebel and asks God to take his life (1 Kings 19:1-4).
3. No lecture, no pep talk. God let him sleep. Read 1 Kings 19:5-7: "the journey is too much for you."
4. Not in the wind, earthquake or fire. Read 1 Kings 19:12: "a gentle whisper."

5. Free Bonus: Elijah, like Enoch, did not die (2 Kings 2:11); the cup for Elijah at Passover; Mendelssohn's *Elijah* (1846).
6. Discuss: What's your battery-at-1% warning sign?
7. Pray it together.

PRAY 4 TEARS · 12 min

POINT: Jesus wept because he loved. You can't have the gift of love without the gift of tears.

1. Ask for the shortest verse in the Bible (John 11:35). Why did Jesus weep? Expect "Because he was sad."
2. The mystery: Jesus waited two more days on purpose and knew he would raise Lazarus. Read John 11:32-36 ("See how he loved him!").
3. Free Bonus: four days mattered; many believed the soul lingered three days. Pope Leo I: in his humanity Jesus wept for Lazarus; in his divinity he raised him.
4. Read Psalm 126:5 and Revelation 21:4.
5. Discuss: When have tears been a sign of how much you loved someone?
6. Pray it together.

CLOSING · 9 min

1. Tie it together: Job held on, Elijah rested, Jesus wept. All three were met by God in their weariness. Reread Matthew 11:28.
2. Weekly challenge: take one real rest this week, and sit with someone who is grieving.
3. Closing prayer.

TEACHER NOTE: Some in the class may be grieving. Leave room for quiet, and don't press anyone to share.

LESSON 8

Faith in a Foreign Land

BIG IDEA: Far from home and serving foreign kings, three men stood in the fire, Daniel kept praying, and Nehemiah kept building.

PRAYERS: Pray 4 Deliverance (21, Shadrach, Meshach & Abednego) · Pray 4 Faithfulness (22, Daniel) · Pray 4 Determination (24, Nehemiah)

THREAD: Daniel 3:17-18. God is able to deliver us, “but even if he does not,” we will not bow.

OPENING · 5 min

1. Hook: “Have you ever been the only one in the room who believed what you believe?”
2. Read Daniel 3:17-18. Today’s stories happen under three foreign kings: Nebuchadnezzar, Darius and Artaxerxes.
3. Opening prayer.

PRAY 4 DELIVERANCE · 12 min

POINT: No praise without a deliverance. No deliverance without a test. No test without a test subject. And the test subject is you.

1. “Get ready for the best story ever told.”
2. They refused to bow and went into the furnace. Read Daniel 3:16-18.
3. Read Daniel 3:24-25: four men walking in the fire. Whoever the fourth was, he was most certainly divine.
4. Read Daniel 3:28-30: the king praises God and promotes them.
5. Free Bonus: the 1939 song recorded by Fred Leary, and Johnny Cash’s version. Play a clip if time allows.
6. Discuss: What furnace have you come through? Where did you see the fourth man in the fire?
7. Pray it together.

PRAY 4 FAITHFULNESS · 12 min

POINT: Faithfulness is what you do every day, long before you need it.

1. “Imagine being audited.” Read Daniel 6:4: they found no corruption in him.
2. They trick Darius into a 30-day ban on prayer.
3. Read Daniel 6:10: he prayed three times a day, “just as he had done before.”
4. Read Daniel 6:22: God shut the lions’ mouths.
5. Free Bonus: Daniel was likely in his eighties at the lions’ den; as a teenager he chose vegetables and water (Daniel 1); his friends were Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

6. Discuss: What daily habit is building your faithfulness? “When the lions show up, you’ll already know what to do.”
7. Pray it together.

PRAY 4 DETERMINATION · 12 min

POINT: Determination is refusing to come down off the wall until the job is done.

1. Nehemiah, cupbearer to King Artaxerxes, hears Jerusalem’s walls are broken. He mourns, fasts and prays, then sends up a quick prayer and asks the king (Nehemiah 2:4-5).
2. Sanballat and Tobiah mock and threaten; half build while half stand guard. Read Nehemiah 4:6.
3. Four invitations to come down. Read Nehemiah 6:3: “I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down.”
4. Read Nehemiah 6:15 (52 days) and Galatians 6:9.
5. Free Bonus: the cupbearer tasted the king’s wine; Nehemiah’s quick prayer is often called an “arrow prayer.”
6. Discuss: What great project has God given you? Who keeps inviting you to come down?
7. Pray it together.

CLOSING · 9 min

1. Tie it together: three men wouldn’t bow, Daniel wouldn’t stop praying, Nehemiah wouldn’t come down. Reread Daniel 3:17-18: “but even if he does not” is faith in a foreign land.
2. Weekly challenge: set fixed times to pray each day; send one arrow prayer before a hard conversation.
3. Closing prayer.

LESSON 9

Songs of Faith

BIG IDEA: Before the first Christmas carol there were older songs. Hannah sang because God heard her, David danced because God was near, and Mary said yes and sang a song that echoed Hannah's.

PRAYERS: Pray 4 Hope (12, Hannah) · Pray 4 Joy (15, David) · Pray 4 Trust (25, Mary, mother of Jesus)

THREAD: Luke 1:46-48. Mary's Magnificat echoes Hannah's song (1 Samuel 2:1-10).

SEASONAL NOTE (OPTIONAL): A natural fit for the Sunday before Christmas.

OPENING · 5 min

1. Hook: "What's the first song of faith you remember singing?"
2. Read Luke 1:46-48. Mary's song has roots a thousand years older.
3. Opening prayer.

PRAY 4 HOPE · 12 min

POINT: Hope is confident expectation. Hope changes your face before it changes your circumstances.

1. "I hope it doesn't rain. I hope there's pie left." Usually we mean "I wish."
2. Hannah longed for a child; Peninnah never let her forget it (1 Samuel 1).
3. Eli thought she was drunk. Read 1 Samuel 1:15: "I was pouring out my soul to the LORD."
4. Read 1 Samuel 1:18: "her face was no longer downcast." Nothing had changed yet but her face. Samuel was born the next year.
5. Free Bonus: compare 1 Samuel 2:1-10 with Luke 1:46-55; the little robe each year (1 Samuel 2:19); Romans 15:13, "the God of hope."
6. Discuss: Have you left a burden with God and felt your face change before your circumstances did?
7. Pray it together.

PRAY 4 JOY · 12 min

POINT: Joy isn't about being cool or dignified. It's being so glad God is near that you can't help but celebrate.

1. "Ever been to a wedding reception where somebody's uncle hit the dance floor?"
2. David brings the Ark, the sign of God's presence, to Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6). Read 6:14: dancing "with all his might."
3. Michal despised him (6:16). Read 6:22: "I will become even more undignified than this." Happiness depends on circumstances; joy depends on God's presence.

4. Free Bonus: Psalm 150's trumpets, harps, cymbals and dancing; Nehemiah 8:10, "the joy of the LORD is your strength."
5. Discuss: Whose opinion are we "dancing for"?
6. Pray it together.

PRAY 4 TRUST · 12 min

POINT: Trust is falling backward into God's arms, even when you can't see how He'll catch you.

1. "Ever done a trust fall?"
2. Gabriel visits a young bride-to-be in Nazareth (Luke 1:26-38). She asks how, not whether. Read Luke 1:37.
3. She risked her reputation, her engagement, possibly her life. Read Luke 1:38: "I am the Lord's servant."
4. Free Bonus: the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55); Mary at the cross (John 19:25-27) and praying with the disciples (Acts 1:14); "Mary, Did You Know?" (1991).
5. Discuss: Read Proverbs 3:5-6. Where is God asking you to say yes before you understand how?
6. Pray it together.

CLOSING · 9 min

1. Tie it together: Hannah poured out her soul, David danced, Mary trusted and sang. Reread Luke 1:46-48 and listen for Hannah in it.
2. Weekly challenge: read 1 Samuel 2:1-10 and Luke 1:46-55 side by side this week; read Psalm 150 aloud one morning.
3. Closing prayer.

LESSON 10

A Fresh Start

BIG IDEA: God's mercies are new every morning. A runaway prophet, a crooked tax man and a disciple who denied Jesus all got a fresh start. The last one had to learn to forgive himself.

PRAYERS: Pray 4 Second Chances (19, Jonah) · Pray 4 A Changed Heart (32, Zacchaeus) · Pray 4 Self-Forgiveness (34, Peter & Judas)

THREAD: Lamentations 3:22-23: his compassions never fail; they are new every morning.

SEASONAL NOTE (OPTIONAL): A natural fit for the first Sunday of the new year.

OPENING · 5 min

1. Hook: "If you could have a do-over on one day this year, which would it be?"
2. Read Lamentations 3:22-23. Every morning is a fresh start.
3. Opening prayer.

PRAY 4 SECOND CHANCES · 12 min

POINT: God gives second chances: for runaway prophets, for wicked cities, for you.

1. Golfers call it a "mulligan."
2. Jonah ran the opposite way, toward Tarshish. Storm, overboard, great fish (Jonah 1:17).
3. Read Jonah 3:1-2: "the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time." This time he went, and Nineveh repented.
4. Jonah sulked over God's mercy (Jonah 4). He got a second chance but didn't want Nineveh to have one.
5. Free Bonus: the Hebrew says "great fish," not whale (the whale comes from the KJV of Matthew 12:40); Jonah sailed from Joppa, now part of Tel Aviv.
6. Discuss: Where do you need a mulligan? Who would you rather not see get one?
7. Pray it together.

PRAY 4 A CHANGED HEART · 12 min

POINT: A changed mind makes promises. A changed heart writes checks.

1. "Nobody likes the tax man." Zacchaeus, chief tax collector in Jericho, climbs a sycamore-fig to see Jesus.
2. Read Luke 19:5: "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." The crowd grumbles.
3. Before Jesus says a word of correction, read Luke 19:8: half to the poor, four times back to anyone cheated.
4. Read Luke 19:9-10: "the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

5. Free Bonus: fourfold repayment was the Law's penalty for stealing a sheep (Exodus 22:1); "Zacchaeus Was a Wee Little Man."
6. Discuss: What's the difference between a resolution and a changed heart?
7. Pray it together.

PRAY 4 SELF-FORGIVENESS · 12 min

POINT: Jesus has forgiven you. Now be a saint, and forgive you, too.

1. Dante's *Inferno*: Satan chewing on Brutus, Cassius and Judas. Shouldn't there be a fourth? Where is Peter?
2. Both failed Jesus: Peter denied him three times (Luke 22:54-62); Judas betrayed him (Matthew 26:47-50). Both were sorry: Peter "wept bitterly"; Judas returned the silver (Matthew 27:3-4).
3. The difference: Peter forgave himself; Judas did not. Read 2 Corinthians 7:10 (godly sorrow vs. worldly sorrow) and John 21:15-19 (Peter restored).
4. Erased means erased: Psalm 103:12; Hebrews 8:12.
5. Free Bonus: Paul, who once persecuted Christians, had to forgive himself too.
6. Discuss: Why is forgiving ourselves sometimes harder than forgiving others?
7. Pray it together.

CLOSING · 9 min

1. Tie it together: Jonah got a second word, Zacchaeus wrote the check, Peter accepted forgiveness and moved on. Reread Lamentations 3:22-23.
2. Weekly challenge: make one thing right, give someone a second chance, and stop re-remembering one thing God has already erased.
3. Closing prayer.

TEACHER NOTE: Matthew 27:5 describes Judas taking his own life. Keep the focus on Peter's restoration and God's forgiveness.

LESSON 11

A Thankful Table

BIG IDEA: Three prayers for the table: turn around and say thank you, give from the heart, and open the door.

PRAYERS: Pray 4 Gratitude (30, The Tenth Leper) · Pray 4 A Generous Heart (33, The Poor Widow) · Pray 4 Hospitality (39, Lydia)

THREAD: Luke 17:15-16. One man saw he was healed, turned back and threw himself at Jesus' feet to thank him.

SEASONAL NOTE (OPTIONAL): A natural fit for the Sunday before Thanksgiving.

OPENING · 5 min

1. Hook: Who had to write thank-you notes as a child? ("Dear Aunt Edna, thank you for the socks.")
2. Read Luke 17:15-16 aloud. Today is about what we bring to the table: thanks, generosity and an open door.
3. Opening prayer.

PRAY 4 GRATITUDE · 12 min

POINT: Gratitude is turning around.

1. Read Luke 17:11-19. Ten men with leprosy cry out, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!" All ten are healed on the way to the priests.
2. Nine kept going. One turned around, and he was a Samaritan, an outsider. A gratitude rate of 10%.
3. Jesus asks, "Where are the other nine?" and tells the one, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."
4. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:18: give thanks in all circumstances.
5. Free Bonus: Leviticus 13:45-46 (living outside the camp, crying "Unclean!"); Lincoln's 1863 Thanksgiving proclamation.
6. Discuss: What blessing have you kept running with when you should have turned around to say thanks?
7. Pray it together. Be the one.

PRAY 4 A GENEROUS HEART · 12 min

POINT: What matters is not the size of the gift, but the size of the heart that gives.

1. Counting the church offering, the counters find a Chuck E. Cheese token among the coins. A child gave something they valued.
2. Read Mark 12:41-44. The poor widow put in two very small copper coins.

3. Jesus: she “has put more into the treasury than all the others.” Compare Luke 21:1-4: she gave all she had to live on.
4. Free Bonus: her coins were the lepton, the smallest coin in circulation; “my two cents” may come from her story.
5. Discuss: What small gift would cost you something to give? Why does Jesus measure a gift by what is left over?
6. Pray it together.

PRAY 4 HOSPITALITY · 12 min

POINT: Hospitality isn’t a fancy house or perfect cooking. It’s an open door and an open heart.

1. “Y’all come in. Make yourself at home. Can I get you some sweet tea?”
2. Read Acts 16:14-15. Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth: first the Lord opened her heart, then she opened her home.
3. Read Acts 16:40. Out of prison, Paul and Silas go straight to Lydia’s house.
4. Read Hebrews 13:2 (strangers and angels).
5. Free Bonus: Lydia is considered the first recorded convert in Europe; the church in her house later received Philippians; “born to the purple.”
6. Discuss: What keeps us from opening our door? Who could you invite to your table this week?
7. Pray it together.

CLOSING · 9 min

1. Tie it together: the leper turned around, the widow gave from the heart, Lydia opened her door. Reread Luke 17:15-16.
2. Weekly challenge: this week, write one real thank-you note, give one gift that costs you something, and invite one person to your table.
3. Closing prayer.

LESSON 12

Love in Action

BIG IDEA: Love is something we do: stop for the hurting, let go of getting even, and make something useful for someone in need.

PRAYERS: Pray 4 Compassion (27, The Good Samaritan) · Pray 4 Forgiveness (36, Stephen) · Pray 4 Kindness (38, Tabitha/Dorcas)

THREAD: Luke 10:36-37: “Go and do likewise.”

OPENING · 5 min

1. Hook: “Have you ever been in too much of a hurry to stop for someone?”
2. Read Luke 10:36-37. Jesus ends with something to do. Today we meet three people who did it.
3. Opening prayer.

PRAY 4 COMPASSION · 12 min

POINT: Compassion is seeing someone in need and refusing to cross to the other side of the road.

1. It started with a lawyer’s question: “Who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:25-29)
2. Read Luke 10:30-35. A priest and a Levite pass by; a despised Samaritan stops, bandages, carries and pays.
3. Jesus turns the question around: not “Who is my neighbor?” but who acted like one.
4. Free Bonus: the Jericho road drops over 3,000 feet in under 20 miles; Good Samaritan laws; the 1970s Princeton study where seminarians running late passed a man in need, some on their way to speak on this parable.
5. Discuss: What makes us cross to the other side: hurry, fear, not wanting to get involved? Who is on your road this week?
6. Pray it together.

PRAY 4 FORGIVENESS · 12 min

POINT: Forgiveness is letting go of your right to get even, and asking God to do something better.

1. Stephen, one of the seven, “full of God’s grace and power” (Acts 6:8).
2. False witnesses, a sermon through Israel’s history (Acts 7), then stoning.
3. Read Acts 7:59-60: “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.”
4. Read Acts 8:1: Saul approved. That Saul became Paul. You never know what God might do with the person you forgive.
5. Read Matthew 18:21-22.
6. Free Bonus: Stephen means “crown”; the Feast of Stephen is December 26 (“Good King Wenceslas”); the first Christian martyr.

7. Discuss: Why is giving up the right to get even so hard?
8. Pray it together.

PRAY 4 KINDNESS · 12 min

POINT: Kindness is love with a needle and thread.

1. “What will people hold up at your funeral?”
2. Read Acts 9:36: Tabitha “was always doing good and helping the poor.”
3. Read Acts 9:39: the widows show Peter the clothing she made. Her kindness left evidence you could hold.
4. Peter prays: “Tabitha, get up.” Many believed (Acts 9:40-42).
5. Read Ephesians 4:32: kind, compassionate, forgiving. Today’s three prayers in one verse.
6. Free Bonus: both names mean “gazelle”; Dorcas Societies sewed for the poor; Joppa is the port where Jonah bought a ticket the wrong way.
7. Discuss: What is your needle and thread?
8. Pray it together.

CLOSING · 9 min

1. Tie it together: the Samaritan stopped, Stephen forgave, Tabitha sewed. Reread Ephesians 4:32 and Luke 10:37.
2. Weekly challenge: stop for someone you’d normally pass, hand one grudge to God, and make or do one practical thing for someone in need.
3. Closing prayer.

LESSON 13

From His Feet to the Streets

BIG IDEA: It starts at Jesus' feet. People who have been with Jesus go out together to carry, encourage, and run when the Spirit says go.

PRAYERS: Pray 4 Devotion (28, Mary of Bethany) · Pray 4 Teamwork (26, The Four Friends) · Pray 4 Encouragement (35, Barnabas) · Pray 4 Boldness (37, Philip)

THREAD: Acts 4:13. The council saw their courage and noted that they had been with Jesus. Final class of the series.

OPENING · 5 min

1. Hook: "At every family gathering, one person is in the kitchen while everyone else visits. Which one are you?"
2. Read Acts 4:13. First they had been with Jesus; then came the courage.
3. Opening prayer.

PRAY 4 DEVOTION · 9 min

POINT: Devotion isn't doing more for Jesus. It's spending time with Jesus.

1. Read Luke 10:38-42. Martha works; Mary sits and listens. "Mary has chosen what is better."
2. Give Martha her due: her great confession of faith in John 11. Read Psalm 46:10.
3. Free Bonus: Mary later poured perfume worth a year's wages on Jesus' feet (John 12:1-8); her brother was Lazarus.
4. Discuss: What "kitchen" keeps you from the living room? "The dishes can wait. He's in the living room."
5. Pray it together.

PRAY 4 TEAMWORK · 9 min

POINT: Teamwork is carrying someone who can't make it on their own.

1. "Ever moved a couch up a flight of stairs?" Read Mark 2:3-5: four friends, a crowded house, a hole in the roof. "When Jesus saw their faith ..."
2. Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-10.
3. Free Bonus: flat Capernaum roofs of beams, branches and clay; "through the tiles" (Luke 5:19); also Matthew 9:1-8.
4. Discuss: Who carried you? Who needs four friends right now? "Every one of us will be on the mat someday. And every one of us can be one of the four."
5. Pray it together.

PRAY 4 ENCOURAGEMENT · 9 min

POINT: Encouragement is believing in someone before anyone else does, and saying so out loud.

1. Read Acts 4:36-37: Joseph, nicknamed Barnabas, “son of encouragement.”
2. Read Acts 9:26-27: Barnabas vouched for Saul when the disciples feared him.
3. He gave John Mark a second chance; years later Paul asked for Mark (2 Timothy 4:11).
4. Free Bonus: Antioch, where disciples were first called Christians (Acts 11:26); the split over Mark (Acts 15:36-40).
5. Discuss: Who believed in you first? Who needs to hear it from you? Read 1 Thessalonians 5:11, then pray it together.

PRAY 4 BOLDNESS · 9 min

POINT: Boldness is simply obedience at a run.

1. Picture the Spirit telling you to walk up to a stranger in a limousine and talk about God.
2. Read Acts 8:29-31. Philip ran to the Ethiopian official’s chariot: “Do you understand what you are reading?” He was baptized at the first water (8:35-38).
3. Read Acts 4:31.
4. Free Bonus: Philip the Evangelist (Acts 6), not Philip the Apostle; his four daughters who prophesied (Acts 21:8-9).
5. Discuss: What makes us walk, or stand still, when we should run? Then pray it together.

CLOSING · 9 min

1. Tie it together: Mary sat, the four friends carried, Barnabas encouraged, Philip ran. Reread Acts 4:13.
2. Weekly challenge: start each day with still time at Jesus’ feet, then carry someone, encourage someone out loud, and say yes at a run.
3. Wrapping up the series: 13 weeks, all 40 prayers. Point the class to pray440.com and the free PDF, and invite them to pray one a day for 40 days, then start again.
4. Closing prayer.