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Discover Your Bible Series

Discover
**THE JOY OF
SHARING JESUS**



LEADER GUIDE

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Discover
**THE JOY OF
SHARING JESUS**



by
Diane and Brent Averill



Grand Rapids, Michigan

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To the Leader

Prepare the Lesson

This leader guide is meant to assist small group leaders, not to substitute for your own personal work. Always answer the study guide questions first, using the suggested basic steps of preparation. Then use the leader material to enrich your understanding of the passage.

Do not take the leader guide to the Bible study group. You do not want to give the impression that you have an answer book. The answers are in the Bible; you are a guide to help your group find the answers in God's Word.

Prepare thoroughly before each group session so that you can lead without frequent references to your notes. This will leave you free to concentrate on your leadership responsibilities. You will also be able to keep better eye contact and listen more carefully.

Get Ready to Lead

Learn to think in questions. As you prepare the lesson, ask yourself questions and discover your own answers. There is no better way to prepare yourself to anticipate the group's questions and help others discover truths from God's Word.

Lead with Questions

Use questions to direct the discussion. Draw out positive contributions with questions. Break down difficult or unclear questions with smaller, concise questions. Respond to wrong answers or problems with questions. If you learn to lead others to the truth by questions, you will be a good Bible discovery leader. The questions in this study are designed to be used with the New International Version of the Bible, but other translations can be used too.

Help to Apply

Gently help group members discover the meaning of God's message for their own lives. Be careful not to be judgmental of those who are not yet applying these truths. It's the Spirit's work to apply God's Word to the hearts of men and women. Tactfully let the group know how the Spirit is applying it in your heart and life. Pray faithfully for the Spirit's work in others.

Keep application low-key. Be careful not to put any personal pressure on group members to apply the truths. Simply try to help group members see that there is a relationship between the Bible and life. Avoid the use of direct pronouns in application. For example, instead of asking, "What does this

mean to you?” ask, “What does this mean in our lives?” or instead of asking, “What will you do?” ask, “What action does this passage suggest?”

Leadership Training

If there is more than one group, leaders are strongly encouraged to meet regularly for discussion of the lesson, for prayer, and for mutual support. Every leader should have a copy of the *Coffee Break Evangelism Manual with Director's Handbook*. This book is a basic “how-to” for establishing and leading a Bible discovery group. Reread the book or portions of it periodically and review it at the beginning of each season. *Leading with Love* in the Coffee Break Core Values series is another important tool for leadership development. Leaders will also find it helpful to attend one of the many leadership training workshops offered each year. For more information on materials or training, write to Discover Your Bible, 2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49560 or P.O. Box 5070, STN LCD 1, Burlington, ON L7R 3Y8, or visit www.FaithAliveResources.org.

Introduction

Sharing our faith is a very personal matter. Sometimes we feel that we'll insult or offend our friends if we talk to them about our faith. Or our friends may have misconceptions or negative perspectives about the Bible's message. Perhaps they have never read the Bible or they have no Christian background. In addition, we're afraid that we may not say things just right, so it is easier to clam up about our faith.

Don't worry about getting it right. People are naturally interested in others' personal stories. Simply using gracious, meaningful words to tell of God's grace in our lives goes a long way in communicating the gospel.

You may have been a Christian for many years, or maybe you are new in your faith. Possibly you are not even certain you have yet crossed the line of faith. Wherever you are on your spiritual journey, you will find this study helpful.

This study uses Colossians 4:2-6 as a framework of four essential elements of the Christian faith.

These include

- prayer,
- a dependence on God to open doors,
- characteristics of grace-filled living, and
- how to answer everyone.

The Scripture passages in this study will help us learn how Jesus and the early apostles interacted with people. We will learn how Paul and other early believers communicated their faith. Most importantly, we will learn to heed Peter's command in 1 Peter 3:15: "In your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect."

Tips for Leading Your Group

As you begin this study, you may want someone from the group to read the Introduction aloud. Ask: **Have you ever felt misunderstood when talking about your faith? If you were asked to share your faith story, would you be able to do so easily?**

Challenge your group to take time in the coming week to develop a three-minute explanation of how they came to believe in Jesus Christ. Those who were raised in a Christian home may say they have no story to tell. The opposite is the case. Their story would simply be more like Timothy's testimony (2 Tim. 1) than Paul's (Acts 9, 22, and 26). If they cannot name a specific date when they first trusted Christ, ask them to think of an event when they knew for certain that Christ was their personal Savior.

Be sensitive to group members who have not yet come to faith. They may be hearing the gospel for the first time in this study. Be sure to use language that they will understand. Look for natural opportunities to speak with them and to answer their questions. It can be as simple as going out for coffee and asking them what they think of the study or how their understanding of Jesus has changed. To make sure they feel included as participants, you may want to assign them the task of asking a Christian they know to tell how he or she came to believe in Christ.

As you prepare each lesson, think of how you would approach it if you were a nonbeliever. Ask yourself what might be confusing or difficult. Remember that you may have the opportunity to put into practice the principles you learn. Pray that the Holy Spirit will give you the right words to say to everyone in your group.

Glossary of Terms

Acts—a term used to describe the historical events (acts) of several apostles, especially Peter and Paul, in the early period of the Christian church. A physician named Luke wrote the narrative commonly called the Acts of the Apostles.

apostle—another word for one of the twelve disciples who were commissioned, or sent out, by Christ to proclaim the gospel. Christ also appointed Paul an apostle.

clear conscience—having no personal “baggage” to hide from others; living free of sinful patterns that would discredit what you say.

Colosse—a city located in present-day Turkey (near Laodicea) where Christianity took root. There is no evidence that Paul visited the place. Paul’s letter to the church there is called the epistle to the Colossians.

Corinthians—residents of the city of Corinth, the primary commercial center and capital of the Greek province Achaia. Paul’s letters 1 and 2 Corinthians are directed to the Christian church he established there.

devote—commit oneself to live a life of wholehearted service to Christ and his teachings.

Ephesus—a seaport city and significant commercial center located in present-day western Turkey. The apostle Paul spent a significant amount of time in this city, and an important Christian community developed there. Paul also wrote a letter to the church in Ephesus called the epistle to the Ephesians.

Galatians—residents of Galatia, a province in present-day north central Turkey. The Galatian believers were reverting to a form of legalism when Paul sent his corrective letter to them.

glorious inheritance—a place in heaven or glory, which Christians will receive when they die.

gospel—literally means “good news.” The gospel is the message that God’s Son, Jesus Christ, took the punishment for our sins upon himself, dying on the cross, and rose again for the salvation of his people; that he ascended into heaven; and that he will someday return to fully establish his kingdom.

Jacob—grandson of Abraham; he had twelve sons whose descendants became the twelve tribes of ancient Israel.

John—a disciple of Jesus who wrote one of the four gospel accounts in the New Testament. He was a close personal friend of Jesus and an

eyewitness to Jesus' life. He also wrote several New Testament letters and the book of Revelation.

mystery of Christ—the surprising meaning of God's eternal plan for all people, revealed to us through the person and work of Jesus Christ.

outsiders—people who do not believe in Jesus Christ, or who are outside the Christian faith.

Paul—a highly educated and religious Jew who initially rejected Christianity but came to faith after a miraculous encounter with Jesus. Paul played a key role in the founding of the early church; he wrote many of the letters in the New Testament.

Philippi—a seaport city located in present-day Greece. The apostle Paul established the church there and wrote the people a letter called the epistle to the Philippians.

proclaim—to make known the good news of God's grace and the forgiveness of sins.

saint—a person who trusts Jesus as Savior through the power of the Holy Spirit in his or her life.

salt—a mineral used to preserve food or enhance the flavor of food.

Samaria—a small country located between Galilee and Judea. Samaria was inhabited primarily by the descendants of the ten northern tribes of Israel who were carried off into captivity but who returned to their homeland and married foreigners. The Samaritans were considered to be a mixed race and not truly Jewish. Jews considered them enemies and heretics and refused to have any contact with them.

Silas—an apostle who worked with Paul and accompanied him on some of his missionary trips.

sinner—one who disobeys God's law as revealed in human conscience and God's Word, the Bible.

Sychar—one of the chief Samaritan cities located near Mount Gerazim. It was the place where Jacob dug a well nearly two thousand years before Christ lived.

Timothy—a follower of Christ and a young protege of Paul who accompanied him on his missionary trips.

Thessalonians—residents of Thessalonica, a seaport city in northern Greece. Paul established a church in this city and wrote two letters to the church there.

Lesson 1

Colossians 4:2-4; Ephesians 6:19; Philippians 4:6;
Acts 2:42-47; Ephesians 1:18-20; John 17:20-23

Prayer: The Essential Ingredient

Introductory Notes

Mike was about the last person you would expect to trust Jesus. He made it clear to any Christians he met that he wanted nothing to do with anything religious. Mike was convinced that he did not need God, and his spicy language reinforced his conviction. He was willing to concede, though, that his wife needed God and the church. When Mike's wife came to faith, her church community began to pray for the impossible: Mike's salvation. After six months of concentrated and intentional prayer, someone from the church shared the gospel and Mike prayed for salvation. It was a miracle. But Mike had seen the change in his wife's life, and he had observed the kindness of the church. Mike is a reminder that God does indeed answer "impossible" prayers.

This lesson will cover passages of Scripture that remind us that prayer is essential to sharing our faith. We need to ask for God's guidance and follow God's leading.

Optional Opening Share Question

What are some ways people communicate with God?

Allow a few minutes for group members to share experiences they have had with prayer. **Did you feel that God was speaking to you? Was it a positive or negative experience?** Be sure to accept each answer. Don't get bogged down with the theological implications of each answer. If an answer sounds questionable, simply say "That's interesting" and move on.

Encourage your group to think of prayer as a two-way conversation. We pray not only for the people we know who are open to the gospel, but also for God to lead us to people to whom we should speak. It is important that we not do all the talking in our prayer conversations with God. Rather, we should tune our ears to hear God's voice in these matters. Listen carefully to your group's comments. Be especially aware of those who may be struggling spiritually. Your goal is to help them see prayer as two-way communication.

1. *Colossians 4:2-4*

²Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. ³And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. ⁴Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.

Note: Paul was put in prison simply to await a trial or hearing or even to appease those who falsely accused him of disturbing the peace. He was not guilty of criminal activity.

a. *What does it mean to be devoted to prayer?*

It means to make prayer a priority in one's life. Prayer is not an option for the Christian; it is a prerequisite to sharing one's faith. **What things are people devoted to today? Children? Spouse? Jobs? How does being watchful and thankful capture the essence of prayerful preparation?** The word for *watchful* is translated "be wide awake" elsewhere in the New Testament. Jesus used the word in Matthew 26:38ff. when he asked his disciples to watch and pray before Judas Iscariot betrayed him. The disciples had fallen asleep, so being watchful meant to be awake and alert in prayer. **How might this insight help you as you prepare to talk with someone about your faith? Why should we be watchful? How will a thankful attitude affect the way we talk about our faith?**

b. *What specific things does Paul want people to pray for? Why?*

Paul wants people to pray that God would open doors so that he could share his faith with others. **What is our part in opening a door?** Remember that God often uses people, but never forget that it is God's power and not our cleverness that opens the door to others. Paul also wants people to pray that he would proclaim the gospel clearly so that people can understand it. Presenting a simple, understandable message about our experience with Jesus is an essential component of sharing our faith. The message must be clear and uncluttered.

How can we avoid presenting an unclear message? Our prayer is that we will be able to speak sensibly with people and to understand their spiritual situation. This is only possible when the Holy Spirit works in their lives and ours.

c. *Why does Paul want others to pray for him?*

Paul knows that God is the one who will open doors for the proclamation of the gospel. Knowing that others are praying will give him the confidence for the task. **Is prayer more effective when more than one person is praying? How can we follow Paul's example?**

In your discussion suggest that group members ask a small group of friends to pray specifically for their attempts to share their faith. If you are leading a grow group, have members suggest ways they can support each other in prayer. Incidentally, even newcomers can see the value of having friends pray for them.

2. *Ephesians 6:19*

Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel.

a. *What request does Paul make of the Ephesian Christians?*

Paul wants God to give him the words to speak, and he wants to be able to speak without fear. While it is true that God gives people insight into the needs of others, we also must be prepared to present a very clear message.

Jesus promised that in difficult circumstances he would give his followers the words to speak. The apostle Paul taught that the Spirit himself gives believers the words to say. Your grow group may wish to turn to 1 Corinthians 2:13ff. and discuss this concept. (See also Moses' complaint and the Lord's answer in Ex. 4:10-12.)

b. *What difference does it make if people are praying for us?*

Are you ever fearful when you talk to others about your beliefs? What is it that you fear? Do you fear that you will fail to unlock the “mystery of Christ”? (See the glossary.) How will the knowledge that others are praying for you help you open your mouth? How might we hold each other accountable in this regard? **The fact that we know others are praying for us should provide confidence as well as the realization that we are not alone in our effort.**

3. *Philippians 4:6*

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Note: A petition is a request and is normally understood to be one element of prayer.

a. *What is the antidote to fear and anxiety?*

The passage teaches that the antidote is prayer to God about our concerns and fears. **What are some anxieties we have when we speak with others? How is it a comfort to know that the one who is all-powerful hears our prayers? Why would this make us thankful?** God is the one who opens doors and helps us to walk through them. Furthermore, God promises to give us help and confidence so that our words will have a meaningful impact.

b. *Why is this prayer request important?*

It is important because we fear rejection. This is one of the greatest fears people have in interpersonal relationships. Rejection stifles our ability to speak to others. It makes us even more hesitant to share our faith. **How would our prayer give us confidence?** Our fear can be overcome when we articulate our fears in prayer. In response, God strengthens us and gives us a greater resolve to share our faith with others. As with many situations in life, the more we do something, the more natural it becomes. Often one difficult experience keeps us from speaking with others. However, when we discover that people are genuinely interested in what we have to say, we will become more comfortable in speaking about our faith.

4. *Acts 2:42-47*

⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. ⁴⁴All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. ⁴⁶Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

a. *What happened when the early church devoted itself to fellowship and prayer?*

Great things happened to the group and to individuals as well. They developed unity as their mutual appreciation of God was reinforced. They helped each other and found genuine fulfillment in their lives. Most significantly, God added to their numbers, because the spirit of prayer and learning was infectious. **Have you ever known someone with an infectious faith? What was this person like? How can we have an infectious faith? What needs of others might we be in a position to meet?** Be sure not to limit your answers to material needs. Although there is significant material need in our society, there are other needs as well. People today often need to know that someone is interested in them. They need role models for their relationships. Time is valuable; when we spend time with people, it shows them that we care. **How does sharing our beliefs translate into action?**

b. *How often did people come to faith?*

The early church was so activated by prayer and sharing that people came to faith on a daily basis.

c. *Is this the norm in the church today? Why or why not?*

The church today, with some exceptions, seems far removed from the experience of the early church. Take a few minutes to discuss why this appears to be the case. If you are leading a group, ask: **How can a sharing and caring community be a source of encouragement today?** Remember that in the early church there was a strong emphasis on relationships. As you discuss these matters, be aware that some group members may have negative comments to offer about a certain church. Be ready to turn the discussion in a more positive direction. All members of a local church should desire it to become what God wants it to be, and work toward that goal. **What can Christians today do to restore the New Testament perspective of community?**

5. *Ephesians 1:18-20*

¹⁸I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, ²⁰which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms.

a. *What is the first thing Paul prays for in verse 18? How is this accomplished?*

Paul prays that his readers might have their minds open to the great hope that each of them has in heaven, because this hope is a powerful incentive. The phrase “eyes of your heart” suggests a continual vision of enlightenment from the Holy Spirit. Overall, verse 18 gives us a glimpse of the believer’s future as a child of God. **How does a hope of eternal life change our perspective now?**

Now that you’ve touched on the topic of eternal life, you might want to ask if group members have saving faith. Be careful though. Since this is your first meeting together, ask only if you feel group members would not be unduly put off by the question. You might ask, “If you were to die tonight and God were to ask you, ‘Why should I let you into heaven?’ what would you say?”

People who have not yet trusted Christ may mention the good life they have led or the good works they have done. Explain that Christianity is a matter of *done* rather than *do*. It is based on what Christ has done for us by dying on the cross, rather than on the good works we might do for him. Good works are an indication that we have true faith; they are done out of gratitude for our salvation. We might say good works come after salvation, not before. Be sensitive to group members who may be struggling with this

concept. You may need to limit the discussion and offer to speak to anyone with questions after the session has ended.

- b. *What kind of power is available to those who believe in Christ? Why is this power important?*

This power is the same power God exercised when God raised Christ from the dead and restored him to his position of heavenly authority. **How does this thought encourage us? Have you ever felt this kind of power? Do you have it now?** How wonderful that this power is available to all believers. When we share our faith, it is God's power that saves, not the effectiveness of our presentation.

6. *John 17:20-23*

²⁰“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²²I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: ²³I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”

- a. *For whom is Jesus praying? What does he ask?*

Jesus is praying for both present and future believers. His prayer is a request for unity. The purpose of this unity is not simply for the sake of believers; it is also a mark of God's presence that speaks to people who have yet to believe. **What things can we do to indicate our unity with other Christians? How does disunity diminish the Christian message?**

- b. *What encouragement and challenge should this knowledge give us?*

We should be encouraged with the knowledge that Jesus is praying for us today. His prayer empowers us to be witnesses of God's love and grace to the world.

7. *Summary*

How will this lesson help us if we come across people like Mike in our life?

It will help to review the essential elements of prayer in the passages of this lesson, especially those that teach that divine power is unleashed by the prayers of the saints. Then we will know how to speak with people and they will be prepared by God to hear the message.

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How to Study

The questions in this study booklet will help you discover for yourself what the Bible says. This is inductive Bible study—no one will tell you what the Bible says or what to believe. You will discover the message for yourself.

Questions are the key to inductive Bible study. Through questions you will search for the writers' thoughts and ideas. The prepared questions in this booklet are designed to help you in your quest for answers. You can and should ask your own questions too. The Bible comes alive with meaning for many people as they discover for themselves the exciting truths it contains. Our hope and prayer is that this booklet will help the Bible come alive for you.

The questions in this study are designed to be used with the New International Version of the Bible, but other translations can also be used.

Step 1. Read the Bible passage several times. Allow the thoughts and ideas to sink in. Think about its meaning. Ask questions of your own about the passage.

Step 2. Answer the questions, drawing your answers from the passage. Remember that the purpose of the study is to discover what the Bible says. Write your answers in your own words. If you use Bible study aids such as commentaries or Bible handbooks, do so only after completing your own personal study.

Step 3. Apply the Bible's message to your own life and world. Ask yourself these questions: What is this passage saying to me? How does it challenge me? Comfort me? Encourage me? Is there a promise I should claim? A warning I should heed? For what can I give thanks? If you sense God speaking to you in some way, respond to him in a personal prayer.

Step 4. Share your thoughts with someone else if possible. This will be easiest if you are part of a Bible study group that meets regularly to share discoveries and discuss questions. If you would like to learn of a study group in your area or if you would like more information on how to start a small group Bible study, write to Discover Your Bible, 2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49560 or to P.O. Box 5070, STN LCD 1, Burlington, ON L7R 3Y8, or visit www.FaithAliveResources.org.

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Silas—an apostle who worked with Paul and accompanied him on some of his missionary trips.

sinner—one who disobeys God's law as revealed in human conscience and God's Word, the Bible.

Sychar—one of the chief Samaritan cities located near Mount Gerazim. It was the place where Jacob dug a well nearly two thousand years before Christ lived.

Timothy—a follower of Christ and a young protege of Paul who accompanied him on his missionary trips.

Thessalonians—residents of Thessalonica, a seaport city in northern Greece. Paul established a church in this city and wrote two letters to the church there.

Lesson 1

Colossians 4:2-4; Ephesians 6:19; Philippians 4:6;
Acts 2:42-47; Ephesians 1:18-20; John 17:20-23

Prayer: The Essential Ingredient

Mike was about the last person you would expect to trust Jesus. He made it clear to any Christians he met that he wanted nothing to do with anything religious. Mike was convinced that he did not need God, and his spicy language reinforced his conviction. He was willing to concede, though, that his wife needed God and the church. When Mike's wife came to faith, her church community began to pray for the impossible: Mike's salvation. After six months of concentrated and intentional prayer, someone from the church shared the gospel and Mike prayed for salvation. It was a miracle. But Mike had seen the change in his wife's life, and he had observed the kindness of the church. Mike is a reminder that God does indeed answer "impossible" prayers.

1. *Colossians 4:2-4*

²Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. ³And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. ⁴Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.

- a. What does it mean to be devoted to prayer?

- b. What specific things does Paul want people to pray for? Why?

- c. Why does Paul want others to pray for him?

2. Ephesians 6:19

Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel.

- a. What request does Paul make of the Ephesian Christians?

- b. What difference does it make if people are praying for us?

3. Philippians 4:6

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

- a. What is the antidote to fear and anxiety?

- b. Why is this prayer request important?

4. Acts 2:42-47

⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. ⁴⁴All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. ⁴⁶Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and

sincere hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

- a. What happened when the early church devoted itself to fellowship and prayer?

- b. How often did people come to faith?

- c. Is this the norm in the church today? Why or why not?

5. Ephesians 1:18-20

¹⁸I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, ²⁰which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms.

- a. What is the first thing Paul prays for in verse 18? How is this accomplished?

- b. What kind of power is available to those who believe in Christ?
Why is this power important?

6. *John 17:20-23*

²⁰“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²²I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: ²³I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”

- a. For whom is Jesus praying? What does he ask?

- b. What encouragement and challenge should this knowledge give us?

7. *Summary*

How will this lesson help us if we come across people like Mike in our life?