October 25/26, 2025

Test the Spirits

Face to Face Series

1 John 4:1-6

Pastor Ryan Harmon

Well, good morning, Lincoln Berean Church. It's good to be with you this morning. Lincoln Berean Church, that's our name. I think from time to time it's worthwhile to remember where that name comes from. If you've been here for some time, then you're familiar with this, I'm sure. But it's still helpful for us to remember this and remember what it means.

The name Berean comes from the book of Acts. In Acts, chapter 17, Paul has been moving throughout the Mediterranean world preaching and proclaiming the name of Jesus. And as he came to the town of Berea, which is a town in northern Greece, he proclaimed—and the people of Berea, it says in Acts 17—as they eagerly received what he had to say. But they didn't stop there. They then diligently searched the Scriptures to see whether what he said was so**,** to see whether Paul's words lined up with the truth presented in Scripture, and Paul commended them for it. Lincoln Berean Church, that's where our name comes from.

The question I'd like to ask you this morning is whether we will embrace what it means to be Bereans. Will we embrace what it means to have that name? When I say "we," please understand I'm not talking about myself or about Bryan, or about our staff or our elders. It's important that it's inclusive, so we're a part of the "we," but I'm talking about everyone that calls Lincoln Berean Church their church home…each and every one of us. Will we be people that embrace what it means to be Bereans, to diligently study the Scriptures? As we continue our series in 1 John this morning, I think it will become quite evident why that is so critical, why we must embrace what it means to be Bereans. So, open your Bibles with me to 1 John, Chapter 4 as we continue this study together.

Last week, as we finished chapter 3, Bryan reminded us that although as we walk through the Christian life, we will stumble…we will blow it…we will mess up, each and every one of us is a work in progress. Although that happens, when our heart starts to condemn us and we start to feel like, as Bryan likes to say, "loser Christians," we need to remember that that is a feeling speaking; that is not God speaking. Our God and Father accepts us on the basis of His Son and the finished work on the cross. And Jesus came in the flesh, proclaiming the Word of life and making eternal life, this unending dynamic life with God. That is the dance of God, making it available to all who come to Him. Therefore, we can stand absolutely assured.

As chapter 3 closed, John offered up another point of assurance to go along with that. It comes in verse 24 where John says*,* ***God has given us His Spirit***. We've been given the Spirit of God as a sign, as a guarantee of the inheritance we will step into. We are people of the Spirit. We are a community of the Spirit, brought about by the Spirit, unified by the Spirit.

Now as John continues and we turn the page into chapter 4, he returns to the problem that we met when we first opened this book. You'll remember that there were false teachers that were proclaiming something different, and part of the problem is those false teachers left, but as they left the community, they didn't leave saying they were abandoning God. They left saying they were right. They had a spiritual message and they had spiritual insight, but they were proclaiming something different. And that poses a problem that maybe could stir up concern for this believing community, as they saw these people so boldly proclaim that they were the ones that had a message inspired by God. So, John addresses that at the beginning of chapter 4, verse 1:

> **Beloved,** (That is brothers and sisters that are part of this spiritual community, this spiritual family of faith.) **do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God...** (*NASB, 1 John 4:1a)

Do not believe every spirit. In other words, just because someone comes along proclaiming that they have a message from God, proclaiming to have deep spiritual insight from God, just because someone says that, doesn't mean that we as a community are required to believe it. We don't have to believe every time someone says, "God told me." Rather John says, **test the spirits.** To test is to examine. It's to weigh, to check, to verify the authenticity of the message, to see whether it is actually so, to see whether it is true. And this community, this Christian community, was called to do just that, to check the authenticity of the claims of those who were saying that they had special spiritual insight. And the reason they are to do that is because John says there are **spirits,** plural. Now we know that we have been given the Spirit, the Holy Spirit of God, but the fact that John says **test the spirits,** plural, brings us to a sobering reality that we live in a world that is physical, but we also live in a spiritual realm. It is inhabited by God and His angels, certainly Father, Son, Spirit, but also there are evil spirits. There are other spirits, the devil and his minions, so to speak. There are evil spirits. Therefore, it's imperative that this community **test the spirits.** Just because someone is saying they have spiritual insight doesn't guarantee that insight is from God and from His Spirit.

Now the reason for John's concern becomes clear. We already mentioned these false teachers, and he brings them up again at the end of verse 1: We're to

> **…test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.** (Vs. 1b)

False Prophets, liars, deceivers, but that word **prophet** is important. They are claiming to speak from and for God. They are claiming to have a message from God. They have gone out from the community, and they have gone out into the world. They are former members of the community, and as they have gone out, they have said, "We still have the proper message. We have God's insight. We have the words of God." Therefore, they're to **test the spirits.** It's imperative.

So, we know that's important. The question becomes, of course, "How do we do that?" That's precisely where John turns next. He gives us two tests. The first one comes in verse 2:

> **By this you know the Spirit of God:** (So here it is.) **every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the *spirit* of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.** (Vs. 2-3)

Test one: the message. What is the message that is being proclaimed? And, specifically, what is the message about Jesus Christ? Does the message accurately represent Jesus as He truly was and is? In our very first week, Bryan talked about how these false teachers claim to possess a spiritual knowledge, kind of a higher knowledge of reality, and certainly about Jesus and about the things of God. And as they claimed to possess this higher knowledge, they came up with a new version of Jesus.

There was a common false teaching in the first couple centuries, no doubt linked to what these false teachers were saying. The idea that these false teachers were proclaiming is that spiritual things were what was most important, and physical things were bad. Spiritual things are what mattered, and the body and flesh and all that stuff (matter) was bad. It was negative. And following that line of thought, they began to say things like, "Jesus didn't really appear in the flesh. He only seemed to appear in the flesh. He didn't really walk the earth. He only appeared to walk the earth. He was a spiritual being that only looked or seemed to be physical." They had this belief because they thought spirit is good; flesh and blood is bad.

Now John, in the very first verses of this letter, addressed this very teaching, and he addressed it emphatically and quite personally. Do you remember what he said? It was very personal. John basically came on the scene in these first few verses of this letter, and said, "Listen, I was there. I saw it with my eyes; I touched it with my hands. I'm talking about that which I experienced." John, at the Last Supper, is the one that leaned back on Jesus. He lived constantly attentive on Jesus' presence for three years solid.

Jesus lived and walked this very earth, and He actually did it. He didn't just seem to do it. Jesus probably had a distinctive walk. He probably ate His food a certain way. He had a certain tenor and tone to His voice, and John was acquainted with all of it. And, therefore, he said to these false teachers and to this community, "Not true! Jesus didn't appear to take on flesh. He actually took on flesh. And I can say that with confidence, because I was there. I saw it."

Now, here, John ups the ante, and he says that anyone who says something other than that, anyone that claims that Jesus did not come in the flesh, is proclaiming a message that is **not from God,** actually from the **spirit of the antichrist.** This is not mere opinion. This is a departure from what is true. This is to embrace falsehood. It's **not from God;** it's from the **spirit of the antichrist.** Here is what is from God. Jesus is the Word of life that **came in the flesh** to offer life with God—eternal life, eternal in duration, eternal in quality, available only through Him. Any other message is from the **spirit of antichrist.**

Now, Bryan mentioned this a few weeks ago, but in John, in this letter, the antichrist is not referring to that character that is to come, that culminating anti-God antichrist that is to come in the final days. Here, I think of this more as the job description of these spirits. Here's their function, here's their job description: to be anti-Christ, to be against Jesus, to be against God and His ways. These evil spirits have a mission, and they are obsessed with it. And their mission is to deceive, to get people off track, so that the very works of God cannot continue. They are anti-Christ, constantly seeking to deceive.

Test one: What is the message about Jesus? Does it align with who He actually was and is?

I think there are times where we take for granted how fortunate we are, first of all to have the full Word of God available to us. At this time, it was all being written during the days of this letter. So, the early church was quite diligent in gathering together and saying, "What is essential that we have to believe? What is error? What takes us off track?" And they did that, particularly in the first two centuries about the person of Jesus. "Who was He? What do we have to uphold? What can we not compromise on?" And ever since that day, Bible-believing, authentic Christianity has said this about Jesus. Jesus was fully God, and He was fully man. 100% God. 100% man. Now I understand that if you are a mathematical person, those numbers don't quite add up. I get that.

This is a deep, complex point of theology. It's trying to understand the deep things of God, and in that sense, it is a mystery to us. But by mystery, I don't mean we can't think about it, and we can't grow in our understanding. I just mean we're trying to bring our feeble human minds up into the glorious mind of God and understand these things that Paul describes as unfathomable to us. There are a number of things about God that are just so hard to comprehend. He's eternal. As temporal beings, just time-bound, we have the hardest time understanding eternity. He didn't have a beginning. He won't have an end. I remember as a kid, I used to sit and think, "Okay, if I could just keep going back, rewind the clock a little more, maybe He started here, you know, but He'll never arrive because He didn't have a beginning." He is trying to understand the mind of God which takes us into deep mysteries. But don't let the fact that it is mysterious prevent us from seeking as much as we can to understand more and more of who He is.

So, the truth is, as we consider these things, we step into worship; we learn more about His glorious nature. And in fact, for eternity, we're going to get to do that. A thousand years from now, we will be gathering together. We're going to say, "God is so amazing. It's unbelievable. A thousand years ago, I wasn't quite aware of just how glorious He is." We'll be drawn up to everlasting worship, gazing at just the magnificence of who He is, fully God and fully man. But if either one of those is compromised, here is what is at stake: our salvation. Our salvation is at stake if we would compromise on the idea that Jesus was fully human, that He actually appeared in the flesh. If we would say, "Well, He didn't probably appear in the flesh," that would mean that He didn't physically go to the cross. He didn't bodily die. He didn't actually rise from the dead. And if that is not true, then we remain in our sin, and that is what the **spirit of the antichrist** would love to deceive us into believing. We have to uphold Jesus, fully human. Our very salvation is at stake.

But, along with that, we also have to uphold that He was fully divine. And I think in our day and age, this is what is more compromised more often in the world at large. If we're going to err, the temptation is probably to err more on this side. Here's what I mean by that. If I would go out in the larger world, and say, “Hey, were you aware that Jesus Christ was actually a person? He walked around the Middle East and He said amazing things, and the religious leaders of the day didn't like it, and they killed Him for it.” I think the world at large would say, “I know that's why He is so admirable.”

But if I would continue and I'd say, “Did you also know that He was God in the flesh, that when He died, He made the perfect sacrifice for sin, and He defeated sin and death and the powers of evil? And then He died and rose again, declaring His victory, and He ascended to the right hand of the Father and He currently oversees all of human history and is in charge. Did you know that?” Well, now I'll meet resistance. But it's critical we hold on to that: fully God, fully man. Test one: What is the message? What is said about Jesus? Do they represent Jesus? Do they proclaim Him as He truly is? Because any message that veers from who He truly was and is, is **not from God.**

Now as John continues, he's going to get to the second test, but before he does, he speaks to the concerns of this little community. You know, you can imagine it is a sobering thing to come to grips with the fact that we live in the midst of conflict, that there are evil spirits, that there is the **spirit of the antichrist** at work in the world. That can be something that induces anxiety and fear for people. Maybe even you could start to believe that the people that are proclaiming a false message are gaining a hearing. Maybe they're winning. What do we do about that? John addresses them in verse 4:

> **You are from God, little children, and have overcome them;** (Them, referring to the evil spirits, but also the false message.) **because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.**

Overcome is a prevailing word. It's a victory word, a Greek word. It could be used in the field of battle. It could be referred to in the court of law. Either way, it's about the one who is victorious. And here John is affirming, there is a conflict. There is a war on a cosmic scale: light versus darkness, good versus evil, the spirit of truth versus the spirit of error. There is a conflict, a cosmic war that is being waged. And if for a moment you start to feel fearful, you need not fear, because you stand with the One who has overcome. John says they **have overcome,** and we might say, “Well, how have they overcome?” And the reason they **have overcome,** and we **have overcome** is because we are with God. We are His **little children**, and He has overcome**.** Therefore we need not fear. His victory, God's victory is absolutely assured.

Now, how is that and why is that? Well, John's language is important. Notice he said, **have overcome,** not “will overcome” at some future moment. **Have...** the tense of that verb indicates something already happened in the past, and it has present implications: already overcome. And that means that we can live rest assured right now in this moment.

We as believers live in what theologians often refer to as the “already and not yet” of this cosmic war. We live in this in-between time. There are things that are already true. God has already overcome evil. We already get to experience the fullness of life with Him. We already have been given God's Spirit, and we have to remember and be thankful for all the things that are already true. But a war wages on, a conflict continues, and there are “not yet” things that we look forward to, and we hope for. But just because there is this “not yet” reality, never let it, for a moment, lead you into insecurity, because God has already overcome. Where did He already overcome? He overcame on the cross. On the cross, Jesus died, and in His death and in His resurrection, He overcame sin and death. He dealt the decisive blow that guarantees that at the final day, the victory will be His. It's already determined. Nothing can compromise it. Therefore, we stand victorious with Him, knowing that a day is coming when ***every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.*** Until that day, we live full of hope and full of confidence, “already and not yet.”

An analogy that is often used to capture this idea is drawn from World War II, and I find it to be very helpful. Every year in June, without fail, I am drawn up in gratitude and thankfulness for all those who serve in the military, but on June 6 I think particularly about those who served on June 6, 1944. The day that we call D-Day. that fateful day that historians would look back at and say that that was the moment; that was the decisive blow. That's the day we remember. I don't have to look that day up. It's burned into my memory, June 6, 1944.

I have to confess to you, though, that I do, from time to time, have to look up the other day called VE Day. You might not even be familiar with VE Day. Victory in Europe Day, the day the Nazis unconditionally surrendered. It came 11 months later, May 8, 1945. The decisive blow was absolutely delivered, but there was 11 months of conflict. Eleven months of war that continued to rage before that final decisive blow, that final moment when everything was finished finally came.

The decisive blow has been delivered. Jesus died on the cross, guaranteeing the victory. And there is a day to come when ***all knees will bow*****,** and we live in the in-between. And because we live in this in-between moment where conflict continues to rage on, we are called to be vigilant. We're called to be people who **test the spirits…test the spirits.**

Test one: the message. Test two comes in verse 5. John says:

> **They are from the world; therefore they speak *as* from the world, and the world listens to them.**

If test one is the message, I think of test two as the audience: Who's listening? Who's lapping up and buying what's being sold? John's logic is a little circular here, but it makes sense when you think about it. He's saying, “Hey, **they are from the world, therefore they speak as if they are from the world.** And those who really love their message reveal that they also **are from the world.** There's a straight line. People who are of the world love the message of the world.”

The world, of course, is just John's shorthand for this system of flesh and evil that is opposed to God. And those who are caught up, are from this system, are born, are children of this system. They act as though they are from the system. It shouldn't be all that surprising. And when people who are from that system hear the message of that system, hear the message of the world, and from the world, they respond, and they say, "I'm in. It sounds good to me…sounds good to me." In some way, it's more subjective, certainly, but in some way the audience who is listening and responding to the message, can help us understand where that message is coming from. Is that message inspired by the spirit of truth or the spirit of error?

It's a little bit like this. At the last week of my sabbatical, I met my best friend in Washington, DC, and on Friday afternoon we were on the Capitol Mall, sitting there on a bench, looking at the Capitol and also looking at the Washington Monument. And it was the Friday before the Husker game at Maryland, which is just a few miles away, and so I went to the mall, fully expecting that it would be overrun with red. We travel well, and we did travel well, but I was surprised as we sat there talking, that I didn't see that many Husker fans. In fact, I only saw one. It was a college student that was running by, with a Nebraska shirt on. Now I am from Nebraska, and I speak as if I am from Nebraska. And so, I said what Nebraskans say. He ran by, and I said, "Go Big Red." And he stopped, and looked at me and said, "Go Big Red. Where are you from?" I said, "Lincoln." He said, "I'm from Lincoln." We connected because we were from Nebraska. If you're from Nebraska, you speak as if you're from Nebraska, and the people who are from Nebraska listen and respond. They get it. If that person, if that student was from New Mexico, and he happened to grab his roommate's sweatshirt to go for a run, and he was running by and I said, "Go Big Red," he would have thought I was crazy. It wouldn't have registered. ***Those who are from the world speak as if they are from the world and the world listens.***

If we see a message come out proposing a new and improved version of Jesus and the world, let's just say those who generally are opposed to God, love it. It should raise red flags for us, cause us to pause. It's not decisive. We go back and we look at the content of the message, but the audience who's lapping up what's being sold, says something about the content of the message and where it is coming from. Now in just the same way, those who speak the message from God, well, those who are from God, they respond to that message as well. So John says in verse 6:

> **We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us.** (Now here's kind of his summarizing statement.) **By this** (By these two tests) **we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.**

When John says **We**, he certainly is referring to himself and other authorities, preachers, teachers in the church, those who speak for God, but also he's talking about all of us, the believing community. When we embrace what is true about Jesus and we proclaim it in word and deed out in the world, those who are being drawn by the very Spirit of God will respond to the truth of what is being proclaimed.

But it's also true that there will be people that will hear what is being proclaimed and will say, “I want nothing to do with it. I like this version better.” When that happens, it's perfectly appropriate for our heart to grieve. That is troubling; that is upsetting, but we can never allow that to tempt us to begin to compromise on the truth of what we uphold and what we proclaim. Our commitment is to the truth. It's to represent Jesus as He truly is, to worship Him as He truly is, to tell the world about who He truly is. Our commitment is to the truth, not to the counterfeits, not to the fakes, because there are fakes out there. Because of that, John says, **test the spirits.**

Do you know the best way to identify a counterfeit or identify a fake? Here it is! Become intimately acquainted with the real thing. Become intimately acquainted with Jesus as He actually is, so that when someone comes and presents this fake version, this new and improved version, your acquaintance with Him, your relationship with Him, can empower you to say “Not true. That ain't Him.”

That's why it's so critical, church. That's why it's so critical that we embrace what it means to be Bereans, that we go into God's Word, that we cherish His Word, that we seek Him in His Word as He's presented Himself to us. God has spoken. Just consider that for a moment. For centuries before God's Word was written, before God came on Mount Sinai and declared, “Here's what I say,” people just longed to know, “What do the gods want?” And now God, He's revealed Himself to us. Oh, that we would be people that would cherish His Word, would dig into His Word, that we would be Bereans and we would live up to our name.

Over the past 15 years as a pastor, I've become concerned as I've watched what I would describe as a very subtle, yes, it's very subtle, but a subtle erosion of confidence in God's Word…a decreasing confidence that this book, that God's Word is the ultimate guide to life. It's the best information on the most important things. It is God speaking. I'm passionate about it, because if we lose a passion for His Word, if we lose a reverence for His Word, we are toast.

I've seen it like in subtle ways. We're not talking about what's going on out there. I'm talking in here with friends of mine. These are personal stories. Someone said to me, “I know God's Word is helpful in terms of my personal faith, but when it comes to how I run my business, when it comes to how I interact in the world at large, it just doesn't work. And so I'll take care of that, but I will keep going to Him. It's good I have a quiet time,” relegating God's Word to the private sphere of his private religion but not impacting all points and all parts of his world, so to decrease the importance the authority of God's Word.

I had professors that used to say when we go to study God's Word, what we need to have in mind is reading it like this. We are under it. It masters us. We never master it. When my life is out of alignment with God's Word, I don't change God's Word. I see that my life has to change. It has to align with what is true.

Another little subtle comment I've heard from a friend is, “Jesus never talked about that; only Paul talks about that, and I just really want to listen to what Jesus said,” as if God's Word isn't unified,

that He hasn't given us exactly what we need, and He hasn't spoken with one voice to start to minimize what He said.

Those are subtle, but they are the subtle first steps that will, in time, take root, and they will lead us to be people that let our Bibles sit on the shelves, so to speak. Our Bibles will become dusty. Our apps will get deleted off our phone, and as that happens, we become, as people, very vulnerable to the counterfeits, very vulnerable to the fakes. We become less and less able to be people of discernment who are able to **test the spirits** and identify truth and reject error.

We're called to be a people, a community of the Spirit, shaped after Jesus, a spirit and a community of truth and of love. If we are to be that, each one of us has a call, a call to go to God, to seek Him in His Word, so that we might find Him as He truly is and worship Him and be transformed by His Spirit, and to embrace the eternal life that is available only through Him. Let that be true of us.

> *Our Father, we thank You. We thank You that You have won the victory. It is over, for on the cross You defeated sin and death. You made payment for our sin that we might come to You and receive what has been freely given by Your grace. And now, as we await that final moment when every knee shall bow, we pray that You will help us to be people of discernment, people of the Word, people of the truth that we might properly represent You in the world, a world that longs to know the life that is truly life. We pray these things in Jesus' name, Amen.*

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FALL 2025 // WEEK 8

Life Group Questions

1 John – Face to Face // October 25/26, 2025

Test the Spirits // 1 John 4:1-6

Introduction

John once again turns to the idea of false teaching and false prophets. The problem with false prophets is that you can't tell them apart from the true ones at first glance. They seem devout and reasonable; they claim to have a word from God; but not everyone who claims to be a prophet is in fact a prophet. In our passage John gives the followers of Jesus two things to look for in testing the spirits.

Study Questions *(to complete on your own)*

1) Read 1 John 4:1-6 in a couple different translations of Scripture. Make notes of words or phrases that are repeated. **What is John's main concern in this portion of his letter?**

2) Compare this week's passage with 1 John 2:18-23. **What similarities do you see between the two passages?**

3) **What does 1 John 4:1-6 tell us about those who are in Christ?**

Discussion Questions *(with your group)*

1) What has been your experience with false teachers or groups that you now understand to be a cult?

Why do you think people are vulnerable to false teaching?

2) In 1 John 4:1, John tells his readers to "test" the spirits. **What does he mean by test?**

According to 1 John 4:2-3 what is the first test to determine if a spirit is from God?

Why is confessing that Jesus came in the flesh important to the message of the gospel?

3) John reminds us in 1 John 4:4 that "greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world". **What does that mean?**

What kind of effect can understanding this truth have on the way we live out our faith?

4) According to 1 John 4:5-6 what is the second test to determine if a spirit is from God?

Look back at 1 John 2:15-17. **How does embracing the world affect a person's ability to hear and believe the truth? What would likely resonate with that person as true?**

5) Pastor Ryan mentioned that two things are critical to developing discernment when seeking to "test" the spirits: 1) Knowing the truth of the Word of God and 2) Being engaged in God's community. **What are 2 practical things you could do to grow in your understanding of the truth this next week?** (Hint**:** look at the Personal Spiritual Exercises below).

How could you engage yourself more deeply in your community (Life Group!) this next week? (Examples: being more vulnerable, connecting with someone from my Life Group for coffee or lunch, listening to and praying for those in my Life Group)

Personal Spiritual Exercises

Just like physical exercises help strengthen and stretch our bodies for healthy living, these spiritual exercises are meant to move us spiritually in ways that may be new so that we might experience inner growth. Since God longs for us to experience Him with our whole selves—mind, body, spirit— we invite you to strengthen your souls with exercises that challenge and stretch you in new ways. Choose one and commit to repeating it until you gain strength in that area.

1) **Scripture Reading: to listen and soak in the Word as an experience of the words washing over you.** Read or listen to the entire letter of 1 John at least twice/week. As you take it in, resist the impulse to study and parse the details. The point is not to gain "head knowledge" but a stirring in the heart as the Holy Spirit brings the Word to life in you.

2) **Memorization: to internalize God's Word.** A key passage for this series is ***1 John 4:7-14***. Commit to memorize it yourself and encourage others in your group to do it with you.

3) **Walk & Pray: to actively engage with the scripture passage.** Write out the passage of the sermon each week on a note card and take it with you on a daily walk.

4) **Journal Reflection: to practice remembering what God has done.** Make time in your schedule to put down in writing the feelings and thoughts that are stirring as you interact with the Word of God.

5) **Self-control Exercise: to help you come to stillness from a busy or hurried pace of life.** Set a timer for 10 minutes. Sit upright but comfortably in a chair with your palms open and upward on your lap. Focus on a word or short phrase about the character of God the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit. When your thoughts wander to the things on your to-do list or other people's needs, redirect them back to the character of God. When the 10 minutes is up, close in a short prayer of gratitude.

Prayer

Praying together in a group is different than praying alone with God. It's a conversation that can help you grow closer to each other as you are in God's presence. One way to pray follows this often-used pattern in scripture – acknowledge who God is, recognize the need we have for Him, and ask to partner with Him on behalf of others. When possible, use the passage of scripture from this week's sermon as your starting point, then form a prayer that follows this pattern:

God, our Father, this week we learned that you are _____ and _____ .

As I looked into your Word, I understood how I need you to _____. Help me to be faithful to _____ in the week ahead.

Other people are on my heart, and I trust that you have put them there for a reason. I ask for your will to be accomplished in their life as they _____. Help me to know how to respond well to the needs of _____, even as my first step is in praying for them right now.

Each group engages in prayer differently. Some groups go around and allow anyone to pray that desires to do so. Other groups have several people pray or maybe 1 person closes the group in prayer. Still other groups split into smaller groups of 2-3 people and those people pray for each other. How you choose to engage in prayer is dependent on your group and your choice to ENGAGE! **We learn to pray by praying and by listening and praying with others!**