

Teach Us to Pray, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 3: Praying to the Father Through the Son

John 14:13–14; 1 Timothy 2:5

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This lesson sits at the doctrinal center of the whole study, and it touches truths that lie close to some of the most common errors in the religious world. What is at stake is the mediatorship of Jesus Christ. John 14:13-14 and 1 Timothy 2:5 together teach that we come to God the Father through the Son, and through the Son alone. There is one God and one mediator. Make sure the class leaves with this fixed: a Christian does not approach God through Mary, through departed saints, through angels, through a human priesthood, or through the supposed merit of an especially holy person. We approach the Father through Jesus Christ, our great high priest and the one mediator between God and men.

Two clarifications guard against error. First, praying “in Jesus’ name” is not a magic formula. The phrase does not function like a password that, correctly typed, forces the door open. To ask in his name is to ask on the basis of who he is and what he has done, in keeping with his character and his will, as those who belong to him and represent him. An ambassador speaks in the name of the one who sent him; he says what his sender would say. So to pray in Jesus’ name is to pray the kind of prayer Jesus himself would own. Second, “whatever you ask” is not an unconditional blank check. It is bounded by the very phrase that qualifies it, “in my name,” and by the stated purpose, “that the Father may be glorified in the Son.” This protects the class from the error, developed more fully in later lessons, that prayer is a tool for getting whatever we want.

At the same time, do not let the lesson become merely a list of things prayer is not. The pastoral heart of this passage is access and confidence. Many sincere believers pray as spiritual orphans, secretly convinced God will only listen if they have been good enough. The aim this week is to set them free by anchoring their confidence not in themselves but in Christ. When students grasp that the Son has opened the way and stands as their one mediator, their prayers can become bold, honest, and frequent. Teach the doctrine clearly, and let it land as the good news it is.

Question 1

Student Question:

Jesus promises, “Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do” (v. 13). What does it actually mean to pray “in Jesus’ name,” and why is it far more than a phrase we attach to the end of a prayer?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Begin by dismantling the idea that “in my name” is a closing tag. In the ancient world a name carried the weight of the whole person, their authority, character, and reputation. To act or speak in someone’s name was to act on their authority and in line with their will, as their authorized representative. So to pray in Jesus’ name is to come to God on the strength of who Jesus is, not on the strength of who we are.

Make the access point explicit. The reason our prayers reach God at all is Jesus. He is the one who has dealt with our sin and opened the way to the Father (as Lesson 1 established with the torn curtain and the throne of grace). When we pray in his name, we are saying, in effect, “Father, I come to you on the basis of your Son, not on the basis of my record.” That is precisely why it gives confidence.

Show that praying in his name also shapes the content of our prayers. An ambassador does not say whatever he pleases in the name of his king; he says what the king would say. To pray in Jesus’ name is to pray the kind of prayer Jesus would pray, in line with his character and will. This is the seed of the truth that this lesson will develop: the name and the will of Jesus belong together.

Close by naming the goal Jesus gives in the same breath: “that the Father may be glorified in the Son.” Answered prayer is meant to put the glory of God on display. Keep that in front of the class; it will frame everything else in the lesson.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Praying “in Jesus’ name” as coming on his authority and in line with his will, not reciting a formula
- A name in Scripture standing for the whole person: authority, character, reputation
- Jesus as the basis of our access to the Father (the torn curtain, the throne of grace)
- The ambassador image: representing the one whose name we use
- The glory of the Father in the Son as the purpose of answered prayer

Discussion Prompts

- What is the difference between praying in Jesus’ name and simply ending a prayer with his name?
- If a name stands for the whole person, what are we leaning on when we pray in Jesus’ name?
- How does praying in his name give us confidence we could never have in ourselves?

Question 2

Student Question:

Be honest about your own habit. Has “in Jesus’ name” become a routine sign-off for you, or even a kind of formula you assume makes a prayer count? What would it look like this week to pray in his name with real meaning rather than out of habit?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question gently exposes a near-universal habit. Most of us have said “in Jesus’ name” thousands of times with our minds already moving on. There is no need for shame, but there is an invitation to recover the meaning. Help students notice the autopilot without scolding them for it.

Reconnect the phrase to its weight. Suggest that for one week they pause before saying it and remember what it means: that they are coming to the Father through the Son, on his merit and in line with his will. Even a moment’s awareness can turn a reflex back into an act of faith.

Offer an alternative practice for those who find the phrase has gone stale: occasionally pray a whole prayer consciously “through Jesus,” naming at the start that they come on his account, not their own. The aim is meaning, not a new ritual.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Recovering the meaning of a phrase that has become routine
- Praying with conscious dependence on Christ rather than on habit
- The danger of treating sacred language as a verbal seal
- Awareness as a step back toward faith-filled prayer

Discussion Prompts

- When you say “in Jesus’ name,” what, if anything, are you usually thinking?
- How could you restore meaning to that phrase this week?
- What does it do to your prayers to remember you come to God on Jesus’ account?

Question 3

Student Question:

Paul writes that “there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5). What is a mediator, and why does it matter so much that there is only one, and that the one is Jesus?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Here the lesson states its central doctrine plainly from 1 Timothy 2:5. A mediator is a go-between, one who stands between two estranged parties and brings them together. Sin has separated humanity from a holy God, and we cannot bridge that gap ourselves. We need a mediator, and Paul says there is exactly one: “the man Christ Jesus.”

Stress both the oneness and the identity. There is one mediator, not many. This rules out the idea that we approach God through a chain of intermediaries, whether departed saints, angels, Mary, or a human priesthood that re-offers a sacrifice. And the one mediator is the man Christ Jesus, fully God and fully man, uniquely able to lay his hand on both God and us. Only one who is truly God and truly man can stand in the gap, and there is only one such person.

Show why this is good news rather than a narrow technicality. Because the mediator is appointed and effective, every believer has direct and equal access to God. We do not need to find someone holier to carry our prayers in. The newest, weakest Christian comes to the Father through the same Christ as the most seasoned saint. There are no spiritual elites at the throne of grace.

Tie it back to the previous lesson's high priest. The one mediator is also the one who always lives to make intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25). He has not merely opened the door and walked away; he stands for us at the Father's right hand even now. That is the security underneath all our praying.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- One God and one mediator, the man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5)
- A mediator as the go-between who reconciles estranged parties
- Christ's unique qualification as fully God and fully man
- A clear rejection of praying through Mary, saints, angels, or any human priesthood
- Direct and equal access for every believer; no spiritual elites at the throne

Discussion Prompts

- Why do sinful people need a mediator to come to a holy God?
- What makes Jesus uniquely qualified to be that one mediator?
- If there is only one mediator, what does that say about the idea of praying through saints or others?

Question 4

Student Question:

We can drift into leaning on other things to make us acceptable to God: our own goodness, a streak of religious effort, or the sense that we need an especially holy person to pray for us. Where are you tempted to trust something other than Christ to secure God's ear, and what would it mean to rest in him alone?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question surfaces the subtle ways we still try to earn God's ear. Few of us would say out loud that we approach God through someone other than Christ, yet in practice many lean on

substitutes: a sense that God listens more on the days we have been good, a reliance on our religious performance, or a feeling that we need a holier person to really get through. Help students name their particular substitute honestly.

Apply the doctrine pastorally. If there is one mediator and our access rests on him, then our good days and bad days do not change our standing to approach God. This frees the discouraged from despair and frees the diligent from pride. We all come the same way: through Christ.

Invite a concrete shift of trust. Encourage students to notice this week the moment they hesitate to pray because they feel unworthy, and to consciously transfer their confidence from themselves to Christ. The practice of rejecting the substitute and resting in the mediator is itself spiritually formative.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The temptation to ground our access to God in personal performance
- Resting in Christ alone rather than in our own goodness or in another's merit
- Equal access for the discouraged and the diligent through the one mediator
- Transferring confidence from self to Christ as a habit of faith

Discussion Prompts

- What do you tend to lean on to feel acceptable to God when you pray?
- How does the one mediator free both the discouraged and the proud?
- What would change if you stopped grading your worthiness before praying?

Question 5

Student Question:

Jesus gives the purpose of answered prayer: "that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (v. 13). How does this stated goal shape what it means to ask in his name, and how does praying for the Father's glory protect us from treating prayer as a way to get whatever we happen to want?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Return to the purpose clause, because it governs the whole promise: "that the Father may be glorified in the Son." Answered prayer is not finally about our comfort; it is about God's glory displayed through the Son. This reframes everything. To ask in Jesus' name is to ask in a way that aims at the Father's glory, not merely our own preferences.

Show how this guards the promise from abuse. "Whatever you ask" sounds unlimited until we hear its purpose. We are not authorized to ask in Jesus' name for things that would dishonor the Father or contradict the Son. The purpose clause quietly screens our requests. A prayer aimed at

God's glory and a prayer aimed only at our own gratification are not the same kind of prayer, even if both end with "in Jesus' name."

Help the class see this as freedom, not restriction. When our deepest aim becomes the Father's glory in the Son, we are released from the anxious project of trying to script our own lives. We can ask boldly, then trust the Father to answer in the way that most glorifies him, which will also, in the end, be the best for us.

Connect to worship. Prayer and the glory of God belong together. The same God we adore is the God we ask, and asking in Jesus' name keeps our requests tethered to worship rather than letting them drift into mere wish-making.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The glory of the Father in the Son as the governing purpose of answered prayer
- The purpose clause as a guard against self-centered asking
- "Whatever you ask" qualified by "in my name" and by God's glory
- Freedom in aiming at God's glory rather than scripting our own outcomes
- Prayer tethered to worship rather than reduced to wish-making

Discussion Prompts

- How does "that the Father may be glorified" change the way you read "whatever you ask"?
- Which of your current requests aim mainly at God's glory, and which mainly at your comfort?
- Why is aiming at God's glory actually freeing rather than restricting?

Question 6

Student Question:

Imagine holding your current prayer requests up to the test, "Would answering this glorify the Father in the Son?" Which of your requests look different in that light, and how might that question reshape what you ask for?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question puts the glory test to work on the student's actual prayer list. The goal is not to make anyone feel guilty for ordinary requests; God invites us to ask for daily bread. The goal is to let the question, "would this glorify the Father in the Son?", surface and reorder our deeper motives.

Help students distinguish between requests reshaped and requests released. Some requests will simply be reframed: the same need, now asked with God's glory in view. Others may be quietly

released as students realize they were asking mainly to serve their own comfort or pride. Both outcomes are healthy.

Encourage one concrete practice: this week, before bringing a significant request, pause to ask how God might be glorified in the answer, and to add, sincerely, that they want his glory more than their preference. This small discipline slowly converts wish-making back into worshipful asking.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Applying the glory of God as a test of our motives in asking
- Requests reshaped versus requests released
- Honest motives in prayer without guilt over ordinary needs
- A practice of seeking God's glory before pressing our preference

Discussion Prompts

- Which of your requests look different when held up to God's glory?
- What is the difference between a request reshaped and one you should release?
- How could you build the glory question into your prayers this week?

Question 7

Student Question:

To pray in Jesus' name is to pray in keeping with his character and will, the way an ambassador acts in the name of the one who sent him. How does Jesus connect answered prayer to abiding in him and having his words abide in us (see John 15:7), and what does that teach about the kind of asking he promises to answer?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question develops what it means to pray in keeping with Jesus' character and will, using the ambassador image and John 15:7. An ambassador represents his sender faithfully; he does not freelance. To pray in Jesus' name is to pray as his representative, asking what aligns with his heart. That is why character and will cannot be separated from the name.

Bring in John 15:7: "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you." Notice the conditions that frame the bold promise. The asking that Jesus promises to answer flows out of a life joined to him and saturated with his words. The closer we abide, the more our wishes are shaped by his will, and the more our prayers line up with what he delights to give.

Address the apparent tension honestly. "Ask whatever you wish" can sound like a blank check until we hear "if you abide in me, and my words abide in you." The promise is real and generous,

but it is the promise to a person whose desires are being formed by Christ. This is not a loophole that empties the promise; it is the relationship that fills it with meaning.

Apply it to the prayer life. The path to praying in line with Jesus' will is not mainly a technique but a relationship: staying close to him, soaking in his word, letting it reshape what we want. Prayer that asks in his name grows naturally out of a life that abides in him.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Praying in keeping with Christ's character and will, as his representatives
- Abiding in Christ and his words abiding in us as the setting for bold asking (John 15:7)
- The conditions that frame the promise, filling it with meaning rather than emptying it
- Prayer shaped by relationship and Scripture, not technique
- Desires conformed to Christ through abiding in him

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean to pray as Jesus' representative rather than on our own behalf?
- How does abiding in Christ and his word change what we end up asking for?
- Why is "ask whatever you wish" not a blank check when read in context?

Question 8

Student Question:

Praying in Jesus' name slowly conforms our desires to his. Take one request that matters to you right now. How might bringing it under the character and will of Jesus change the request itself, or change you as you pray it?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question lets students feel the conforming power of praying in Jesus' name on a real request. Invite each person to hold a current desire next to the character and will of Jesus and to notice what happens. Often the request is not abandoned but refined: a prayer for success becomes a prayer to be faithful; a prayer to be vindicated becomes a prayer to love an enemy well.

Normalize the slowness of this work. Our desires are not transformed in a single sitting. Praying in Jesus' name over time gradually retrains the heart to want what he wants. Encourage patience with the process and honesty about the gap between our wishes and his will.

Call for a concrete step: take one specific request this week and pray it deliberately in line with who Jesus is, noticing whether the request, or the one praying, begins to change. The fruit is usually a quieter, more trusting heart.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Prayer in Jesus' name as a means of conforming our desires to his
- Requests refined rather than simply granted or denied
- Patience with the slow reshaping of the heart
- Trust as the fruit of praying in line with Christ's will

Discussion Prompts

- Take one real request. How does it change when held next to Jesus' character?
- Have you experienced a desire being refined as you prayed about it?
- What request will you deliberately pray in Jesus' name this week?

Question 9

Student Question:

Some treat "in my name" as a guarantee that any request, worded correctly, must be granted, and some look to other mediators, to departed saints or to anyone besides Christ, to carry their prayers to God. Why is both of these a serious error? Using these verses, explain how we approach God: through Christ alone, the one mediator, asking in line with his will, rather than through a formula or any other go-between.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the doctrinal high point of the lesson, and it confronts two errors directly, so handle it clearly and confidently. The first error treats "in my name" as a guarantee: word the request correctly, attach the name, and God is obligated to deliver. The second error looks to mediators other than Christ, praying to or through departed saints, Mary, or anyone besides Jesus, to carry requests to God. Both must be answered from the text.

Answer the formula error first. "Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do" is bounded by its own terms. To ask in his name is to ask in line with his character and will, for the Father's glory (v. 13). A request that contradicts his will is, by definition, not asked in his name, however the words are arranged. So the promise is not a magic lever; it is a generous assurance to those who pray in step with Christ. God is not a vending machine, and no arrangement of holy words obligates him. This guards the class against the prosperity and word-of-faith thinking that later lessons will address more fully.

Answer the other-mediator error next, and do it gently but plainly. First Timothy 2:5 allows only one conclusion: there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. Scripture never directs prayer to anyone but God, and it never routes our prayers through saints or angels. The departed faithful are not appointed go-betweens; Christ alone holds that office, and he holds it permanently (Hebrews 7:24-25). To pray through any other mediator is to look away from the very Savior who opened the way. We honor the saints who have gone before by imitating their faith, not by praying to them.

Then land on the positive truth, because this is finally good news. Through Christ, and through Christ alone, every believer comes boldly and directly to the Father. We need no other go-between, and we need no perfect performance. We ask in line with his will, trusting the Father to answer in wisdom. That is both the limit and the glory of praying in Jesus' name: limited, because it is not a tool for our own agenda; glorious, because it means the living Christ himself is the guarantee that we are heard.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- A clear rejection of "in my name" as a magic formula that obligates God
- "Whatever you ask" bounded by Christ's will and the Father's glory (John 14:13)
- One mediator, Christ alone; prayer is never directed to or through saints, Mary, or angels (1 Timothy 2:5)
- Christ's permanent priesthood and intercession as our security (Hebrews 7:24-25)
- Honoring past saints by imitating their faith, not by praying to them
- Bold, direct access to the Father through Christ alone as the positive good news

Discussion Prompts

- Why is treating "in Jesus' name" as a guaranteed formula a misreading of this verse?
- How do these verses answer the practice of praying to or through saints or Mary?
- How is praying through Christ alone both a real limit and wonderful good news?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across John 14:13-14 and 1 Timothy 2:5. Jesus is your one mediator, and through him you have real access to the Father. Name one specific way this truth is reshaping the confidence with which you pray, and one thing you will do this week to come to God boldly through Christ.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The capstone gathers the lesson into personal confidence. Walk the class back through the two texts: we ask in Jesus' name, on his authority and in line with his will (John 14:13-14), and we come through him as the one and only mediator between God and men (1 Timothy 2:5). Together they answer the question underneath all our praying: how can we get through to God? Through the Son.

Aim at the heart of the spiritual orphan. Many believers pray timidly because they secretly think their access depends on their performance. The truth of this lesson, truly believed, produces boldness. Encourage students to name the specific way this changes their confidence, not in themselves, but in Christ their mediator.

Press for one concrete action and then pray together. Have the class come to the Father through Christ, out loud and unhurried, so they experience the very access the lesson describes. Let your own praying model bold, direct, Christ-grounded confidence.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Synthesis: we pray to the Father, through the Son, in line with his will
- Confidence grounded in Christ the mediator, not in personal performance
- Boldness as the proper fruit of understanding our access
- Spiritual formation expressed in a concrete step of confident prayer

Discussion Prompts

- How does knowing Jesus is your one mediator change the confidence you bring to prayer?
- Where have you been praying like a spiritual orphan rather than a welcomed child?
- What will you do this week to come to God boldly through Christ?