

**One truth shared:** Focused prayer goes to God with things that are according to his will and for the good of his kingdom.

*Then Abraham spoke up again: “Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, though I am nothing but dust and ashes, what if the number of the righteous is five less than fifty? Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five people?”*  
**Genesis 18:27,28**

### **Focused Prayer Claims What God Wants for Us, Not What We Want from Him**

If you were Aladdin, what would you ask for? It’s a question people have been asking since the original Disney movie came out in 1992. To be honest, it’s kind of a fun game to play and sure to spark a good (though shallow) debate with friends.

“I’d ask for infinity wishes,” (says every young person who thinks they are smarter than everyone else).

“You can’t do that,” is always the reply.

Well, what would you ask for? Fame? Fortune? Money? Maybe you’re slightly more clever, and you would ask for some amazing career or secret investment that keeps the money flowing without end. Or maybe you’re slightly less selfish and would ask for grandma to be cured of cancer or for the HOCO date you dumped to find true happiness with someone else.

I wonder how often we treat God like this, as if we are Aladdin and he’s some magic genie in a bottle. Take a moment and think about your prayer life. How often are you going to God with something that you really, really want? Better grades . . . to pass a test . . . a fixed friendship . . . a happier home life . . . success in your future . . . a “Yes” to your proposal.

While we certainly can ask God for all kinds of things, the Bible reminds us what truly *focused* prayer is like. Prayer that is properly focused goes to God with things that are according to his will. Proper prayer is a mixture of confessing sin, praising God, thanking God, and then also bringing our requests to him. But those requests are not just for iPhones, PS5s, and Porsches. Instead, focused prayer goes to God with things that line up with his will—for strength, wisdom, perseverance, peace, comfort, help and healing for others, etc. Because we are God’s dearly loved children, we know that we can bring such focused prayers to our Father with confidence, just like Abraham did.

God revealed to Abraham his plan of bringing judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah for their rebellious sin and rejection. But Abraham boldly pleaded with God to change his plans. In fact, he was so bold that he seemingly bargained with God to see how low he would go. Six times he went to God in prayer on behalf of those people and his nephew Lot’s family living there! But again, Abraham knew that God is a gracious Father, he was his dearly loved child, and this prayer was something that would be in line with God’s will (being merciful to people).

So young friends, pray away! Let it rip! Go to God boldly and confidently in prayer. But do so not with genie-in-a-bottle wishes. Go to God with bold requests trusting his love and that his will is always done.

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, how gracious you are to invite us to communicate with you in prayer! Give me bold confidence to come before you with all my prayers. Help me also to pray not only for my wants and needs, but also for things that are according to your will and good purpose. Amen.

## Foundations Teen Facilitators Guide

### Year C – Proper 12

#### Focused

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***Starting the Discussion:** This first section is intended to be light and easy, to engage and get the conversation going. Have a little fun with these questions.*

- So . . . what would you wish for if you were Aladdin?
- What is the one thing that you pray about the most?

***Connecting:** This section serves as a bridge between the opening conversation and the body of the study/discussion. It should get the group thinking about the topic/text even before they've looked at it.*

- What makes it so easy for us to treat God like he is a genie in a bottle in our prayer life?
- *Agree/Disagree.* When we ask God for something in prayer, if we are truly confident, we will always expect the answer, "Yes." Explain your answer.

***Digging In:** Here we want to dig into some texts or the text for the day and see what Scripture says. The questions are meant to be open ended to give a beginning of a scriptural conversation. These are a guide for a spiritual and scriptural conversation.*

- Abraham confessed to God, "I am nothing but dust and ashes." Why does this make his prayer even more impressive?
- Explain this statement: Prayer is not for God. Prayer is for us. God doesn't need our prayers.
- In the Gospel this week, Jesus teaches his disciples how to pray as he teaches them the Lord's Prayer. Which do you think is better, a memorized prayer or a prayer from the heart? Why?

***Conclusion:** Here we want to wrap up the discussion, perhaps circling back to the "connecting question" above.*

In your own words, describe what the focused prayer life of a Christian looks like.