



What if the reward for following Jesus...is Jesus? What if being with God is its own reward? In this lesson, we consider the value of contemplative prayer, finding Jesus as our ultimate goal, not simply as the one to give us our ultimate goals.

These questions are intended to deepen your experience of the message. Use them for your personal or family study time, or with an open Bible as you share the good news with your neighbor.

Group Ice-Breaker:

- (1) Think of your childhood Christmas "wish lists." What did you want more than anything (as a kid)?
- (2) What did you think getting that thing would do for you?

WHAT WE REALLY WANT. Read **John 1:38-39**. Every action we take or choice we make aims at some goal. But usually the "goal" we can name is still only a means to get to an even greater goal. When have you ever achieved a goal, and learned that you were still unsatisfied? What is the ultimate thing—the "chief good" that we hope to get? [Philosophers say its "happiness."] What do you think will bring you happiness?

LOVE. "The most important thing that happens between God and the human soul is to love and to be loved" (14th C). Do you think this is true? Describe what you think this means.

THREE KINDS OF PRAYER. Read **2 Cor 3:18**. We (1) pray to get something from God, to (2) give something to God, and (3) to reflect on the presence of God. Discuss what it might mean to pray with no "getting" or "giving" as the goal. **See Psalm 16:8; Psalm 46:10.**

THE END OF GETTING. In contemplative prayer, we do "give" something—we give God our full attention. And we do "get" something, but it's not about getting extra rewards. There are rewards in Christianity (see Lk 6:35); but reflect on what it would mean to seek God for something more than what he gives you.

PRESENCE AS ITS OWN REWARD. Read **Exodus 33:15**. Have you ever been around someone whose presence was its own reward? The good news is that everyone can experience the love of God. **See Ephesians 3:14-19**. The reward for meditating on God is God! To know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge provides everything. Comer calls this "looking at God, looking at you, in love." Discuss this definition of contemplative prayer.

WHAT CHANGES? If our ultimate aim—our highest goal—was simply to abide in God's presence, how would it affect our day-to-day?