

Life Group Notes

Lord, teach us to pray

4. Contemplation

These notes are designed to be used in Life Groups alongside the Sunday teaching at Wavertree. You might want to begin the time by sharing what stood out from Kerry's talk on the 4th October.

"Prayer is any move, spirit, body or soul towards God."

INTRO: 10 minutes

- When you think about prayer, what usually comes most naturally to you?

Talking to God? Asking for help? Worship? Reading Scripture? Silence and reflection? Something else?

In the talk, contemplative prayer was described as a form of prayer that focuses on being present with God, slowing down, and becoming aware of His presence. It is less about saying the right words and more about communion with God.

"In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God."

Romans 8:26-27

The talk highlights that sometimes we simply run out of words when we pray. In those moments, silence can become a way of trusting that the Holy Spirit is praying and interceding for us even when we don't know what to say.

DISCUSSION: 15 Minutes

1. How do you feel about silence in prayer?
2. Is there anything you find difficult about being quiet before God?
3. Have there been moments when you sensed God's presence without many words?
4. What distractions tend to crowd in when you try to be still?
5. How might the promise of Romans 8 encourage us when prayer feels difficult?

Knowing God

The talk described one stream of contemplative prayer as focusing on what can be known about God through Scripture and experience.

Lectio Divina

Slowly reading
scripture
Reflecting on it
Responding in prayer
Resting in God's
presence

Ignatian Contemplation

Using imagination to
enter a Gospel story
and engage personally
with what God may be
showing us.

DISCUSSION:

- Have you ever found a Bible passage speaking to you through repeated reading?
- What are the benefits of slowing down when reading Scripture?
- How comfortable are you with using imagination while praying?
- What safeguards help keep us grounded in truth when using imaginative prayer?

Unknowing God

This type of prayer emphasises God's mystery and greatness beyond our understanding. Practices such as Centering Prayer use a simple word such as 'Jesus' to return the mind's attention to God when distractions arise.

***As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways
higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.
Isaiah 55:9***

REFLECTION:

- What do you think about the idea that God is both knowable and yet beyond our understanding?
- Do you find it comforting or challenging that God's ways are higher than ours?
- Why might repeatedly returning our attention to God be a valuable spiritual practice?

**SEE THE NEXT PAGE FOR A CHOICE OF
CONTEMPLATIVE EXERCISES FOR THIS
WEEK**

Centering Prayer

Find somewhere quiet where you won't be disturbed.

- Sit comfortably.
- Set a timer for 2 to 10 minutes.
- Ask God to help you pray.
- Focus on a simple word such as: "God", "Jesus", "Lord", or "Spirit".
- When your mind wanders, gently return to the chosen word.
- Don't criticise yourself when distractions come. Each return to God is prayer.

If sitting still feels difficult, try gentle movement such as walking, pacing slowly, rocking gently, or another activity that helps you focus on God

Prayer Through Nature

If possible, take a walk somewhere green and quiet.

- Ask God to help you pray.
- Choose a Fruit of the Spirit that comes to mind.
- Notice where you see reflections of that quality in creation.
- Spend a few minutes enjoying God's presence through what you observe.
- Thank God for what He shows you.

Examples:

Gentleness in soft grass.

Patience in bulbs waiting underground.

Peace in a resting bird.

Joy as you enjoy God's creation.

A Loving Look at the Real

Set aside time alone with God.

- Ask the Holy Spirit to bring to mind a recent situation where you were unkind, impatient, fearful, or struggled in some way.
- Notice the event honestly, without judging yourself.
- Allow your thoughts and feelings about it to surface.
- Talk to God about what happened.
- Receive His love, mercy, conviction, and grace.
- Listen for what He may be saying to you.
- If nothing comes, simply thank God for His presence and try again another day.