

How to Use Sermon Resources

- **READ AHEAD TOGETHER** - MCG's should use the Devotional at the end of this resource as a reading plan for the week leading up to your meeting.
- **SIT UNDER THE WORD** - This resource is filled with scripture references. Read them aloud, together before you answer any questions.
- **APPLY TRUTH** - The goal is deep discussion and application, not necessarily to complete this resource. Don't squash a good discussion. If you get into something important along the way that's fine.

Small Group Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer [2 mins]

Use the Overview [5 mins]

- Cover any key points for people who missed parts or all of the sermon

Scripture Deep Dive [30-40 mins]

- Opening Question
- Read the scripture for each question then ask the question. Some have multiple scriptures.

Close in Prayer

- In this extended prayer time, ask others to pray as they feel led, pray in a circle, pray over one another, pray to your left, or pray for someone specific. Whatever seems best.

Split Time (if applicable)

- Men with men, women with women
- Share in a circle. "What's one thing you want to celebrate? What do you need prayer and accountability for?"
- After everyone shares, pray in a circle for the person to your left/right.

SERMON OVERVIEW

"The Fruit of a Praying Church"- Ephesians 1:15-19, 3:14-19

Sermon Summary:

This sermon launches the "Follower" series by examining what it means to be a praying church and the fruit that genuine prayer produces in a congregation. Using Paul's prayers in Ephesians as a foundation, the message emphasizes that a praying church can be identified not by labels or claims, but by the fruit it produces—much like an apple tree is known by its apples. The sermon challenges believers to examine whether their prayers are centered on God's glory or merely their own circumstances, and calls the church to participate in corporate prayer throughout the week. The pastor emphasizes that true prayer transforms individuals, edifies the church body, and mystifies the watching world through the sanctifying work of Christ.

Key Points:

- A praying church is known by its fruit, not by its claims or labels on paper
- The glory of God must be central to our prayers, not just our circumstances or comfort
- Prayer should focus on sanctification—God working in us, around us, and through us to make us more like Jesus
- Biblical prayer edifies the church as believers share testimonies and encourage one another
- A sanctified church mystifies the world when believers live radically different lives centered on Christ

Scripture Reference:

- Ephesians 1:15-19 (Paul's prayer for wisdom and revelation)
- Ephesians 3:14-21 (Paul's prayer for spiritual strength and love)
- Philippians 1:9-10 (Prayer for love to grow in knowledge and discernment)
- Colossians 1:9 (Prayer to be filled with knowledge of God's will)
- Colossians 4:2-6 (Devotion to prayer and acting wisely toward outsiders)

Stories:

- Adoniram Judson's marriage proposal letter to Anne's father: A powerful historical account where missionary Judson asked for Anne's hand in marriage, centering his request entirely on the glory of God and the mission field, asking if her father could consent to hardship, danger, and possible death "for the sake of Zion and the glory of God"

Scripture Deep Dive

Opening Question:

How do you typically incorporate prayer into your daily life, and how do you think that might influence your relationship with God and others?

I. God is Glorified

1. **Ephesians 3:20-21** - Read these verses. According to Paul, why is God's ability to do more than we ask or think directed towards His glory? How does this understanding of God's power influence your prayer life?

Further Reading: Compare with Romans 11:36. How do these verses reveal the relationship between God's actions and His glory?

II. People are Sanctified

1. **Ephesians 1:17-18** - Paul prays for the Ephesians to grow in wisdom and knowledge of God. How does spiritual wisdom differ from worldly wisdom, and why is it important for sanctification?

2. **Colossians 1:9-10** - Discuss how Paul's prayer for the Colossians' spiritual wisdom and understanding is linked to their behavior. How should growth in knowledge of God influence our actions and attitudes?

Further Reading: Explore Hebrews 12:1-2. How does sanctification relate to the idea of laying aside every weight and sin?

III. The Church is Edified

1. **Ephesians 3:16-19** - According to these verses, how does understanding and experiencing God's love contribute to the edification of the church?

Further Reading: Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:11. How does Paul describe the way church members should interact with one another?

IV. The World is Mystified

1. **Colossians 4:2-6** - What does Paul mean by acting wisely towards outsiders, and how does prayer prepare believers for this task?

Further Reading: Compare with 1 Peter 2:12. How does living honorably among non-believers serve as a testimony to God's transformative work?

2. **Matthew 5:14-16** - How does this passage relate to the idea of the world being mystified by the church? In what ways can believers actively demonstrate the light of Christ to the world?

5 Day Devotional

Day 1: Understanding the Glory of God

Reading: Ephesians 1:15-19, Romans 11:36

Devotional: Paul prays for believers to comprehend the immense glory of God, emphasizing that our understanding and wisdom come from knowing Him. The glory of God is central to a flourishing church and should be the anchor of our prayers. As you begin this devotional journey, consider how your prayers can glorify God rather than seek personal gain.

Prayer Suggestion: Pray for a deeper understanding of God's glory and wisdom in your personal life.

Day 2: Praying for Strength and Wisdom

Reading: Ephesians 3:14-19, James 1:5

Devotional: Paul's prayer reveals God's desire for us to be strengthened through His Spirit and to grasp the vastness of His love. When rooted in love, our faith becomes a source of divine wisdom and power. As you read today, reflect on how God's love can be the foundation for all your decisions and actions.

Prayer Suggestion: Ask for God's wisdom to guide your heart and actions, and seek His strength to face daily challenges.

Day 3: The Sanctification of Believers

Reading: Ephesians 1:20-23, Philippians 1:6

Devotional: Sanctification is an ongoing process of God making us more like Christ. It involves God working in us, around us, and through us. As you engage with this process, be open to the ways God is shaping you daily, and remember that He is faithful to complete the good work He has started in you.

Prayer Suggestion: Pray for God's ongoing transformation in your life, asking Him to reveal areas that need His refining touch.

Day 4: Edifying the Church

Reading: Ephesians 3:20-21, 1 Thessalonians 5:11

Devotional: Paul's vision of a praying church includes believers being mutually edified through God's love and power. When we are rooted in God's love, we contribute to building each other up in faith. Reflect on how you can contribute to the edification of your community and be a source of encouragement to others.

Prayer Suggestion:

Pray for opportunities to edify and encourage those around you, and for a heart responsive to those in need of support.

Day 5: Mystifying the World

Reading: Ephesians 3:10-13, Matthew 5:14-16

Devotional Message: When believers live in alignment with God's will, the world takes notice. Our lives should reflect the light of Christ, mystifying the world through our distinctive love and unity. Consider how your actions can serve as a testament to God's transformative power, inviting others to seek Him.

Prayer Suggestion: Ask God to use you as a light in the world, revealing His love and truth through your daily interactions.