



ements

The Components of the Weekly Gathering

Community Group Leader's Guide

August 27 - September 3, 2017

Weekly Summary

This week we will be looking at why we pray as a church. This is really not as much about personal prayer as it is corporate prayer. Another way to describe this appears in Jack Miller's "Outgrowing the Ingrown Church", where he talks about the difference between "maintenance" and "frontline" prayer and prayer meetings. Maintenance prayers in churches are short, mechanical, and totally focused on physical, personal needs inside the church. But frontline prayer has three basic traits: A request for grace to confess sins and humble ourselves; a compassion and zeal for the flourishing of the church; and a yearning to know God, to see his face, to see his glory. It is the latter type of prayer, "frontline" prayer or corporate prayer that we will spend our time discussing and practicing tonight. Let's dive into together.

Getting Started

Icebreaker: *If you were being honest, how would you rate your prayer life? How would you rate the prayer life of our Community Group? How would rate the prayer life of our church during our gatherings? Explain.*

Going Deeper

Read Matthew 6:5-13; Matthew 21:13; John 14:12-14.

1.) In your own words, what do we see Jesus teaching about prayer in these texts?

2.) In Matthew 6, Jesus tells his followers "go away" and pray in private, and yet the prayer is written in plural form. Why do you think that is?

3.) In John 14, why did Jesus tell us we would do greater things than he did? Doesn't that seem absurd?

Read Acts 1:14; Acts 2:42; Acts 4:31; Acts 6:1-7; Acts 10:9; Acts 12:5; Acts 13:2-3.

4.) Based on these texts in Acts, what takeaways do have from prayer in the early church?

5.) Reread the Acts 6 passage. What do you make of the church leaders delegating ministry tasks to focus on prayer? What should that say to us 2,000 years later?

A few things to make note of:

1. Corporate prayer was on par with preaching and teaching as a priority in the early church. 2. Praying together is a vital key to opening God's presence and work among His people in unique ways, as it was for them. And, 3. The tendency among believers, even among those who occupy leadership positions in the church, is to think of prayer gatherings as the extra-curricular activity in the life of the church but the early church did not.

6.) What do you think was the benefit of such a focus on prayer?

7.) How do our prayer lives, in the modern church, differ from what we read in Acts? Why do you think that is? Is this difference a problem (yes or no)?

8.) What sorts of things need to change in your life to make praying together a priority? What about our Community Group? What about our church?

Application (experience prayer together)

This is obviously something that will take many groups out of their comfort zones. Prepare ahead of time and help reassure your group that this is merely a chance to worship together through prayer, and maybe bring significance to the praying together that was lacking in their lives before. Remember, as we talked about this weekend to keep prayers 1.) kingdom focused, 2.) bold and specific, and 3.) prevailing and corporate.

Keep the following in mind:

- *Don't call on someone to pray unless you've asked permission beforehand (or you know them well).*
- *Don't expect everyone to pray every time.*

- *Try to avoid praying in a circle. Allow members to pray one at a time as they feel led.*
- *Respect the intimacy level. As the group grows in deepening relationships, a sense of safety will foster a deeper experience in prayer.*
- *Be clear on who will close the prayer time.*

Choose a couple of the following ideas for you group that will fit the dynamic that is present. Try to make this time last at least 15-20 minutes.

- *Pray through a psalm out loud together.*
- *In a couples' group, have spouses pray for each other.*
- *Pick a portion of Scripture to pray for one another during the week (for example, Colossians 1:9-14 or Ephesians 3:14-19).*
- *Pray for Redemption, a country, a family in need, specific events, or any area for which your group has a passion.*
- *Pray through Redemption's prayer requests list (found in The Weekly).*
- *Have each member write down requests for the week on a piece of paper, fold the paper, and put it in a hat. Pass the hat, each member agreeing to pray for the person he or she picks and to call to encourage that person during the week.*
- *Allow a couple periods of silence where your group prays for things you direct them in, and then have someone in the group close out those prayers with one aloud.*
- *The group might adopt a church leader, family, or mission for whom they can pray moving forward, as they keep track of their activities and needs.*