

PRAY: TRAINING GUIDE

Abiding Practices for Missional Communities

Pray: Prayer is communication with God.

WHY WE PRAY

The primary purpose of prayer isn't to get something but to know someone, and his name is Yahweh. In addition to that, prayer is an admittance that we need God to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

Depending on the way we nuance our definition of prayer, the first mention we find in the pages of the Scriptures is in Genesis 4:26. Eve had been promised that she would bear a child, an offspring, who would crush the head of the serpent (Genesis 3:15). When her godly offspring Abel was instead crushed by his murderous brother Cain (Genesis 4:8), we're left wondering who this promised snake-crushing child could be.

It's then we read Genesis 4:25-26, "And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Seth, for she said, 'God has appointed for me another offspring instead of Abel, for Cain killed him.' To Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time people began to call upon the name of the LORD." This connection is meant to point us to another important purpose of prayer: crying out to God for him to fulfill the promises he has made to his people, namely where is this snake-crushing son you promised? If you have time as a group, read the following passages to begin seeing this aspect of prayer: Genesis 32:9-12; Exodus 2:23-35; Numbers 14:17-20; Matthew 6:9-13; and John 17.

This implies that we actually know his promises in the first place, which means that prayer is inextricably linked to the Scriptures. We can think of Pray and Listen as two sides of the same coin. While God primarily speaks to us through his Word in the Scriptures, we primarily communicate to God through prayer. In his book titled "Prayer," Tim Keller writes: "We can define prayer as a personal, communicative response to the knowledge of God. All prayer is responding to [him]. In all cases God is the initiator; hearing always precedes asking. God comes to us first or we would never reach out to him."

PRAYING IN COMMUNITY

If we take the words of Jesus at face value in Matthew 6:5-6 to go into our closets and pray where no one else can hear us, then we may be tempted to believe that we are forbidden from praying while others are around. In actuality, Jesus is much more concerned with our motivation than our location. After all, he's about to model before his disciples the most recognized public prayer of all time that we call the Lord's Prayer, and what is the first word of that prayer? "Our." In fact, the entire prayer is written with plural pronouns.

This shows us that not only is it not forbidden to pray in public, it's actually encouraged! Jesus is teaching us that it should be normative to pray on behalf of and in the presence of our brothers and sisters in Christ, our community.

Prayer in some form or another is probably a regular aspect of your time together as a Missional Community. You probably pray to end your Family Gatherings or pray before your meal or pray as your DNA Groups get ready to Discover Jesus in the Scriptures. While we certainly encourage prayer in those forms, we want to also help you think about how you can devote specific time and attention to the practice of prayer in its own right when you gather for your normal Missional Community rhythms of Family Gatherings, DNA Groups, and Neighborhoods To Nations.

Family Gatherings

There are five primary practices that take place over a season of Family Gatherings. They are Listening to the Scriptures, Eating, Sharing Stories, Fellowshiping, and you guessed it: Praying. What would it look like for you to devote an entire night to praying together as a Missional Community family? Here are just a few examples you could use to pray during your Family Gatherings.

- Prepare a guided prayer night to pray specific prayers you want God to answer
- Pray God's word back to him. Check out the short book called "Praying The Bible" by Donald Whitney for an in-depth look at this idea
- Break up into smaller groups and share prayer requests and then pray for each person after they share
- Pray specific prayers from Paul's Epistles (Romans 1:8-10, Ephesians 1:15-23, Philippians 1:9-11, etc.)

DNA Groups

Prayer is woven throughout the DNA Group Meeting Guide to help you bathe your time together in prayer. Visit summitcrossing.org and click on the "DNA Group Meeting Guide" for how we suggest to structure your weekly DNA Group time together.

Neighborhoods to Nations

During your regular Neighborhoods To Nations rhythm, your Missional Community could do a prayer walk around the neighborhood where you regularly meet to pray God's blessings on it and that those neighbors would come to know the salvation found in Jesus. One of the best ways to engage the nations is to pray for them regularly. There are many resources at our disposal (Joshua Project app or Operation World book) to pray informed and helpful prayers as we ask "earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest" (Matthew 9:38). You could attend the monthly Neighborhoods & Nations Prayer night held at our church's building on Sunday evenings to pray with others from our church family for our local and global partners.

PRAY RESOURCES

We would encourage you to engage with the following resources as you discuss how to implement the Abiding Practice of Pray.

Recommended Sermons

- Pray - Life in the Vine: Practices for Abiding in Jesus - Patrick Johnson
- Pray & Fast - David Platt

Recommended Books

- Prayer: Experiencing Awe And Intimacy With God - Tim Keller
- Calling on the Name of the Lord: A Biblical Theology Of Prayer (NSBT) - Gary Millar
- A Praying Life - Paul Miller
- Praying The Bible - Donald Whitney

Recommended Digital Resources

- Joshua Project: Unreached Of The Day (App)
- The Primary Purpose of Prayer - David Platt (Podcast)

SAMPLE COMMITMENT

Below is a sample commitment that you may find useful as you seek to Pray in your Missional Community. Please feel the freedom to use these ideas or come up with your own.

PRAY COMMITMENT

Missional Community Leaders: The Jobs and The Gateses

Date of Commitment: May 2023

Commitment

Over the next six months our Missional Community will commit one Family Gathering each month to spend the majority of our time in prayer together.

Family Gatherings

Our Prayer Coordinators (The Wozniaks) will help us decide what we will pray for during each of our prayer-focused Family Gatherings.

DNA Groups

We will commit to following the DNA Group Meeting Guide that saturates our time together in prayer.

Neighborhoods To Nations

Our N2N Coordinators (The Allens) will send a weekly Unreached People Group for us to pray for during our time Listening to the Scriptures each day as individuals.

Conclusion

Again, this is simply an example that your Missional Community can use to begin in obedience toward committing more of your time together in prayer. We have plenty of resources that we would love to provide you with if you have any questions about how to practically do some of these things. Simply email us at mc@summitcrossing.org.

PRAY COMMITMENT

Missional Community Leaders:

Date of Commitment:

Date to Reevaluate Commitment:

Commitment:

Family Gatherings:

DNA Groups:

Neighborhoods To Nations: