

LIVING THE STORY

Praying with Simplicity

Small Group Study Notes by Rev. Matt Bruns

“God speaks in the silence of the heart. Listening is the beginning of prayer.”
Mother Teresa.

PAUSE

Take some time to come before Jesus and be there with him as simply and honestly as you can manage. The focus will shift from you to him, and you will begin to sense his grace. Take a moment to welcome the Holy Spirit to fill you. Take a moment to acknowledge with gratitude you're loving and gracious Father, who knows and cares about what you need better than you do yourself.

READ

As a group, read Matthew 6:5-15 (MSG) aloud, each person reading out a few verses at a time.

Is there one word or phrase that strikes you? Share with the group.

“Is prayer your steering wheel or your spare tyre?”
Corrie ten Boom

I don't need to convince you of the importance of prayer. The challenge is creating the space for friendship and keeping company with God amongst the busyness, distractions & pressures of life.

QUESTIONS

1. What do you make of that quote by Corrie ten Boom?
2. Share with each other what your prayer life is like at the moment?
3. What is the biggest barrier or challenge you face when it comes to prayer right now?

“If you only pray when you're in trouble, you're in trouble.”
Anonymous

PRAXIS (Option 1) – Soulfulness Meditation Exercise

Shut your eyes. Make yourselves comfortable.

Start with noticing your breath, as you breathe deeply, in and out. Notice your chest rise and fall as you breathe in and out. Notice the noises around you – they're all ok, don't try and change anything, just be fully here.

Now shift your focus to your body. Be curious and notice where there's tension or stress. See if you can relax. Enjoy the sensation of doing what feels like nothing, if you can.

In the Silence let your mind chatter quieten down.

In the Stillness let your body stop moving and doing, and let it be.

In the Solitude let everyone else leave your mind so that only you and God are left.

Now gently move deeper to that private place inside you that no one fully knows except you. It's often called the soul or the spirit. For some of you it's a place of deep self-awareness and acceptance.

If that's you, just settle in and enjoy being fully you in the presence of God. For others of you it will feel a bit empty, a blank, a mystery, maybe you're not sure if there's anything there. Just stay there with curiosity if you can.

For others of you it will feel like shame, or it will feel really uncomfortable, and you may want to escape back to action, to the you who does things that make you feel valuable.

Just stay there in stillness if you can. Just stay here a minute or two. It will feel short to some of you and forever to others.

PRAXIS (Option 2) – Piggy in the middle Prayer

In your group invite someone to stand or sit in the middle.

For 1-2 minutes in silence wait on God ask God is there anything He wants to say to person in middle? Those not in middle are concentrating on person in middle and focusing on whether God is giving you something through the Spirit to encourage that person.

It might be a word, picture, feeling, passage from bible, or a prophetic word of encouragement. If something comes to mind and you're not sure if its God or just you – say quietly in your heart is that - what does this mean for person in middle before sharing.

Then after waiting go round group and each take a turn to say what you sensed God gave you for that person in the middle. We then ask person in middle did God say anything to them during that 1-2 minutes. Then move on and pray anyone else who is keen. There's no right or wrong way to do this – anyone can do it – if you're open & willing to have a go.

CLOSING PRAYER

Disturb me, Lord, when I am too well pleased with myself,
When my dreams have come true because I have dreamed too little,
When I arrived safely because I sailed too close to the shore.
Disturb me, Lord, when with the abundance of things I possess
I have lost my thirst for the waters of life;
Having fallen in love with life, I have ceased to dream of eternity
And in my efforts to build a new earth, I have allowed my vision of the new heaven to dim.
Disturb me, Lord, to dare more boldly,
To venture on wider seas where storms will show your mastery;
Where losing sight of land, I shall find the stars.
I ask You to push back the horizons of my hopes;
And to push into the future in strength, courage, hope, & love.
Amen

