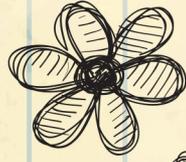
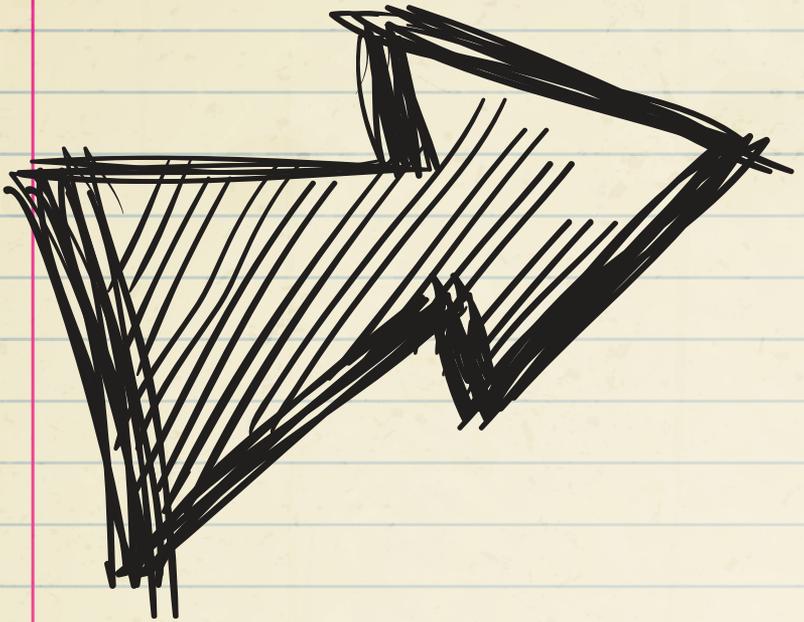


3 WEEKS



Dear God!





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Getting To Know God Through Prayer

SMALL GROUP STUDY

**Kicking
it off:**

What is the earliest prayer you remember praying?

Big Idea:

Prayer is communicating with God: honestly, about everything, continually and with a listening ear to His response.

**Key
Scriptures:**

Matthew 6:5, 7

"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men... And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words."

Philippians 4:6

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."

Psalms 5:1-3

"Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my sighing. Listen to my cry for help, my King and my God, for to you I pray. In the morning, O LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning, I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation."

Exodus 5:22-23

"Moses returned to the LORD and said, 'O Lord, why have you brought trouble upon this people? Is this why you sent me? Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has brought trouble upon this people, and you have not rescued your people at all.'"

Key Scriptures:



1 Peter 5:7

"Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

"Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

1 Samuel 1:12-13

"As she kept on praying to the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard."

1 Kings 19:11-13

"Go out and stand before me on the mountain," the Lord told him. And as Elijah stood there, the Lord passed by, and a mighty windstorm hit the mountain. It was such a terrible blast that the rocks were torn loose, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake there was a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave."

John 10:27

"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me."

Discussion:



Read the previous Scriptures and discuss the following:

1. What can you learn about prayer from the above verses?
2. What keeps most people from praying on a regular basis? What are some specific ways we can overcome those challenges?

Discussion:



3. With which do you most struggle in prayer before God: praying with gut-wrenching honesty, praying about everything, praying persistently or listening for God's response?
4. Describe a time when God answered an important prayer in your life. How did the way God answered your prayer affect your relationship with Him?
5. On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being the highest, how would you rate your time spent talking with God this past week? Explain.
6. What commitments might you make concerning prayer in order to deepen your relationship with God?

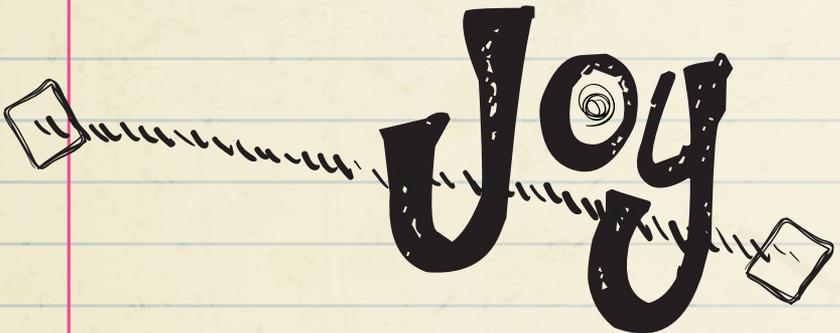
Wrapping It Up:

With your group, pray God will help you develop a deeper relationship with Him through prayer. Set aside a time each day over the next week to spend time talking with God.

Memory Verse:

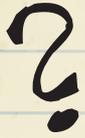
"Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18



Why Didn't God Answer My Prayer?

SMALL GROUP STUDY



Kicking it off:

If you could ask God for anything, what would it be? Explain why you would ask for it.

Big Idea:

What things matter to God when it comes to prayer?

Key Scriptures:

Mark 11:24-25

"Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."

1 Peter 3:7

"Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers."

James 4:3

"When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives..."

Proverbs 16:2

"All a man's ways seem innocent to him, but motives are weighed by the LORD."

James 5:16

"The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."

Proverbs 15:29

"The LORD is far from the wicked but he hears the prayer of the righteous."



**Key
Scriptures:**

James 1:6-7

"But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord..."

Matthew 9:29-30

"Then he touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith will it be done to you"; and their sight was restored."

Matthew 17:20

"Jesus told them. "I tell you the truth, if you had faith even as small as a mustard seed, you could say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it would move. Nothing would be impossible."

1 John 5:14-15

"This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us-whatever we ask-we know that we have what we asked of him."

Luke 22:42-43

"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."

Discussion:

1. Discuss a time when God said "no" or "not now" to a request. Did you understand the reason for His answer then? Do you understand it now?
2. What is something you are currently praying for that God has apparently not yet answered? How have you handled this prayer not being answered?
3. Read Mark 11:24-25 and 1 Peter 3:7. These two verses would seem to indicate that our relationships with others have some effect on our prayers. What do you think the connection might be? Has your ability to

*dream
BIG!*

Discussion:



- pray ever been affected by your relationships?
4. Read James 4:3 and Proverbs 16:2. Describe a time when you prayed for something but your motives may have been less than pure. How did God respond to your prayers?
 5. Read James 5:16 and Proverbs 15:29. According to these verses, how might the way we live affect our prayers? How might this spur us on toward living in more right ways?
 6. Read James 1:6-7 and Matthew 9:29-30 and Matthew 17:20. What role does faith have in the outcome of our prayers? What level of faith is required for God to work on our behalf?
 7. Read 1 John 5:14-15. What promises are ours when we pray according to God's will?
 8. Read Luke 22:42-43. What can we learn from Jesus' prayer and what happened after His prayer?

Wrapping It Up:

With your group pray for any requests that may have left you feeling confused, uncertain or even unheard. Be open and honest with God. He can handle it. Ask Him to help you examine your heart, your motives and your faith. Ask Him for a willingness to hear whatever His answer, whatever it may be, and to trust in His goodness and His wisdom.

Memory Verse:

"The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."
James 5:16

Praying Like Jesus Prayed

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Kicking it off:

What is the best answer to prayer you have ever received? How did that answer to prayer affect your relationship with God?

Big Idea:

Jesus gave us an example of how to pray.

Key

Scriptures:

Luke 11:1

"One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray..."

Matthew 6:9-13

"This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'"

Matthew 6:33

"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

1 John 1:9

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

1 Corinthians 10:13

"No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."



Discussion:



1. Describe your daily conversations with God. What types of things do you typically pray for?
2. Read Luke 11:1 and Matthew 6:9-13. Did you grow up knowing the Lord's Prayer? Was it something you simply recited out of memory or did it have meaning for you? Explain.
3. Read Matthew 6:33. In thinking of some of the needs you currently have in your life, how does this verse put those needs in perspective?
4. Why do we tend to put our priorities over God's when we pray? What are some ways we can make our priorities the same as Gods?
5. Read 1 John 1:9. Both in this passage and in the Lord's prayer we are encouraged to confess our sins before God in prayer. Is this something you regularly do? If not, what keeps you from it? What benefits might we experience when regularly confessing our sin to God?
6. Read 1 Corinthians 10:13. What role do you suppose prayer might have in protecting you from temptation in your life?

**Wrapping
It Up:**

With your group pray the Lord's Prayer together. Do not simply recite the prayer, but pray it with true meaning. Then finally, pray for the needs of your group.

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your Kingdom come,
Your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom
and the power
and the glory forever and ever,
amen.



**Memory
Verse:**

"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

Matthew 6:33

hope

Notes:



Top 10 Tips for Leading a Small Group

1. Establish a welcoming, accepting, and safe environment.
 - Take time to prepare.
 - Make sure to give a warm enthusiastic greeting to each person.
 - Verbally communicate the environment that you hope to create.
 - Ephesians 4:1-3
2. On the opening night of your group you need to have some intentional discussions centered around these questions:
 - What is the purpose of our group?
 - What is the vision for our group?
 - What are your expectations?
 - What do you hope to gain from this group experience?
 - What are some things we value as a group?
 - What are some healthy guidelines we need to have in place?Review and sign a group agreement.
3. Be authentic. Spend time sharing your life stories in order to get to know each other on a deeper level.
4. Find a good balance between:
 - Truth and grace/Bible study and life
 - Encouraging and challenging one another
 - Giving and receiving feedback from each other
5. Ask good questions to stimulate good discussion. Use open ended questions and follow up questions.
6. Hang out together, do things socially, eat together and have fun together!
7. Develop a missional lifestyle, find a service project to do together in the community.
8. Raise up new leadership by rotating facilitation of the group.
9. Share the responsibilities in order to increase individual commitment and ownership of the group.
10. Pray for your group and for each other!

Find ways to celebrate what God is doing in your group! Who else could you invite to join you in order that their life may be impacted by what God is doing in your group?

Group Agreement

OUR PURPOSE

To transform our spiritual lives by cultivating our spiritual health in a healthy small group community. In addition, we: _____

OUR VALUES

Group Attendance: To give priority to the group meeting. We will call or email if we will be late or absent.

Safe Environment: To help create a safe place where people can be heard and feel loved. (Please, no quick answers, snap judgments, or simple fixes.)

Respect Differences: To be gentle and gracious to people with different spiritual maturity, personal opinions, temperaments, or imperfections. We are all works in progress.

Confidentiality: To keep anything that is shared strictly confidential and within the group, and to avoid sharing improper information about those outside the group.

Encouragement for Growth: To be not just takers but givers of life. We want to spiritually multiply our life by serving others with our God-given gifts.

Welcome for Newcomers: To keep an open chair and share Jesus' dream of finding a shepherd for every sheep.

Shared Ownership: To remember that every member is a minister and to ensure that each attender will share a small team role or responsibility over time.

Rotating Hosts/Leaders and Homes: To encourage different people to host the group in their homes, and to rotate the responsibility of facilitating each meeting.

OUR EXPECTATIONS

- Refreshments/mealtimes _____
 - Childcare _____
 - When we will meet (day of week) _____
 - Where we will meet (place) _____
 - We will begin at (time) _____ and end at _____
 - We will do our best to have some or all of us attend a worship service together.
 - Our primary worship service time will be _____
 - Date of this agreement _____
 - Date we will review this agreement again _____
 - Who (other than the leader) will review this agreement at the end of this study _____
-



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