

Teach us to pray.

Study 1 Simple Prayer

1. Has your prayer life changed in any way over the last 18 months of lockdowns? In what way?

Luke 11: 1-4

2. The Jewish people of Jesus time were a people of prayer. They would pray three times a day as well as pray before a meal and while worshipping together at the Synagogue and Temple. In addition to these practices Jesus took time out to pray. What can we learn from Jesus' practice of prayer about his relationship with God and for our own prayer life? (See Mk 11:17; Mk 1:35, 14:35-42; Lk 3:21, 6:12-13)
3. The prayer Jesus teaches is both short & simple while being deep & profound. What are the simple and profound truths suggested as we address prayer to God as 'Father'? (See also Rom 8:15-17; Gal 4:6-7)
4. What does it mean to 'hallow God's name'? How might we express our honour of God in today's language?
5. Praying for God's kingdom to come is an expression of our desire for God's rule and his way in this world. What might that look like on both an international/national level and a personal level? Why is this a dangerous prayer to pray?
6. Jesus suggests we pray for our physical need of food daily, v3. Is this prayer relevant to our lives when most of us live with plenty? Why should we pray this daily?
7. Our most fundamental spiritual need is for our own need for forgiveness and our need to forgive others. Forgiving others is not always easy. How are our relationships with God and with others interrelated? (See also Lk 6:37 and Mk 13:30-31)
8. Trial or temptation has the possibility of either strengthening or undermining our faith (James 1:12-15). How should we pray when faced with temptation and how might we cooperate with God to strengthen our faith?

Pray together

- Together, use the prayer Jesus taught as a model to bring your requests and needs to God, our Father.
- Ask God to deepen your prayer life and relationship with him during lockdown.

Study 2 Bold Prayer

1. How has your prayer life changed over the seasons of your life (childhood, young adult, parenthood, retirement etc)?
2. What are some of the reasons we find it difficult to pray?

Luke 11: 5-13

3. From what you know of Jewish culture what was usual about the man's request for bread from his friend? What was bold about the request? (v5-8)
4. Jesus goes on to explain the point of his story. What does he say about prayer? V8-10
5. What can a child expect from a father when they request some food? What can we expect from God when we ask for our daily needs? V11-13
6. These stories use a Jewish pattern expressing a point by using how-much-more reasoning. How is our relationship with God like a relationship with a friend or father and prayer like conversation with a friend or father? Now think of how God is much more than our earthly friends and fathers especially when it comes to conversation with God (prayer) and asking God for something.
7. Why can we come boldly to God in prayer? (See also I Tim 2:1-2; Eph 3:11-12)
8. What should we ask for? V3-4 (See I Jn 5:15-15; Lk 22:42; Jas 4: 3)

Pray together

- Believing that God, our Father gives good gifts and is pleased with us when we pray, ask him to help you to overcome obstacles to prayer and to grow in boldness to keep praying.
- Use the prayer Jesus taught us to pray for the needs of each member of your group.

Study 3 Persistent Prayer

9. What are the types of requests you have prayed for a long time without seeing immediate answers?

Luke 18: 1-8

10. What is the main point Jesus wants us to learn from this story (v1)?
11. This story is an example of Jewish how-much-more form of argument. How is God not like the judge? How much more is God like the judge?
12. Widows in the Bible usually depict the most powerless people. How and when are we like the widow when it comes to prayer?
13. What are some reasons we find it difficult to persist in prayer? What are some of God's promises that encourage us to persist in prayer? (See also Ps 145:17-19; Luke 11:8-9; I John 5:14-15)
14. In v8 Jesus says God will grant an answer 'quickly'. Why do we struggle to believe this? What is God's perspective on the timing of answers to prayer (see II Pet 3:8-9)?
15. At times of unanswered prayer and when it is hard to see God at work what does Jesus expect of us (v1 & v8)?
16. This story is about a request for justice. What are some of the matters of justice that concern you most? What are some justice matters you could pray for as a Life Group?

Pray together

- Pray for God's help for each other to persist in prayer and his protection to remain in faith when God seems silent.
- Pray for justice matters that concern you, both local and international.

Study 4 Humble Prayer

1. What are some of the situations when we might be tempted to talk up or exaggerate our strengths and achievements?

Luke 18: 9-14

2. In the times of Jesus Pharisees were considered to be good and tax collectors were hated outcasts. From what you know of the two groups why might this be the case?
3. Think of some types of people who might represent the same contrast as these groups today?
4. Who were Jesus audience (v1)? How are we like the Pharisee?
5. Compare the way the two men prayed and what they prayed.
6. Jesus audience would have thought the two prayers appropriate for who was praying. What is the problem with Pharisees understanding of righteousness and of his relationship with God (see also v14; Rom 3:27-28)?
7. What was right about the understanding of righteousness the tax collector had (v14; Rom 3:22-24)?
8. What do we learn from this story about how to approach God in prayer (see also James 4:6-10; I Pet 5:6-9)?

Pray together

Before sharing your prayer concerns, confident that God, our loving Father hears us, you might like to pray the following prayer of confession together as a group:

Eternal God, in whom we live and move and have our being, whose face is hidden from us by our sins, and whose mercy we forget in the blindness of our hearts: cleanse us from all our offenses, and deliver us from proud thoughts and vain desires, that with reverent and humble hearts we may draw near to you, confessing our faults, confiding in your grace, and finding in you our refuge and strength; through Jesus Christ your Son.

(Book of Common Worship, Louisville: Westminster/John Know Press, 1993)