



1. Discussion Starters

- a. A Gallup poll revealed that over 75% of Americans pray while only 25% say they regularly attend a worship service. What does this observation imply to you?
- b. Imagine you are watching a TV drama: A woman is talking to a man in a coffee shop. She asks him if there is any hope. He begins to cry, shakes his head and says that he has done everything possible. Now all that's left is to pray. The woman says, "Oh, you poor, poor soul". How do you react to this scene and what does this say about our culture's view of prayer?
- c. What does this picture say to you?
- d. What do you usually think of when you hear the word "prayer"?
- e. What do you think prayer is meant to accomplish?
- f. What are some things that prayer is not? (hint—some ideas: not a lottery, not making God do what we want, not a guarantee of success, not a ritual, not getting in touch with mystical forces of the universe, not magic—from Aycok, Prayer 101).
- g. Who has served as an example to you of how to pray? What one thing about prayer did you learn from this person?

2. How should we pray? 1 Corinthians 13; Matthew 6: 5-15; Luke 11: 1-4

- a. From the right motive
 - i. Love, love, love....."The one who loves much prays much, and the one who prays much loves much." Chinese proverb. People ask us to pray for something because they believe we are concerned about them and their need. Telling someone that we are praying for them and then doing that is the highest form of caring and love.
 - ii. For the benefit of God and His reign and not so that other people will see or hear us and think us religious; not for show.
 - iii. Deeply committed, honest communication between God and individual or individuals; no wordiness, doublespeak, insincerity, and other things meant to impress people.
 - iv. Genuine desire to grow closer to God—disciples seeking to know how to pray.
- b. The model prayer: Note that this is a corporate prayer using the pronouns "we", "us", and "our".
 - i. Our Father: Aramaic word "Abba". Personal term of address similar to "Daddy".
 - ii. In heaven: Our God may be a personal one but he is not bound by this earth. He is at the same time a forever God, worthy of our worship.
 - iii. Hallowed be your name: Equivalent to "holy" and separate. One who is to be revered and approached with awe.
 - iv. Your kingdom come: We want others to know God and for His kingdom and we desire to be a part of making that happen.
 - v. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven: This is saying that we want what God wants. Remember that this is a God on mission who seeks to reconcile.
 - vi. Give us this day our daily bread: God is interested in our everyday lives, struggles, and needs.
 - vii. Forgive us our debts as we have forgiven our debtors: God is interested in our forgiving others. Note the conditional element here. Forgiveness and reconciliation open the door to relationships with other people and with God.
 - viii. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one: This prayer sentence troubles many people because it seems to be saying that God is tempting us. This is

probably praying for strength to get through trials and problems that we encounter—that we do not fall into a trial so difficult we fail.

3. What attitude should we have when we pray? Luke 18: 1-14
 - a. Perseverance: “Can anything worthwhile be gotten with little effort in a short time?...Just because events do not flow smoothly, do not assume that God is not in those events.” Aycock. Share a time when your prayer was answered in a special way after a long period of praying about a particular thing.
 - b. Faith: Look at Luke 18:8. The implication is that God is looking for us to keep praying with faith that God will move.
 - c. Humility: Contrast the Pharisee’s prayer with that of the tax collector. The Pharisee centers his prayer on his own self-righteousness and there is no room left for God to act. The tax collector recognizes his own inadequacies and places God in the center.
 - d. Risk-Taking: God may lead you to be part of the answer. Tell about a time when you were praying and you felt directed by God to take action.
4. For whom or what should we pray? Matthew 5: 43-48; Luke 23: 33-34; Matthew 9: 35-38; Romans 8: 26-27.
 - a. Family and friends
 - b. Pray for Christian Workers: Begin with pastor, staff, leaders in church; people in area and state; leaders in denomination and other ministries; missionaries local and foreign. Pray that you yourself may be used by God.
 - c. Yourself
 - d. Enemies
 - e. When you don’t know what to pray for, remember Romans 8: 26-27. The Spirit intercedes.
5. Why pray?
 - a. God invites us. It is integral part of relationship with God.
 - b. Others need our prayers.
 - c. God can strengthen and even change the individual through prayer.
 - d. Prayer helps us discern God’s will. If the Church is to follow God into the world, we must first figure out where God is moving. Otherwise, we might be thinking **our** will is God’s will.
 - e. 3 categories described by Fisher Humphries:
 - i. Some things God gives us whether we ask for them or not.
 - ii. Some things that we request from God but He does not give us.
 - iii. Some things that come our way only if we pray to God.
6. Some Prayer Suggestions and Tools
 - a. Listen for what God might be trying to tell you. Intentionally build in some time of solitude for being still and quiet; for reflection and contemplation.
 - b. Keep a prayer journal.
 - c. Create a personal “care” list. Write the names of everyone you can think of in 3 minutes and regularly bring these names up in prayer.
 - d. Find a prayer partner or meet regularly with a prayer group.
 - e. Practice the prayer of relinquishment: Turn it over to God. A demanding spirit that tells God how to handle an issue sometimes blocks answer to prayer. One has to give up self-will so that God can move in the situation. Our study guide referred to this as “abandonment”, making an intentional surrender to God.
 - f. Pray with the scripture: For example, read through 1 Corinthians 13 and pray about the characteristics of love in your life or reflect on the meaning of the individual phrases in the Lord’s Prayer during your prayer time over the next week.
 - g. Use the following ideas to enhance intercessory prayer ministry. Adapted from pages14-15 of study guide.

- i. Learn about the problems and circumstances of other people's lives so that you can more effectively pray about their situations.
 - ii. Imagine Jesus being in the position of the one for whom you are praying.
 - iii. Think about someone very close to you being in the circumstance of the one for whom you are praying.
 - iv. Reflect on what it would be like to be if you found yourself in the situation of the one for whom you are praying.
 - v. Intentionally develop friendships with people who are different from yourself in beliefs or culture so as to enlarge your worldview.
 - vi. Look for and serve in practical ministries so that you may become more aware of the needs in the community around you.
 - vii. Consider intercession as a form of sacrifice and embrace it—there is some pain associated with sharing in the sorrows experienced by others.
- h. Read the newspaper or listen to the news with a prayerful heart. Offer up short prayers about different situations, issues, people reported in the news.
- i. Don't let the feeling of being distracted during prayer time discourage you.
- i. Remember that even when our minds wander, God has not left.
 - ii. Think of distractions as the kind of thing that happens when we are driving a car to our destination. It may rain. We may have to take a detour. There may be an accident up ahead. A tire may blow and you have to change it. However, eventually, you get to the destination that you wanted to reach!
 - iii. Sometimes, distractions are not really distractions. If a particular distraction keeps coming back, try asking God to show you its significance.
- j. At the end of day, pretend you have a phone call from God and tell God about your day.
7. Some closing thoughts....
- a. What steps are we taking to encourage one another in prayer?
 - b. What if it feels as if God is silent? What can a person do then?
 - c. What one practical suggestion can you apply to your prayer life?
 - d. What is something new about prayer that you have learned today?
 - e. Consider this. When Jesus knew he would be arrested, tried, and crucified, he chose to pray. Jesus could have called angels to help him or used his own power. He could have given up and left Jerusalem. What an example he has set before us!

