



LEADERS NOTES

“Prayer is so great that wherever you look in the Bible, it is there. Why? Everywhere God is, prayer is. Since God is everywhere and infinitely great, prayer must be all-pervasive in our lives.”

Prayer – Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God by Timothy Keller p28.

During the sermon series on prayer our goal for small groups is to engage in more prayer as well as grow in our understanding of prayer. We aim to make this as practical as possible so that we can exhort those in our small groups to pray more, not to see it merely as some kind of rite or obligation but a more natural part of their relationship with our Saviour King.

There will be some time spent in the bible hearing from God. Secondly, there will be opportunity for prayer and resources to help think differently about praying and to stimulate our prayer life.

Resources you may find helpful are:

Paul Miller, *A Praying Life*

Tim Keller, *Prayer - Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God*

Don Carson, *A Call to Spiritual Reformation*

WEEK 1: PRAISE - TO WHOM DO WE PRAY?

(Psalm 145, Revelation 4-5)

In this study we want to encourage people to praise our great God. The bible references above give a taste of the way the bible talks about or better still how God reveals himself in the bible. Prayer is a response to the revelation of God. If we have a clearer idea of whom it is we praying to it ought to influence the way we pray and what we pray for.

1. Read Psalm 145. What words are used to describe God in this Psalm?

God (verse 1), King (verse 1), Great (verse 3), beyond understanding (verse 3 unfathomable), takes action (verse 4), glorious and majestic (verse 5), good (verse 7), righteous (verse 7), gracious and compassionate (verse 8), slow to anger and full of love (verse 8), mighty (verse 11), eternal (verse 13), trustworthy (verse 13), sustains and lifts up (verse 14), provider (verses 15-16), near (verse 18), hears (verse 19), saves (verse 19), protector (verse 20), judge (verse 20). This is a long list but the point is to get people speaking of why God is praise worthy, to remind them of who it is we are praying to. This means we are more careful with our prayer, more faithful in our prayer, more reverent with our prayer.

2. Was there anything in this list that surprised you? Were there any that you had not thought about for sometime? Are there any that you do not understand?

3. Some of the things in the list above can also be used of people. How are they different when applied to God?

4. What words are used to praise God in this Psalm?

Exalt (verse 1), praise (verse 1, 3), extol (verse 2) which means to praise enthusiastically, commend (verse 4), speak (verse 5), celebrate (verse 7), how can we do this, joyfully sing (verse 7).

5. When attributes of God are given or his actions are declared what are some of the words used to describe these?

Unfathomable describing greatness (verse 3), mighty describing acts (verse 4, 12), glorious splendour describing his majesty (verse 5), Wonderful describing works (verse 5), awesome describing works (verse 6), great describing deeds (verse 6), abundant describing goodness (verse 7), slow describing his movement to anger (verse 8), rich describing his love (verse 8), glorious splendour describing his kingdom (verse 12), everlasting describing his kingdom (verse 13), faithful describing actions (verse 13), every to describe whose desires are met (verse 16), righteous and faithfulness describing what he does (verse 17), every to describe which creatures praise him (verse 21). You can discuss the use of these descriptions and why they are important as it seems like a lot of pressure that so much can be attributed to one God or being. Do we think of God in this way or is our idea of God too small? If it is too small how can we change this?

6. Read Revelation 4:8, Revelation 4:11, Revelation 5:9-14. What words are used here to describe the one sitting on the throne?

Holy (Rev 4:8). Note that this is repeated. Why do you think this is? Creator and sustainer (verse 11b), Saviour (Rev 5:9), powerful, wealthy, wise and strong (Rev 5:12).

TIME IN PRAYER

Suggestions for praising God.

- Play a song. Perhaps one of the following links (if you do not want to use the links below you can have a musician in your group play):
 - [Praise My Soul the King of Heaven](#) (Hymn)
 - [Unstoppable God](#) (Song)
 - [Love of The Father](#) (Song)
 - [How Great os Our God](#) (Song)
 - [Praise Him in the Sanctuary](#) (Song)
 - [Psalm 145](#) (Song to listen to)
- Go around group asking each person to offer praise based on what has been learnt from Psalm 145 and Revelation 4-5. This can be done in silence individually or out loud.
- Finish night with someone reciting the following prayer:

*You are worthy, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honour and power,
for you created all things
and by your will they were created
and have their being.
You are worthy, Lamb of God,
for you were slain,
and with your blood you ransomed people for God*

from every tribe and language and people and nation.
To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be praise and honour and glory and power,
for ever and ever. Amen.

(from Common Prayer – Resources for Gospel-Shaped services. Service of the Word and Prayer Form 2)

WEEK 2. CONFESSION – WHO ARE WE TO PRAY TO GOD?

(Isaiah 6:1-7, Daniel 9, Nehemiah 1, Matthew 6:9-15)

"We tend to view confessing guilt as at best a passing preliminary in our prayers rather than a primary burden of them. Calvin provides a correction for us. Reflecting on Daniel's 'guilt focus', he says: 'This, then, is our righteousness, to confess ourselves guilty in order that God may gratuitously absolve us.' He then draws attention to Christ's prayer, 'Forgive us our debts.' and draws the application: For whom did Christ wish to use this petition? Surely all his disciples. If anyone thinks that he has no need of this form of prayer, and confession of sin, let him depart from the school of Christ, and enter into a herd of swine.' In short, we are never to cut loose from this 'mourning' over sin as if it belongs to some elementary stage of Christian experience we leave behind. It is a proper preoccupation of our prayers." Ralph-Davis p123.

1. Read Isaiah 6:1-7. What is the contrast between Isaiah's vision of the Lord and how he sees himself?

2. What does Isaiah confess and what do you think this means?

3. Read Daniel 9:1-19. What words does Daniel use to describe the people's sin or rebellion?

Sinned (verse 5), wicked (verse 5), rebel (verse 5), turned away (verse 5), not listened to your servants (verse 6), unfaithfulness (verse 7), disobedience (verse 10, 11, 14), transgressed (verse 10), not sought the favour of the Lord (verse 13), done wrong (verse 15).

4. After confessing, to what does Daniel appeal for forgiveness? Why does he do this?

God's favour or grace (verse 17), God's mercy (verse 18), for the sake of His name (verse 19). He does this because he knows that only God can restore Jerusalem and his people as they are still under the rule of other kings.

5. Read Genesis 3:8-13, Genesis 4:8-10, Acts 5:1-11, 1 Kings 8:33-34, Psalm 51. What is common in these passages and what is different?

In all these passages the characters in the story are given the opportunity to confess. They are aware of their transgression, as is God. In the first three passages the opportunity to confess is passed by. In the fourth passage Solomon is asking God and reminding the people that they need to confess. In Psalm 51 we see the anguish of confession but also that God is a merciful God and it is like David can breath again.

6. Read 1 John 1:8-9. What is the result of confession?

When we confess God forgives our sins on the basis of Jesus death. We do not need to carry the burden of guilt any longer for what we have done.

TIME IN PRAYER

First read confession from the prayer book.

Heavenly Father,

You have loved us with an everlasting love,
but we have gone our own way
and broken your laws.

We are sorry for our sins

and turn away from them.
For the sake of your Son who died for us
forgive us, cleanse us, and change us.
By your Holy Spirit enable us to live for you
and to please you more and more,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

After this it is important to read 1 John 1:8-9. This is called absolution.

Suggestions for other activities:

- Write things we need to confess on paper and around a safe fire pit throw in the pieces of paper and burn them.
- Maybe write things down and have people nail them to a cross.
- Perhaps to give thanks for what Jesus did in the spilling of his blood you can have a cross made of paper and some red paint. Get people to dip their thumb in the paint and put thumb print on the cross. You can take your time and give people to think and confess before they take part. Maybe even have some music playing quietly.
- Just have time of quiet when people can confess personal sins. After this have open time when people confess corporate sins (for example things we have neglected, times we have not honoured God as we should etc).

WEEK 3. CHRIST AS MEDIATOR – HOW DO I KNOW MY PRAYERS ARE BEING HEARD?

“To pray in Jesus’ name means to come to God in prayer consciously trusting in Christ for our salvation and acceptance and not relying on our own credibility or record. It is, essentially, to re-ground our relationship with God in the saving work of Jesus over and over again. It also means to recognise your status as a child of God, regardless of your inner State. God our Father is committed to his children’s good, as any good father would be.” Prayer – Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God. Keller, 105.

1. Read 1 Timothy 2:1-6. In this passage Paul is urging Timothy and others to pray. He is also instructing them on for whom they ought to pray. What assurance does Paul give that their prayers are being heard?

Sometimes it can feel like our prayers are not being heard because things do not turn out the way we would hope. Especially if we are living under a government that rules oppressively or does not rule justly. Paul is assuring them that their prayers are heard because Christ is mediating for them and he wants everyone to be saved. Jesus has opened the way for prayers to be heard. Jesus himself intercedes for us in John 17:2-26.

2. In verse 3, we are told that this kind of praying is good and pleases God. Why do you think this is?

God puts governments in authority. Prayerful dependence on God through Christ demonstrates our reliance on him and that we are saved by Jesus, we want to pray in line with his will.

3. Read Luke 11:1-13. What stands out for you in this passage?

Looking for people to see Jesus teaching how to pray. The generosity of the one we pray to. Jesus has taught us how to pray and that they are heard because as we pray to our heavenly father we need to realise that God wants what is best for us. Jesus helps us to see what that looks like and how to pray in line with the father’s will. Jesus prays knowing the father hears him and through him we can do the same.

4. Read Romans 8:26-30. What role does the Spirit play in our prayer life?

The Spirit is sent by the Son and the Father, he is in line with all they do. He helps us to pray in accordance with the will of God and not our own.

5. Read Luke 22:14-20. In what does Jesus intercede in these verses?

He intercedes because he is himself the sacrificial Lamb who ushers in the new covenant. Jesus intercedes for us because he has satisfied the wrath of God and paid for our sin.

TIME IN PRAYER

It would be good to participate in communion together.

- Spend a couple of minutes praising God for who he is.
- Have a brief time of confession. Then one person says the following.
 - Merciful Father, we rejoice that you pardon and forgive those who truly repent and trust in your Son. Deliver us from all our sins, confirm and strengthen us in all goodness, and keep us in eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
- Pass out bread and juice (or your GF if necessary).
- Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.
- Invite people to eat the bread and say "Eat this in remembering that Christ died for you and feed on him in your heart by faith with thanksgiving.
- Invite people to drink saying, "Drink this in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for you and be thankful."
- After this spend some time praying for those in government, or authority. Pray for people to come to know Jesus. That he will raise up workers for the harvest. Pray that God will heal our thirsty land and look after those on the land with their well being and mental health. Pray that God will be working in peoples lives to bring them back to himself. Mission 2020. Pray for other things you can think of.
- Finish with the Lord's Prayer.

*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 sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.*

WEEK 4. SUPPLICATIONS – WHAT IF MY PRAYERS AREN'T ANSWERED?

"God the Father is always kind to us. He cannot and will not punish those who are in Christ. He always treats us with the love that he has towards his own Son. So whenever you turn towards him, he is ready to listen and willing to bless. He always regards us with affection, is always ready to hear our prayers. If he disciplines, it's always for our good. You may not understand what God is doing and why. But this you can know: 'God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, so that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life' (John 3:16)" Chester, 103

1. Why do you think it is hard to take risks in prayer?

The idea here is to get people to think about what they for. We often pray for things that are

easy and if we do not get an answer we are not too bothered. Moreover, people will often pray for things where others are helping out. For example, we pray for people who are ill because a doctor is looking after them. Doctors are a gift from God but our reliance is on them and not God. Pray for the salvation of people, pray for healing, pray for God to heal our land, pray that people's love will abound more and more in depth of insight so they may discern what is best (Philippians 1:9-11).

2. Do you find it difficult to ask God for things? Why do we find it difficult to ask God for things? What things are most difficult to pray for?

3. Read Ephesians 3:14-21. What does Paul ask for in this prayer? Why does Paul pray so boldly (verses 20-21)?

4. Read Matthew 26:36-46. What does Jesus ask for in this prayer? Is Jesus prayer answered? Does this mean that God no longer loves Jesus? Why or why not?

Jesus prayed, and God said no to him - but he was never not loved!

4fold model of parent to child: yes; yes, but not yet; yes, but in the way you think; no

Every answer is working towards God's plan of making you more like Jesus - the circumstances of life serve the relationship, not the other way around

We are praying to our heavenly Father who always does what is best for us. Parents ought to want what is best for their kids and they answer their requests accordingly.

5. Read 2 Chronicles 6:21-39. What does King Solomon pray for?

6. Read Daniel 9:17-19. Why does Daniel make requests of the Lord?

7. Read 2 Corinthians 12:1-10. What did Paul pray for and how did God answer his prayer?

Paul prayed that the thorn in his flesh (which we do not know what it is) would be taken from him. God's answer is that his grace is sufficient for him. Perhaps you could ask what this means for people, do they find this an unsatisfying response from god and why.

TIME IN PRAYER

- Spend time taking prayer requests.
- You could use some of the following prayers from the prayer book as a guide.
 - *God of Love, make your known to the people of our world, your saving power among all the nations. Guide and govern your church by your Holy Spirit, so that all who call themselves Christians may be led in the way of truth and hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life. We commend to your fatherly goodness all who are afflicted or distressed in body, mind or circumstances (especially ...). Relieve them according to their needs, giving them patience in their sufferings, and deliverance from their afflictions. This we ask for the sake of Christ our Saviour. Amen.*
 - *In the back of this booklet is other prayers you can choose to use at the current gathering or in the future.*
- Finish by praying one of the following prayers:
 - *Ephesians 3:14-21*

- *Philippians 1:9-11*
- *1 Thessalonians 3:9-13*
- *Colossians 1:9-14*

WEEK 5. STRUCTURE OF PRAYER – WHY DON'T I PRAY MORE?

“One prayer system many people have found helpful is ACTS (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication). But systems can become rote, desensitising us to God as a person. We can become wooden or mindless as we pray. When I come home, I don't first adore Jill for a couple of minutes, confess my failure to take out the trash, thanks her for making dinner, and then give her my list... None of us wants to be treated like robots... including God. He is after all, a person.

Many people are so aware of this caution that they are suspicious of all systems. They feel it kills the Spirit. Systems seem to fly in the face of what we learned about childlike praying. But all of us create systems with things that are important to us. Remember, life is both holding hands and scrubbing floors. It is both being and doing. Prayer journals or prayer cards are on the 'scrubbing floors' side of life. Praying like a child is on the 'holding hands' side of life. We need both.”
from A Praying Life by Paul Millar (page 223-224)

1. Read Matthew 7:5-15. What instructions does Jesus give regarding prayer?

2. Why do you think he gives these instructions?

We are not to make a big deal of our prayer as though we are following some religious rite that earns us points. In verse 6 we are told that we are pray to our Father. There is an intimacy here. Prayer does not make us a better person it shows that God is making us a better person not through the action of prayer but by the fact that we do it. Also it is important to pray and Jesus goes on to teach them how they should pray.

3. What things stand out to you in Jesus prayer?

4. What kind of things can you do to help you to be faithful in prayer?

Time to pray

Spend some time combining what has been learnt over the past weeks.

- Spend some time praising God.
- Some time in confession.
- Asking God to meet needs (perhaps some prayers in the back of this booklet from the prayer could help hear.
- Suggestions for things to also pray for:
 - God will be preparing hearts for mission 2020.
 - God will raise up workers for the harvest.
 - For each other.

Suggestions of tools people use for prayer.

- Ask people to offer their own ways of praying.
- Using ACTS (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication) Try to work through differences between praise and thanksgiving.
- Talk about prayer journalling.
- Prayer cards.

- There are also some helpful hints in the back of the book "A Praying Life" by Paul Millar.
- Suggestion of using PrayerMate app. You can show people this app and take them through it. St Paul's has a feed that can be used with this app to stay up to date with what prayer needs there are.

WEEK 6. WHEN SHOULD I PRAY?

1. What do you think it means to pray continually?

2. Read Ephesians 6:18-20. Paul says here that we ought to pray on all occasions with all kinds of prayer. Why do you think he qualifies this with "pray in the Spirit" (verse 18)?

What does it mean to pray in the Spirit? We want people to learn to pray in line with God's will. What does it mean to pray in line with God's will? The Spirit is completely in tune as part of the Godhead. The Spirit is a witness to Jesus, who he is and what he has done (John 14:25-27), therefore, praying in the Spirit is how Jesus would pray. God's desire is to reconcile people to himself and that they might grow in their faith and reflect his glory. This is the best way for us to live. Praying in the spirit is not about some mystical connection but him informing our prayers and interceding for us, this requires faith and obedience.

3. What do think it means when Paul says, "all kinds of prayers and requests"?

4. What makes it difficult to find time to pray? How can we overcome this?

Perhaps look at Phil 1:9-11.

5. What does it say about our relationship with God if we find it hard to find time to pray?

We put time and effort into the relationships that matter to us. Praying is like a child talking to their Father. They ask all kinds of questions and make all kinds of requests because of their dependence on their parents. The gospel of grace ought to be the motivation to pray, to talk with God in a way that is appropriate and regular. We should however, not get down on ourselves if there are times of dryness but come back to him and seek him. DA Carson in his chapter on Philippians 1:9-11 (from A Call to Spiritual Reformation p123) shows how this prayer helps us work through the thirsty times. "Few of Paul's prayers have greater potential to help us surmount the hurdles of spiritual dryness and lack of faith than the one in Phil 1:9-11. It can help us overcome our excuses for prayerlessness." DA Carson from A Call to Spiritual Reformation p124.

TIME IN PRAYER

Suggestions for prayer:

- Use prayers from the appendix in this book, select some as a group.
- Rapid fire prayer. This is where you go around the group saying one sentence prayers and quickly moving to the next person. Start with thanksgiving and then move to asking for things. Prayers should be no more than a sentence. It is also good to have an out for people, that is, a prayer people can use if they cannot think of anything else, such as "Thanks for the trees." It may feel uncomfortable at the start but give it time people will loosen up.

WEEK 7. WHAT SHOULD I PRAY FOR?

1. Read John 17:1-26. How does Jesus start his prayer in verses 1-5?

Prays for God's glory to be shown. Jesus shows God's glory by finishing the work he gave him to do. What work has God given us to do? This can include doing our jobs well, it can include ministry, be a good spouse, of friend to others. Being a good parent and maybe being a faithful member of Jesus church.

2. In verses 6-19 what does Jesus pray for?

Verse 9. Protection verse 11, 15. Sanctify them (that they will grow) verse 17. Is this something we pray for each other. That they might have the full measure of joy (verse 13).

3. Verse 13. What do you think it means that Jesus prays for the full measure of joy within them?

4. In verses 20-26 what does Jesus pray for?

Here there are those who will believe in Jesus even if they have not seen him and he prays that they will be one. What makes them one? Belief in Jesus. That those who believe in him will be where he is. That they will have the same kind of love for each other that Jesus has for them. We struggle with this last one even among God's people.

5. What does it mean to "be where he is" in verse 24?

Does this mean reconciled to God? Does it mean I the future when Jesus returns? Does it mean both of these things?

TIME IN PRAYER

Spend time in prayer. Suggestions for things to pray for:

Mission 2020. The lost. The lost in our family and among our friends. Pray for neighbours.

Pray for our government. Pray for St Paul's staff. Pray for unity and energy.

Pray for our ministry volunteers. Pray for your small group leader. Pray that God will raise up workers for the harvest.

WEEK 8. HOW CAN I GET BETTER AT PRAYING?

"Jesus does not say, "Come to me, all you who have learned how to concentrate in prayer, who minds no longer wander, and I will give you rest." No, Jesus opens his arms to his needy children and says, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt 11:28 NASB) The criteria for coming to Jesus is weariness. Come overwhelmed with life. Come with your wandering mind. Come messy." (Miller, 499)

"You don't create intimacy; you make room for it. This is true whether you are talking about your spouse, your friend, or God. You need space to be together. Efficiency, multitasking, and busyness all kill intimacy. In short, you can't get to know God on the fly."

Miller, 694-696).

"When you stop trying to control your life and instead allow your anxieties and problems to bring you to God in prayer, you shift from worry to watching. You watch God weave his patterns in the story of your life. Instead of trying to be out front, designing your life, you realise you are inside God's drama. As you wait, you begin to see him work, and your life begins to sparkle with wonder. You are learning to trust again." (Miller 1027-1029).

1. What stops you from getting better at praying?

Perhaps we get stagnate in our relationship with God.

2. What can we do to get better at praying?

*Get to know God better - prayer is a means to a relationship, not an end in itself
Just pray, little and often!*

Make time to go deeper (you won't 'find time')

Journal - see what God does over time, in you and for you

Realise that prayer is crucial to continuing and growing as a Christian

3. How would you describe prayer after going through these past few weeks?

4. What has changed in your attitude to prayer?

5. What will you do to improve your prayer life?

TIME IN PRAYER

Use this time to reflect on all we have learnt about prayer over the last 8 weeks. Reflect on whether you have seen a difference in your prayer life, pray that God would continue to teach us and encourage us in our prayer lives.