

Special Service - Prayer

Adoration – Confession – Thanksgiving – Supplication

Introduction:

This week's service was different than others. It was designed to allow the church body to be active in both silent and reflective prayer on a Sunday morning. Because we did not exposit a section of Scripture, this week's discussion guide will be a little different as well. I am pulling from multiple resources to help us grow in our understanding and practice of prayer. Even the most experienced Christian can benefit from a conversation about prayer. Prayer is not a spiritual habit that the Christian ever graduates from. In fact, it is so vital to our relationship with the Lord that it should hold a place of primacy in our day. I am reminded of a quote by Martin Luther – *"I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer."* I hope that this week's discussion guide is helpful to you, whether for information, meditation, examination, or transformation. - JF

Questions:

How would you describe prayer to a new believer or a non-Christian? What elements are vital to prayer? Consider a time when you prayed (individually or corporately) that has left an impact on you. What made that time of prayer so impactful? Now consider a time when it felt like prayer was ineffective or a letdown. What made you feel that way about that particular time?

Greg Ogden describes prayer as a *"transparent dialogue. It is a conversation with God in which we address him and in quiet are addressed by him."* What words or phrases stand out to you in Ogden's definition? Why is it that those words or phrases stand out to you? What do you think Ogden should have included in his definition? Why would that inclusion have been beneficial to the definition?

On a scale of 1 (terrible/nonexistent) to 10 (thriving/wonderful), where would you place your prayer life? What do you enjoy about your prayer time with God? What would you like to improve when addressing God in prayer? Is there someone that taught you how to pray? If so, describe to the group what they did to help you improve your understanding of prayer? If no one ever taught or modeled prayer for you, at this point in your life would you be receptive to having someone help? Why or why not?

Read Matthew 6:5-14 | The Lord's Prayer. What is the context of these verses (*Sermon on the Mount*)? What is Jesus doing in these verses (*teaching*)? Why is it important to understand that Jesus is teaching the disciples what they must do and understand about God's kingdom and reign? Prayer is a kingdom standard that stands in stark contrast to the way of life in the fallen world. Why do you think the disciples needed to be taught how to pray? What have you personally learned from reading and/or studying the Lord's Prayer? What does the Lord's Prayer teach Christians about what prayer should be (e.g., *God's rightful place, God's provision, God's forgiveness, God's protection, et cetera*)?

Richard Foster writes in his book on prayer, God *"is inviting you – and me – to come home, to come home to where we belong, to come home to that for which we were created. His arms are stretched out wide to receive us. His heart is enlarged to take us in. For far too long we have been in a far country: a country of noise and hurry and crowds, a country of climb and push and shove, a country of frustration and fear and intimidation. And he welcomes us home: home to serenity and peace and joy, home to friendship and fellowship and openness, home to intimacy and acceptance and affirmation."* When we pray, we are ushered into the presence of God and He graciously listens to us and cares for us. How does this quote by Foster encourage, convict, or frustrate you? Do you agree with Foster's assessment? Why or why not? Knowing that prayer is such a vital part of the Christian life, what will you begin to do or refine in your prayer life?

Conclusion:

During your group's prayer time, you might use the ACTS model (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, & Supplication). Consider sharing one or two things aloud from each category and then allowing the person to your left to pray for you in what you just shared. Another way you can consider applying today's topic is to make a plan for how you will seek to grow in your prayer life. If you are mature and content in your prayer life, you might consider making a list of people that would benefit from you helping them grow in their prayer life.