

by J.R. Miller



Praying in Community

LEADER'S GUIDE

GIVING VOICE TO THE
HEART OF OUR FATHER

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by
J. R. Miller

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Introduction

Several years ago I was pastoring in a large church and was asked to create a Wednesday night discipleship program. I wanted to do more than just teach people about God, I wanted to create opportunities to experience both the love of the Father and the power of Divine-community. As I searched all the major publishing houses, I quickly became frustrated at the quality of materials on prayer. Most studies lacked depth and the ones that provided it were focused almost exclusively on passing along the cold-hard facts about prayer. I wanted something more. The people of God deserve and need something more! This group study was born out of my passion to help people both learn about and experience the power of praying in community.

This 6 lesson series is designed to help every disciple of Christ master the art of communal prayer. So much of our culture emphasizes the private nature faith, that we have forgotten the power of praying in groups. This series has been used in my own ministry to help both the brand new Christians and the mature Christians experience the power of praying as a church Family.

Each lesson is designed to last 1 1/2 hours. Unlike most group studies, this material puts an equal emphasis on teaching the mind and engaging the spirit. The first half of each lesson teaches one of six disciplines; The Prayer of Jesus, The Prayer of Brokenness, The Prayer of Evangelism, The Prayer of Healing, The Prayer of Intercession, and The Prayer of Persistence. The second half of each lesson is your opportunity to move beyond talking **about** prayer and actually engaging **in** prayer. How much time you spend in each will vary depending upon the experience and comfort level of the people in the study. As a whole, this study teaches the value of using the Scripture as our primary book of prayer.

My prayer, is that each person in this study will come to know the joy of prayer and the power of praying in community.

Lesson 1: The Prayer of Jesus

Prayer does not come easy to us and learning to pray can be tough. Many times we feel alone in our struggle to experience meaningful prayer... we are not alone. According to a recent survey, the typical Christian spends three and a half minutes each day in prayer. Christians who are in full-time ministry average only seven minutes per day. Throughout this series we will learn the fundamentals that will help us experience joy and meaning in through prayer. First, let's talk about what prayer is.

I. Introduction: What is Prayer?

NOTE: Allow anywhere from 1 hour to 1 hour 15 minutes for teaching sections I through IV.

- Describe in your own words what defines the ideal prayer life?

NOTE: You may want to press one or two people to explain why they think the way they do regarding their vision of ideal. Is it based on Scripture? The example of a person they know? Read about? etc...

- Describe how you feel about your own prayer life? Are you happy with it? Discouraged by it? Is your prayer life non-existent? Explain why you feel this way.
- If you struggle with knowing how to pray, why? Do you feel God is not listening? Do you feel like prayer has no purpose? Is prayer not important? Why is prayer hard?

The Words of Children
"Prayer is the lisping of the believing infant, the shout of the fighting believer, the requiem of the dying saint falling asleep in Jesus. It is the breath, the watchword, the comfort, the strength, and the honor of a Christian."
Spurgeon

A. Prayer Defined

Over the course of our study we will seek to answer some of the above questions as to why prayer is so important. Throughout this series, we will explore various types of prayer to enhance our skills. As we begin, it might be helpful if we develop a simple definition of the term prayer.

KEY TERM - Prayer

Prayer is communing with your King and Father.

B. The Key Components

The above definition involves three key components.

1: COMMUNION

Communion means that we are interacting with God. We talk, He listens; He talks, we listen. We can not commune with God if we

ignore Him. Do not fail to take time and listen for His voice and He will come to you.

NOTE: God's "voice" does not mean that we will hear his audible answers, but listening in prayer is allowing God to speak through silence, the Word, through circumstances and through the people He has placed in our life.

2: **KING**

If we forget that God is King and ruler of our world and our life, then our prayer will lead to frustration. In the weeks ahead we will spend some time getting to know the God to whom we pray and learn how He is able to accomplish so much through our prayer.

3: **FATHER**

Our prayers are not to an angry God, but a loving Father. God's wants us to pray, He asks us to pray, He waits for your prayers as a father would wait to hear from any child. Prayer is speaking to your heavenly Dad and opening up your life to His work!

He Who is Without Prayer

“He who lives without prayer, he who lives with little prayer, he who seldom reads the Word, and he who seldom looks up to heaven for a fresh influence from on high; he will be the man whose heart will become dry and barren. However, he who falls in secret on his God, who spends much time in holy retirement, who delights to meditate on the words of the Most High, and whose soul is given up to Christ; such a man must have an overflowing heart. As his heart is, such will his life be.”

Spurgeon

II. Breaking Down Barriers: Finding your Faith in Prayer

To be without prayer in the Christian life, is like being a firefighter without water; we have a mission, we have the training, but we lack the power to do any real work. As we begin our adventure into prayer, here are some biblical reasons why we need to pray.

**A. Pray Because God Wants you to Pray
Matthew 7:7-11**

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened for you.
8 For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

9 Is there anyone among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 11 If you then, although you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

The NET Bible

B. Pray Because It Is a Christian's Duty

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Always rejoice, 17 constantly pray, 18 in everything give thanks. For this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

The NET Bible

C. Pray Because God Hears Your Prayers

NOTE: This verse is very good because not only does it demonstrate that God hears our prayer, it also shows that God is sovereign over the world and that there is always justice in his hand.

Psalms 10:16-18

The Lord rules forever! The nations are driven out of his land. 17 Lord, you have heard the request of the oppressed; you make them feel secure because you listen to their prayer. 18 You defend the fatherless and oppressed, so that mere mortals may no longer terrorize them.

The NET Bible

D. Pray Because It Will Change Your Life

Hebrews 4:14-16

Therefore since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. 15

For we do not have a high priest incapable of sympathizing with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way just as we are, yet without sin. 16 Therefore let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and find grace whenever we need help.

The NET Bible

Prayer Bring Character

“Prayer governs conduct and conduct makes character. Conduct, is what we do; character, is what we are. Conduct is the outward life. Character is the life unseen, hidden within, yet evidenced by that which is seen.”

E.M. Bounds

III. A New Tool: The Prayer Journal

We can begin to grow in our prayer life as we try new things, find new models, and practice new tools to help us grow. This week we are going to introduce the idea of a prayer journal and we will practice using this tool throughout the remaining weeks of our prayer experience.