

To KNOW Christ and one another more deeply,
To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW as followers of Jesus,
To SERVE those God has placed in our path.
- CG Mission Statement

Icebreaker

Who have been some key people that taught you about prayer or how to pray?

Worship: Prayer: by Georg Herbert

(Read the poem or a Scripture passage to meditate on)

Prayer the church's banquet, angel's age,
God's breath in man returning to his birth,
The soul in paraphrase, heart in pilgrimage,
The Christian plummet sounding heav'n and earth
Engine against th' Almighty, sinner's tow'r
Reversed thunder, Christ-side-piercing spear,
The six-days world transposing in an hour,

A kind of tune, which all things hear and fear;
Softness, and peace, and joy, and love, and bliss,
Exalted manna, gladness of the best,
Heaven in ordinary, man well drest,
The milky way, the bird of Paradise,
Church-bells beyond the stars heard, the soul's blood,
The land of spices; something understood.

Text for Discussion: Philippians 4:6-7; Matthew 6:5-13

Turn in your Bibles and read this passage aloud together.

Aid for Discussion: Sermon Summary

Prayer is a gift. Through it, we have direct access to the Almighty God, who knows and loves us intimately. Prayer is a promise that our Father cares deeply and listens when we cry out to Him (1 Peter 5:6-7). This access is only because of God's mercy and grace. In Jesus – our faithful high priest and merciful savior – we can draw near to God with a sincere heart, knowing we are fully loved and completely forgiven.

Prayer is a gift we are so reluctant to take hold of that God has to command us to. We need to pray – not out of duty, but because of the peace it offers our hearts. Every instance of worry is an opportunity to pray. So rather than suppressing our troubles, we surrender these cares to God with an attitude of thanksgiving and trust. “Oh what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear, All because we do not carry everything to Jesus... in prayer.”

God doesn't want us to worry, so in every situation – no matter the circumstance – He calls us to pray. Even when we don't know what to say (Rom 8:26). God knows the groanings of our hearts and yearns for us to lay down our burdens before Him. Because the more we pray, the more we will come to know the riches and power that are ours in Christ Jesus.

The Posture of Prayer. It is not to be a performance; we aren't performing a role. In its essence, prayer is something private and personal. We are to adopt a posture of no pretense or hiding. We are to be open and vulnerable, because to pray is to admit our need. Yes, we are God's children, but we are also continually reliant on His grace which we could never deserve.

What is prayer? It's a conversation, relationship and encounter with our loving Father. It is pouring out our feelings – bringing all of ourselves into God's presence. It is knowing God is filled with compassion, tenderness and forgiveness and that through prayer, God's peace will guard our hearts and minds.

How then should we pray? As G.K. Chesterton said, “There are two times to pray: when we feel like it and when we don’t.” But if we only pray when we feel like it, we’ll never really learn how. It is therefore crucial to cultivate a ritual and habit of prayer. We should let prayer be the first and final acts of our day. We must prime our hearts to pray by reciting, listening to, and meditating on God’s word. What this looks like:

Instruction – Ask what the verse or passage is teaching us about God and ourselves.

Thanksgiving – What can I give thanks to God for because of this passage?

Confession – What is this passage calling me to confess of?

Pray – Pouring out our cares, worries, concerns and hopes before our loving

Guiding Question of the Week

(This question is intended as a target for the whole conversation. Do not ask for responses now. It will be repeated later in the study.)

If prayer is a gift, why are we often reluctant to pray and how does this relate to our posture of prayer?

Questions for Discussion

(Remember it is better to wrestle deeply with two good questions than gloss over many. Sub-bullets are intended for potential follow-up.)

- Define prayer.
 - If prayer is a gift, why are we often reluctant to pray and how does this relate to our posture of prayer?
 - What are we promised when we pray according to Philippians 4:6-7? When have you experienced this promise?
- “If you know how to worry, you know how to pray.” Do you agree with this statement? Why do we sometimes prefer to worry rather than pray?
 - What are some moments in your life that have been pivotal seasons of prayer? How did your prayer life change and why?
 - How have you personally seen worry and anxiety as opportunities to pray, trust and receive God’s peace?
- Jesus gave us a model for prayer:
 - “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.”
 - What does calling God “Father” communicate to your heart? How does this lead you to a prayer of praise and thanksgiving?
 - “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”
 - What does this teach us about God’s power? What specifically would you be praying for?
 - “Give us this day our daily bread.”
 - What does this teach about God’s provision? How often should we pray for his provision?
 - “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”
 - How do you respond to this statement? What is the prayer of your heart concerning forgiveness?
 - “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”
 - What do we learn about God’s leading in our lives? What is He always leading us toward?
 - What part of the Lord’s Prayer speaks most powerfully to you?
- Talk about how you pray. Are you alone? With family? Do you have lists of requests? Praises? Do you use Scripture? Do you feel closer to God when you pray? What would you like to do differently? How are you challenged and encouraged by this discussion?

Prayer

Pray for pastors, church staff and leaders during group prayer this week.

Experiment of the Month

(A suggestion for engagement in following the way of Jesus this week)

Spiritual Formation Experience:

Martin Luther wrote a letter to his barber telling him what he did when he prayed. Luther said we must prime our hearts to pray by meditating on God's word. He compared prayer to "a garland of "4 twisted strands" with each strand representing a question he asked himself when reading Scripture. Use these 4 questions on any passage to prime your heart for prayer. (The letter is titled "A Simple Way to Pray" and can be found online.)

- Instruction: What does this passage teach about God and myself?
- Gratitude: What in the passage causes me to give thanks to God?
- Confess: What in the passage causes me to repent and confess?
- Petition: What is the passage is God asking me to do that I should pray about?

Missional Experiment:

Anxiety is a real part of the Christian experience. It is a greater witness to the watching world and more glorifying to God to admit your need of Him then to portray a false sense of put-togetherness. Share stories of how a posture of prayer and vulnerability impacts our culture.