

Why Prayer?

Most people might assume that prayer is a given, but most of us struggle to pray regularly. If this is the life-blood to our relationship with Christ, we need to make it the basis and essence of our church.

In 2022, we want to commit to praying as a church. We want to pray that God would create revival in our hearts, in our church, and in our neighborhoods. Take time in these two months to start your Sunday School class with a focus on God in prayer.

Remember that God's work starts within our hearts. This guide is the help us engage with God in new and fresh ways so that we might grow in maturity and love for Jesus.

Week 1

The Jesus Prayer

“But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God.” – Luke 18:13-14

A simple way we can grow in prayerful confession is by praying one of the oldest prayers of the church:

“Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner.”

Do it: How to pray the Jesus Prayer

Begin by setting your alarm on your phone, on the hour, every day for a week. Simply take a moment in silence and allow this prayer ‘Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner’ to rise out of the deepest part of you.

Don’t worry if it seems slightly manufactured or perfunctory initially – just allow it to keep rising from your heart and it will naturally become more meaningful for you.

Questions to Start:

1. Why should we pray for mercy? How often do we ask for it?
2. In what ways do we, as a church or group, need mercy today?

Take 5 – 10 minutes to have people silently pray the Jesus Prayer over and over. Encourage your group to make this a daily practice by setting an alarm.

Week 2

Lectio Divina

“Blessed is the one... whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night.” – Psalm 1:1-2

Lectio Divina is a Latin phrase meaning ‘divine reading’. This is a form of meditation on the word of God that trains us to listen to His whisper speaking personally to our hearts, allowing His word to become one with us.

Lectio Divina is a reflective and repetitive way to read the Bible, that is not so much focused on becoming informed by the text but rather being transformed by it.

Questions to ask:

1. How are ways we can meditate on God’s word?
2. How might meditating on God’s word cause change in our daily lives?

Practice:

Ask everyone to relax, close their eyes, and prepare their hearts.

1. Read | Pick a passage (a psalm or Gospel passage). Ask a few people to read the passage with a minute of silence between.
2. Reflect | After a moment of resting, encourage the group to simply say a word or phrase they notice – nothing more.
3. Reread the passage
4. Respond | Speak out in prayer what you sense God is saying to you. Tell Him how you feel.
5. Rest | Read a shorter part of the passage and close in prayer.

Week 3

How to Have a Quiet Time

“But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” – Matthew 6:6

While there is not a fixed way to spend time alone with God, it's helpful to blend different postures together. We see this manifest in the Lord's Prayer as the prayer praises, asks for requests, and confesses sins. This structure below is largely based of Jesus's prayer and is a helpful structure to start playing with.

Ask:

1. What does the Lord's prayer teach us about how we pray to God?
2. In what ways would using the Lord's prayer transform our church or our lives? What might be different about us?

Practice:

How to have a 10-minute quiet time (using P.R.A.Y.)

(1 min) Pause | sit quietly for a minute, stilling your soul.

(2 min) Rejoice | read a short Psalm or listen to a worship song.

(3 min) Ask | Tell God what's on your heart. Pray through your day.

(3 min) Yield | Read a few verses from the New Testament, until a phrase pops out at you and then talk to God about it. Are there any sins you need to confess? Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you afresh.

(1 min) Amen | Pray the Lord's Prayer.

Week 4

Prayer of Examen

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” – Colossians 3:17

The Examen is sometimes referred to as ‘examination of consciousness’ and was popularized by Ignatius of Loyola (1491 – 1556).

It has helped millions of Christians center themselves on Jesus as they come to the end of long and complicated days. This practical way of reviewing the day before you go to sleep affords us the opportunity to become aware of the ways God’s presence has been pursuing us while we’ve been awake.

Questions:

1. James K.A. Smith says everything we do is worship (of something). How might viewing everything we do as worship change our lives?
2. How does the Spirit speak to you through things that happen every day?

Practice:

Replay | think over your day like a movie replaying in your head. Notice what you are noticing. What made you happy? What made you anxious? What made you angry?

Rejoice | thank God for those things which are obvious. But also thank Him for non-obvious things which we sometimes forget - random acts of kindness, being healthy, a positive song or meal. Relish and savor these moments in gratitude to God.

Repent | say sorry to God for moments that come to into your mind as you review the day e.g., getting involved in gossip, reacting with a tone that was aggressive, lacking compassion in a situation, ignoring a need, not responding to a nudge. Receive His forgiveness afresh.

Reboot | make a decision in your heart to live for Jesus tomorrow and ask for grace to see His presence more clearly.

The Examen can take five minutes or one hour. If you do it once - it will be useful – if you do it every day, it can bring transformation.

Be careful (as with any prayer tool) that it doesn't become simply another duty. Think of it as a way to dialogue with God in friendship – holding the practice in context of relationship.

If you do not feel comfortable leading the Prayer of Examen, you can use this YouTube video: <https://youtu.be/AZFulbBMGnM>

Week 5

The Breath Prayer

“The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit intercedes for us through wordless groans.” – Romans 8:26

Our breath prayer is discerned in the silence where we learn that the Holy Spirit is our ultimate prayer-guide.

The aim in this type of prayer is that as we consciously and consistently pray our breath prayer it settles inside us in such a way that the word begins to pray itself in us before we are even aware that we actually said the word!

Questions:

1. Do we know what we truly long for in life? Why or why not?
2. How can the Spirit help us and our church when we are unsure?

Practice:

Sometimes the word or phrase that comes will be a child-like recognition of God’s character that feels truest to you in that particular moment or season of life. Other times it could be a phrase from scripture, a word from a song, or a line from some liturgy.

You might simply say the name ‘Jesus’ and focus on Him until a word comes forth. Brennan Manning encourages a simple process of sitting comfortably in silence and as you inhale, quietly whispering the name “abba” and as you exhale, softly saying, “I belong to you.”

Week 6

Praying the Psalms

“From the east to west, from dawn to dusk, keep lifting all your praises to God!” – Psalm 113:3

The most mature and proven way we can learn to worship consistently is to use the Bible’s 150 Psalms – the Prayer Book of Jesus – for the purposes that they were originally intended: to train us in a ‘conversion of language’ where instead of talking about God, we talk to Him.

Questions:

1. What human emotions do we see expressed in the Psalms?
2. Do we express our emotions to God very often in prayer?

Practice:

Ask your group to commit to praying one Psalm every day. Start the morning by reading on Psalm. As you do, ask the group to listen and hear what God is speaking to them or what they might need to say to God today.

Week 7

Silent Prayer

“Be still and know that I am God.” – Psalm 46:10

Silence is arguably the most counter-cultural prayer tool. Our world is increasingly becoming one loud reverberating echo-chamber and the fact that silence scares most people more than it appeals to them shows the brokenness of our culture.

Jesus' example of going to a solitary place (Luke 4:42) challenges us to actively turn the volume down in our live and internally and externally, encourages us to learn how to be alone with God.

Questions:

1. How can silence function to move us to God?
2. How does silence before God “accomplish” what we want Him to do in our church and lives?

Practice:

Have everyone turn off their phones or put them in a basket. Set a timer and ask everyone to quiet their minds for five minutes before God.

Don't run from the emptiness or emotions that start to arise. Ask God to gently help you process these. As you progress in this, begin to build longer times and more regular rhythms: include a 'quiet day' once every term.

Week 8

Prayer

Walk

Go on a prayer walk. You can chose to walk a route around your neighborhood and pray for your neighbors. Another option is to walk an area that you feel called to. As you walk, take notice of what is around your neighborhood. Are there signs in the yards of your neighbors? What is broken? Where is your neighborhood thriving?

Final Reflections Prayer

Undoubtedly, most would probably be surprised by how little talking or requests there are in most prayer practices. This is because we have lost touch with the purpose of prayer: encountering God.

We should be prompted by God as a church to consider how our work, play, the things we eat, and the family we have contribute to how we worship and love God more.

In fact, you probably encountered how rest and Sabbath go hand in hand with prayer and worship. God wants to remind us that rest is not found in vacations and play time but in God alone.

Additional Resources

All resources are heavily borrowed from The Prayer Course and are not my own. You can find additional resources from their Toolshed such as “How do Turn Parenting into Prayer”:

<https://prayercourse.org/toolshed/>

Lectio Divina App: Lectio365. It has daily, scriptural meditations.

* All resources used in this packet are borrowed from [The Prayer Course](#)