



Prayer is a unique activity that allows the follower of Jesus to cultivate nearness to God. In the same way that human conversation allows two individuals to grow closer together, prayer allows us to draw near to God and develop a healthy, deepening relationship.

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DISCUSSION #1: RESPONDING TO GOD'S INVITATION

In this discussion we will unpack how responding to God's invitation to sit with Him, listen, and talk.

MY STORY | Starting Place

What do you fear losing the most?

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Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

Philippians 4:6

Where do you usually find yourself on this spectrum?

Healthy concern ----- Paralyzing Anxiety

What does Paul say in this verse that will move you from right to left on this spectrum?

Define and contrast prayer, supplication, and thanksgiving.

Why does Paul put prayer, supplication, and thanksgiving together here?
What might happen if you excluded one or two of these things?

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And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. vs. 7

What is the biggest threat to your heart and mind right now? What could happen if your heart & mind are not protected in this situation? How is the peace of God different from mere psychological calmness? What is beyond comprehension when it comes to the peace of God?

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Make a list of everything that is provoking anxiety in your heart and mind. Rank each of these according to the severity of the possible loss each of these represents. Bring each one to God in prayer, asking him specifically what you'd like him to do, what actions He'd like you to take—and thank God for all the times he's delivered you from similar situations in the past.

DISCUSSION #2: NO FORMULA NEEDED

In this discussion we will learn how we do not need to find the right “formula” in prayer. We simply share our hearts honestly and the spirit of God actually helps us in our prayers.

MY STORY | Starting Place

What's the most simple, humble prayer you've ever offered to God?

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Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. Romans 8:26

What are some of your mental obstacles when it comes to prayer? How does the Holy Spirit's participation in your prayers handily remove those obstacles? Why then, does it not matter, that we're saying things (to God) in exactly the right way, or according to some formula?

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And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. Romans 8:27

The Holy Spirit not only knows what's going on in our hearts, but always keeps the Lord's top priorities at the forefront of what He's doing. How does the Holy Spirit bring our wills into alignment with the will of God? What's our role in that process?

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Pray for the people in your circles of influence, using only one-word prayers. Pick the best word for that person, a word that represents what that person really needs, and trust the Holy Spirit to expand, amplify, and present your request to God—all on the basis of your one-word request for that person.

DISCUSSION #3: GETTING INTO ALIGNMENT

In this discussion we will learn how prayer is aligning our heart with the heart of God.

MY STORY | Starting Place

What's something you want more than God does?

DIGGING DEEPER | Practical Biblical Application

Pray then like this:

*Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.*

*Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.*

Mathew 6:9-10

How does the will of God being played out in heaven impact how the will of God is being fulfilled on earth? How do you know when what you want is outside of the will of God? Is that ever really all that difficult to figure out? Explain.

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And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.

1 John 5:14

What impacts your confidence in prayer—namely that what you're asking will have any impact on what actually happens?

How do you know when what you want is in alignment with the will of God? Is that ever really all that difficult to figure out? Explain.

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Pray for something this week you know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, is within the will of God—and wait patiently for God to respond.

DISCUSSION #4: HUMBLE PRAYERS

In this discussion we will learn how God delights in humble prayers of integrity and bold faith.

MY STORY | Starting Place

What's the biggest ask you've ever made—and then got what you requested?

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And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Luke 11:9-10

What does asking, seeking, and knocking look like in real life, especially in the context of prayer? Are there any conditions on the guarantees Jesus is defining here? If so, what are they? If not, why do we not always obtain that for which we ask, seek, and knock?

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What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" Luke 11-13

How has your Dad shaped your view of God? How has he helped you to understand what God is like? What perceptions of God need to be unlearned because of your father? Why does God the Father want to give us that which is going to cause us to flourish?

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Ask, seek, and knock for something you know will increase your level of flourishing, or for someone else. Even though He already knows, tell God why you want this particular thing—and how the Kingdom of God might be impacted once you (or the other person) gets some version of what you've requested.

DISCUSSION #5: THE SOURCE OF HOPE

In this discussion we will see how prayer reminds us of our source of hope—specifically in trusting God’s will, His plans, provisions, forgiveness, and helping us walk in obedience.

MY STORY | Starting Place

What types of circumstances tend to increase your hope? Which types of situations tend to diminish your optimism?

DIGGING DEEPER | Practical Biblical Application

Pray then like this:

*Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Matthew 6:9-10*

How does acknowledging the holiness (the wholly “otherness”) of God set the stage for prayers that cultivate hope? In what do you have more confidence: that God’s will is being accomplished in heaven or on earth? Explain.

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*Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
Matthew 6:11-13*

Why is it important to focus on God’s provision one day at a time? What dangers present themselves when we go beyond this time-parameter? Does this preclude planning for the future? Explain.

What is the model God gives for forgiving others? Does God always trust those He forgives?

What are the triggers of the most seductive temptations in your life? How can you put some space between you and those triggers? Which of those triggers can you simply not avoid?

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Increase someone’s hope this week by praying for something intensely specific for that person.

DISCUSSION #6: HINDERED PRAYERS

In this discussion we will see how our prayers can be hindered by lack of repentance (turning from sin), and lack of forgiveness to others.

MY STORY | Starting Place

What physical response does your body have to unresolved relationships issues?

DIGGING DEEPER | Practical Biblical Application

So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

Matthew 5:23-24

Why does Jesus tell us to place the reasonable restoration of relationships over worship? What would bother God about our worship knowing that someone had a legitimate issue with us that we were ignoring?

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Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you[a] of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered. 1 Peter 3:7

In what sense is the health of our relationships a good indicator of our spiritual health? What would bother God about our prayers knowing that our spouse had a legitimate issue with us that we were ignoring?

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If someone has a legitimate beef with you, broach the subject with them, and listen to how your words and actions impacted that person. If you have a beef with someone else, arrange a time to talk with that individual and start the conversation by saying, "When you said [or did] (fill-in-the-blank), it made an impact on me; can you tell me your perspective on what happened?" In either scenario, encourage the acknowledgment of responsibility, and suggest a plan to rebuild trust.

DISCUSSION #7: PRAYING WITH OTHERS

In this discussion we will unpack how there is wisdom and power in praying with others.

MY STORY | Starting Place

What's something you learned from another person, or in a group discussion, that you would have never discovered on your own?

DIGGING DEEPER | Practical Biblical Application

Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. Matthew 18:19

How does including others in our big requests to God provide a way to protect us from what's in our blind spots? Why does God sometimes require collaboration in order to answer certain prayers?

What are some additional benefits to praying with others?

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For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them. Matthew 18:20

Does this mean that God will never meet with us when we're alone? Explain.

What does it mean for a group of people to be meeting in the name of Jesus? How does this type of gathering differ from all others?

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Get together with a group of believers and agree to ask God for something huge—something you all know is in alignment with His revealed will.

DISCUSSION #8: THE DOG AND PONY PRAYER SHOW

In this discussion we will see how prayer should never be a show for others, but rather a way to connect with God.

MY STORY | Starting Place

What's the most publicly impressive thing you've ever done as a Christian?

DIGGING DEEPER | Practical Biblical Application

And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. Matthew 6:5-6

What's the most "showy" thing you consistently do as a Christian? What drives you to do that? What is "motive-cleansing" about praying in secret, where no one can see that we're doing? How can we check our motives when called to pray out loud with others?

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And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Matthew 6:7-8

What are some "magical phrases" to which you're tempted to believe that God is more likely to respond? What happens to us when we articulate (to God) something that we want or need, even though He knows ahead of time we're going to bring these things up with Him?

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Make a list of everything you will legitimately need this week. Find a room where you can be completely alone, preferably in the dark, and present your requests to God