

Prayer: Week 1

“Why is prayer important?”



- Welcome (5-10 minutes)

Who would you rather have a conversation with ...
 your friend ... your spouse/girlfriend/boyfriend ... your pet ... your self ...
 some famous historical figure ... your MP ... other ...? Why would you like to chat to them?



- Worship (10-15 minutes)

Open the eyes of my heart, Lord
 Open the eyes of my heart:
 I want to see you.
 To see you high and lifted up:
 Shining in the light of your glory
 Pour out your power and love as we sing
 Holy! Holy! Holy!

- Word (50 minutes)

Prayer is one of the most important things that we do as Christians. Through prayer we develop a relationship with God the Father through Jesus the Son. Through prayer, we discover more about the character and purposes of God in both our own lives, and also in the wider world, (locally and internationally). Through prayer, we build between ourselves and God a level of intimacy and trust, as we understand more about who we are as his children and the partnership that he created us to have with him in the living of our own life and in the affairs of the world.

- On a large sheet of paper, gather a list of words that shows how your group understands the character of God.
 - Faithful just merciful etc

26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." 29 Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. 30 And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground--everything that has the breath of life in it--I give every green plant for food." And it was so. 31 God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning--the sixth day. **Genesis 1 (NIV)**



‘Made in God’s image’ gives us dignity as beings. We are like him and able to reflect that likeness through our interaction with one another and with creation itself. We are given the responsibility and ability to care for and love the world and its people, animals and terrain as the one who made it cares and loves: we are made for him.

- Spend some time offering prayers of thanksgiving for the world and its people. Follow this with a time of confession, showing where we have failed in the task of 'being in God's image' with regard to the people of the world and then the way humankind has neglected its duty of care to the fabric of the world. (The environment)

It is through this commitment with God, that our prayer emerges. We seek to know his will and approval for our actions. We seek his help when we are confused or worried. Prayer is important because it keeps us close to God and to his heart and will for us.

Ian Coffey, in his book *What you always wanted to know about prayer ... but were afraid to ask*, suggests that:

Prayer by its simplest definition means having a conversation with God. Most of us don't find conversation difficult because we do it all the time. Research has shown that on average a man uses 2000 words a day, whilst a woman employs 7000 – which explains why women, generally speaking, are better at forming and developing relationships than men. Words are building blocks of communication. P.13

It could of course be argued that men are better listeners than women if they don't talk so much? We'll leave that for your group to decide!

However, it is in the space we give God to respond that we truly get to know him.

- Look again at your list of characteristics. Do you want to add any more at this point?

Abraham knew God's character when this following conversation took place. This influenced his 'audacity' to seemingly barter with God.

Read the following passage:

20 Then the Lord said, "The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous 21 that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know." 22 The men turned away and went toward Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before the Lord. 23 Then Abraham approached him and said: "Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? 24 What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it? 25 Far be it from you to do such a thing--to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?" 26 The Lord said, "If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake." 27 Then Abraham spoke up again: "Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, though I am nothing but dust and ashes, 28 what if the number of the righteous is five less than fifty? Will you destroy the whole city because of five people?" "If I find forty-five there," he said, "I will not destroy it." 29 Once again he spoke to him, "What if only forty are found there?" He said, "For the sake of forty, I will not do it." 30 Then he said, "May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak. What if only thirty can be found there?" He answered, "I will not do it if I find thirty there." 31 Abraham said, "Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, what if only twenty can be found there?" He said, "For the sake of twenty, I will not destroy it." 32 Then he said, "May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak just once more. What if only ten can be found there?" He answered, "For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it." 33 When the Lord had finished speaking with Abraham, he left, and Abraham returned home. **Genesis 18 (NIV)**



Prayer is conversation with God. Through this conversation, God reveals his plans to us and allows us to enter into them. In this way, Abraham was able to plead for any righteous people who were left in the city.

- Look at the conversation that Abraham has with God. Do you recognise anything of your own prayer-life in it? How do you feel about how Abraham speaks to God?

Would you speak to God like this? What are your reasons?

Prayer is important, not because prayer is powerful, but because God is faithful and just. As we get to know God through prayer, we are better able to know what we may ask him for and what is inappropriate. He teaches us through the clumsy-ness of our words and understandings about who he is and how he works.



Prayer also is important as it shows God our availability for service in his kingdom. As a church, we are called to pray, not just in the comfort of our 'easy chair' at home, but to join together as a church in prayer. This doesn't 'make God work' or 'force God's hand', as he only will and can bring about the things that are within his personality and character. Praying together shows a desire to be the 'body of Christ', achieving his will through our dedication and commitment. Through praying together, we show ourselves ready and available for service.

- As a group, decide on a subject for prayer that you will pray together each week at Housegroup and will offer at prayer meetings on behalf of your group.

(Families, outreach, young people in and out of church, elderly people, faith, spiritual blessings, etc)

- **Witness (20 – 25 minutes)**

Abraham is in a privileged position, as through his relationship with God, he is able to see what God is about to do. Similarly, God invites us to know him better, to learn his ways and to seek the justice and reconciliation that he desires for his world.

David Jackman says that:

As with Abraham, so with us, God wants us to develop this personal relationship for the benefit of others. We are never the end of the line. He has other people he wants us to direct into his ways, for we each have unique circles of contact and influence. We should not see prayer as a duty. One of the ingredients of the Christian package which we have to accept. Rather, prayer is the means by which our living contact with God is deepened and enriched, and because we love him, we want to know him better, to be more effective for him in the world, to count for God here and now. All that happens when we pray for other people. P17 (Quoted in Coffey)

Abraham was concerned for the people of the city. Which people in positions of power and authority would you wish to pray earnestly for. Why them? What difference do you hope to see your prayers make in the world?

- Close in prayer for one another.
- Time for refreshments, you've earned them.



Bibliography

Coffey, Ian; *What you always wanted to know about prayer ... but were afraid to ask*; CWR; 2007
Walton, John H; *The New NIV Application Bible Commentary: Genesis*, Zondervan, 2001