



# Community Group Discussion Guide

That Thing You Do: Prayer – Weekend of January 19-20, 2019

## I. Starter Questions:

**Simple question:** When was there a time in your life when you realized you couldn't go it alone, and you needed someone else's help?

**Vulnerable question:** When was there a time in your life when you had to fully depend on God?

## II. Overview of The Sermon Series:

**Context:** Last week, Pastor John kicked off a new sermon series called "That Thing You Do". The series casts a broad light on the things we do in church. Why do we pray? Why do we preach? Why do we baptize? In other words, why do we do all that we do in church, why is it important, and how do we do it?

We are a forgetful people, so *all* Christians benefit from being reminded of these! And, for those who are new, this series points us to gospel, answers questions some are too intimidated to ask, and practically teaches how to live out their calling as children of God in the context of a gathered church — or God willing, their soon-to-be calling!

In the overview message last week, we learned that ***Jesus' work on our behalf transforms both you and us!*** The gospel bridges the gap to God; therefore, we respond by drawing near to Him, we hold fast to him with full assurance because He is faithful, and we gather together. Our gathering together is the way we "stir up one another to love and good works" (Hebrews 10:24), and we do this because life is hard!

This week, we're studying prayer. Though we are new creations in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17), our old sin nature clings on for dear life. Because God promises that he will complete the work he starts in us (Phil. 1:6-7), our sin nature is destined for ultimate defeat. We fight this clinging sin — we wage war against it — through feeding our souls with the Word of God and prayer! We are indeed "prone to leave the God [we] love" (*Come Thou Fount*, Robert Robinson) by errantly depending on ourselves and perceiving ourselves to be self-sufficient. The reality is, however, that we *need* God, and we *are not* self-sufficient! When we pray, we pray praises to Him, we confess that we are *not* self-sufficient and we depend wholly on Him, we give thanks to Him who has proven He is able to accomplish things beyond our imagination (Eph. 3), and we make supplication for ourselves, our families, our church, those in our circles of life, the lost and the nations! We pray that "[He] will be exalted among the nations; [He] will be exalted in the earth." (Psalm 46:10)

### III. Choose Your Own Adventure!

Praise God that we are a praying church! Prayers are effective, and they are a pleasing aroma to our Savior. We recommend that you spend your Community Group time in extended prayer as we practice together this amazing privilege we've been given.

If you would also like to include discussion on the sermon and to teach on the various aspects of prayer, we've provided additional resources below.

### IV. Our Main Passage

**Context:** Our main passage this weekend is found in Matthew 6 where we see Jesus praying what we now call The Lord's Prayer.

#### A. **Matthew 6:5-15 (ESV)**

##### **The Lord's Prayer**

<sup>5</sup> "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. <sup>6</sup> 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.

<sup>7</sup> "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. <sup>8</sup> Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. <sup>9</sup> Pray then like this:

*"Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name.  
<sup>10</sup> Your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
<sup>11</sup> Give us this day our daily bread,  
<sup>12</sup> and forgive us our debts,  
as we also have forgiven our debtors.  
<sup>13</sup> And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.*

<sup>14</sup> For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, <sup>15</sup> but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

##### **Brief Explanation:**

In verses 5-6, Jesus addresses the heart motivation for prayer. The hypocrites he speaks

of pray publicly so that they are seen; they want to look good! When Jesus speaks out against their motives and says to instead pray privately, he is prescribing a way to, among other reasons, protect yourself from the temptation to draw man's praise, and to eliminate distractions. Jesus isn't saying to *not* pray in public, to be clear — there is much benefit to public prayer, and he demonstrates it himself in other passages like Matthew 14:19 and Matthew 15:36.

**For Discussion:**

1. Why do some people like to pray publicly? (v. 5) What is the antidote that Jesus offers? (v. 6) Is it bad to pray publicly?
2. In verse 7, Jesus speaks out against “heap[ing] up empty phrases” and the Gentiles’ “many words”, how can this be a comfort to us in our private prayer lives? How can it be a relief to some of us when we pray in public?
3. Why is it such a temptation to pray so completely differently from how we normally talk?
4. What does it mean that God's name be hallowed? (v. 9)
5. What does it mean when Jesus asks, “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as It is in in heaven”? (v. 10)
6. Why do you think Jesus asks for “daily bread” instead of a lifetime's worth? (v. 11)
7. If you were to divide up the focus of this prayer into two sections, what would those sections be?
8. How does the Lord's Prayer dismantle our bent toward of self-sufficiency?
9. What else speaks to you in this passage or from the sermon this weekend?

**V. A Tour of Scripture on Aspects of Prayer:**

**Context:** Read the following passages from Scripture that speak of prayer. Each passage illustrates various aspects of prayer. Discuss each passage. What can we learn from each?

**A. Luke 18:13-14 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ <sup>14</sup> I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

**For Discussion:**

1. This passage illustrates a man's first steps toward a prayer life as he calls on God for salvation. Should we stop asking for mercy or confessing our sins?

**B. 1 John 5:14 (ESV)**

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

**For Discussion:**

1. God loves to answer prayers that are in alignment with His will. How do we know what God's will is?

**C. James 4:2-3 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> ...You do not have, because you do not ask. <sup>3</sup> You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

**For Discussion:**

1. James tells us why God says "no" to many of our prayers. Why would God say "no"?

**D. James 5:16 (ESV)**

... The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

**For Discussion:**

1. The prayers of a righteous person work! What are the marks of a righteous person?

**E. Philippians 4:6 (ESV)**

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

**For Discussion:**

1. Why should we not be anxious?
2. What are some ingredients of prayer?

**F. Luke 18:1 (ESV)**

And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.

**For Discussion:**

1. This verse is from the Parable of the Persistent Widow, whereby a widow is persistent to ask the dishonest judge for justice. The judge relents because she is so persistent. The point is that if this judge honored a persistent request, how much

more so will God? Therefore, should we stop praying for something if our prayers aren't answered immediately?

**G. Psalm 66:18 (ESV)**

If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.

**For Discussion:**

1. What does it mean to cherish sin (iniquity)?
2. This verse says that God doesn't listen if we cherish sin. What then is the answer? What should we regularly include in our prayers?

**H. Matthew 26:42 (ESV)**

Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done."

**For Discussion:**

1. What does this prayer teach us about ultimate submission to God's will?

**VI. Don't Waste Your Privilege!**

John Piper writes the following regarding the amazing privilege we have in prayer.

*"And it is simply staggering that God would ordain—now get this—that God the sovereign ruler of the universe would ordain that prayers cause things. Prayers cause things to happen that would not happen if you didn't pray. I wonder if there are any Calvinists out there squirming.*

*Listen to this. When James 4:2 says: You do not have because you do not ask, that does not mean you would have anyway even if you didn't ask, because I have got a plan. The verse doesn't mean the opposite of what it says. It says you have not because you ask not. That means prayer causes things to happen that wouldn't happen if you didn't pray, which is why this is a staggeringly glorious privilege to be taken by the sovereign God of the universe who rules all things according to his infinite wisdom and folded into his causality. This is breathtaking. If you do not avail yourself of the privilege of bringing to pass events in the universe that would not take place if you didn't pray, you are acting like a colossal fool, aren't you? I am just thinking logically here. If you are offered the privilege of engaging with God in such a way that your request could bring into being things that would not otherwise come into being, not to avail yourself of that privilege is folly of the highest or lowest order. That is why we pray, because He is beckoning us into our share in the running of the universe."*

## VII. Responding in Prayer:

1. Pray for our church! We are a praying church, but all people have a natural bent toward self-sufficiency. Pray that we see God's grace as sufficient for us, wholly and completely.
2. Pray for our church that we would be led by the Spirit to fully embrace the mission of our church: Love God, Love People, and Make Disciples. As Christians, we were chosen for *purpose* — the purpose of glorifying God, and we glorify God by loving him, loving people, and making disciples! *We will be blessed in the doing of the mission set before us.* Some of the ways we fulfill our mission is by loving God through prayer, loving people by praying for their salvation, and making disciples which multiplies the powerful effects of prayer throughout the nations!
3. We confess that we have a lack of faith in the power and effectiveness of prayer. *"The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working."* (James 5:16) So, let us pray earnestly for our church, for our families, and for the persecuted church in the world around us. Let us pray for that one lost family member. Let us pray for that one co-worker, neighbor or friend from school who needs salvation of their soul. We desire that the world know the hope of the gospel. We are to patiently stand firm for the coming of the Lord! And, we are to *pray for his return. "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus."* (Revelation 22:20)