

Call to Prayer

Small-Group Materials
Week of March 4th, 2007

For Small-Group Leaders

Dear Leaders,

In our Scrolls Prayer Guide there is a quote from Albert Einstein that catches my attention. A Princeton doctoral student once asked Albert Einstein, "What is there left in the world for original dissertation research?" Einstein replied, "Find out about prayer. Somebody must find out about prayer." I love that. One of the greatest minds our world has known could not get his brain around the vastness of prayer. Prayer is a mystery. It is bigger than us, beyond our comprehension, and it affords us the greatest opportunity of our lives. In prayer we are given access to the God of the Universe.

In coming weeks, these materials will include several ideas on how to bring prayer into the life of your group. As FBC begins this season of prayer, I hope your home group will be blessed by its participation in this concerted effort to come before the throne of grace.

Seeking him with you,

Scott

These small group materials will be available at www.fbcdavis.org throughout the *Call to Prayer*.

Getting Started:

- **Beginnings** - Begin your home group time together by asking a group member to pray.
- **Barriers** – Read together the attached paper, "Barriers to Prayer." Ask the group to share which barriers impact them the most.

Discussion Questions:

Introduction: Read together Matthew 6:15-25.

1. What part of Jesus' teaching on prayer jumps out at you? Why?
2. What types of things do we usually pray for or pray about? How does this match up against the things Jesus is saying here?
3. What did Jesus know about prayer that we forget or have a hard time grasping?
4. As you look at what we call the Lord's Prayer, which part is the most meaningful to you?
5. Which is the most difficult for you to understand or practice?
6. Notice that the prayer is said in the plural, rather than the singular. For example, it reads "give **us** today **our** daily bread" as opposed to "give **me**...." Why do you think the prayer is spoken in the plural?
7. If we as a group prayed in a way that was more in keeping with the Lord's Prayer, how would we pray differently? How would our requests change?

Focus on Prayer:

For your group's prayer time tonight, pray through the Lord's prayer together:

- Begin by reading out loud the first part of the Lord's Prayer: "**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.**" Then allow time for group members to pray out loud in ways that reflect the spirit of that part of the Lord's prayer. After allowing time for people to pray, continue by doing the same for each line of the prayer:
- "**your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.**"
- "**Give us today our daily bread.**"
- "**Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.**"
- "**And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.**"

Barriers to Prayer

(in no particular order)

Why is prayer oftentimes so difficult? Why is it almost a universal experience that people are dissatisfied with their prayer life? What is it that impedes us when we settle down to pray? What follows are some possible reasons why prayer is such a challenge for us.

1. Entering the Invisible World – We are accustomed and at home with what we can see, feel and touch. Prayer ushers us into the unseen world we call the Kingdom of God.
2. It's Too Big/Immense - Prayer is a wild frontier. No one who goes exploring this vastness should expect ease and smoothness. Rather, such a person should expect to see things he never counted on – mountain top highs and the valley of the shadow of death. And lots of doubts and questions along the way.
3. Ignorance – We don't understand prayer. We don't get it - which is probably as it should be. God gets us in prayer, not vice versa. The disciples are our examples in this. Their ignorance led them to seek answers. "Lord teach us to pray." The only tragedy in this is if our ignorance leads us to stop praying.
4. Busyness – Our pace of life and prayer don't go together. *"We must have room to breathe. We need freedom to think and permission to heal. Our relationships are being starved to death by velocity. No one has time to listen, let alone love. Our children lay wounded on the ground run over by our high speed good intentions. Is God now pro-exhaustion? Doesn't he lead people by the still waters anymore?"* Richard Swenson, M.D.
5. Skepticism – Does God really hear my prayers? Why does it seem that he doesn't intervene? *"In much of the world modern skepticism taints prayer. We breathe in an atmosphere of doubt."* Phillip Yancey
6. Science and Technology – In years past an agrarian culture turned to God for blessing and fruitfulness. Today we turn to technology to solve our problems. Whether that technology includes irrigation to supply water or a PS2 to solve our boredom, why turn to God when we have technology?
7. Wealth – Goes with technology. Wealth creates other options/choices. Many refuse to turn to God until they've exhausted all the options money can buy.
8. Fellowship – I can get my Christian fix by talking with other Christians. Why talk to God when I can so easily talk to my friends?
9. Personality – Some of us (e.g. extroverts) have a hard time being still enough to hear the still quiet voice of God.
10. Noise – Many of us need constant noise. Consequently, we haven't heard from ourselves in a long long time. Not only that, but with lives so crowded by noise, it's difficult to find the space we need to hear the voice of God.
11. Spiritual Opposition – We are opposed.
12. View of God – Most people think they are unacceptable to God. We have a desperate need for grace but instead of running to the Source of grace, we run away, further cementing our desperation.