

# **life group study guide**

## **FIGHTING FROM YOUR KNEES**



**January 27, 2013**

Perhaps our greatest defense and offense in this battle is prayer. We don't fully know why or how prayer works, but we know it does. And, when we pray powerful things happen.

**So, why don't we pray more?** The same God who created the billions of stars invites us, as individuals and groups and churches, to talk with Him. This should be a no-brainer.

1. To get you thinking, consider these quotes on the subject of prayer:

"Never stop praying" (NLT). "Pray without ceasing" (NASB). – Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:17

"A concentrated mind and a sitting body make for better prayer than a kneeling body and a mind half asleep."

"We must lay before him what is in us; not what ought to be in us."

Senior demon Screwtape to junior demon Wormwood: "The best thing, where it is possible, is to keep the patient from the serious intention of praying altogether." – C.S. Lewis

"I ask God most often that we would be an unbroken line of Christians until Christ shall return."  
– A Grandparent's Prayer

"When a Christian shuns fellowship with other Christians, the devil smiles. When he stops studying the Bible, the devil laughs. **When he stops praying, the devil shouts for joy.**"  
– Corrie Ten Boom

"I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had absolutely no other place to go." – Abraham Lincoln

And one of my favorite writers, Andree Seu of *World Magazine*, makes these observations:

"The more you see how wretched and needy you are, the less the question 'How much should I pray?' is an issue for serious debate."

"Thinking a lot is not the same as praying a lot."

"You're one prayerless day away from being capable of any sin."

"Praising and thanking God all day long are the only cure I've found for depression."

A scene from the Apostle John's vision of heaven: "And when he took the scroll, the four living beings and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp, and they held gold bowls filled with incense, which are the prayers of God's people." – Revelation 5:8

## **life group study guide**

### 2. Preliminary Questions: What do you think about prayer?

- What is your reaction to some of the quotes above? Do you agree, disagree, etc.?
- What do you think of Corrie Ten Boom's quote? Is prayer actually more of a threat to the devil than Bible study or fellowship? Why or why not, and in what way?
- Why do you pray? What do you pray for? What role has prayer played in your relationship with God?
- Why don't most Christians pray more? What holds us back? Are you ever afraid that prayer might lead to too much commitment, or too much devotion?
- What can Paul mean in the 1 Thessalonians verse? Is such a thing possible? How?
- What do you think is the significance of the way our prayers are pictured in Revelation 5:8?
- Think of some prayers that you believe God answered, and some that you think He didn't answer (or not as you wanted, or not yet, etc.). Can you share any of these?
- Trivia Question: How many times do the Gospels record Jesus praying? (not teaching about prayer, but praying Himself) Prize – whatever the leader has to give you (piece of gum, the last donut, pocket lint, etc.). Answer at end of outline along with a link to all the texts.

### 3. Eternal Principles for Christian Prayer.

It is impossible to cover much of what the Bible teaches on prayer in one study, but here are some important principles.

- **Jesus prayed a lot and often. Here are just a few from the Gospel of Luke: Luke 3:21-22; 5:16; 6:12-13; 9:16-18; 9:28-9; 10:21; 11:1; 18:15-17; 22:19; 22:31-32; 22:39-46; 23:46; 24:30; 24:50-53.** First of all, remember that Jesus' primary mission was to save us, not necessarily to be our role model ("This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it: 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners'" – 1 Tim 1:15). That being said, **what does it teach us that the Son of God – very God Himself – had the need and/or desire to pray so much and so often? What do the varied circumstances of Jesus' prayers show us? Does that confirm 1 Thess 5:17?**
- **God calls for our prayer in hard times, good times, and sickness: James 5:13-18. What are the three situations in verses 13-14? What does James say our responses ought to be? What other implications for prayer can you find in this passage?** We tend to discount any connection between sickness and sin today, and much of this is justified (read John 9:1-3). But in James 5:15, Peter at least implies that there is at least sometimes (the word "if" is important here) a connection. **In what ways does/can sin affect our health?**

## **life group study guide**

- **God answers prayer, but they are His answers and must be in line with His nature, purpose, and will; and thus often not what we want or expect. Read Matt 6:5-15.** Jesus says “Pray like this . . .” and then gives us the “Lord’s Prayer,” maybe better called “a model prayer.” **What elements of prayer (i.e. praise, confession, thanks, petition/request) are included in the “model”? How much of the prayer is involved with our needs? How far into the future does this request for needs look? What “condition” is attached to this prayer? Do you take this condition seriously when you pray? What prayer of Jesus is not answered in a way that He wants?**

C.S. Lewis reminds us that “In Gethsemane the holiest of all petitioners prayed three times that a certain cup might pass from Him. It did not. After that the idea that prayer is recommended to us as a sort of infallible gimmick may be dismissed.” But Lewis also goes on to tell the story of a woman who had cancer in most of her bones and many organs. She was given a few months at best. Here is the rest of the story: “A good man laid his hands on her and prayed. A year later the patient was walking (uphill, too, through rough woodland) and the man who took the last X-ray photos was saying, ‘These bones are as solid as rock. It’s miraculous.’”

So Paul and James tell us to take everything to God in prayer and to expect results, while Jesus instructs us that our personal wants/needs are only one part (and one of the smaller parts) of prayer. And Gethsemane reminds us that some very hard things remain, despite the most earnest prayer of a righteous person.

- **Studying prayer and discussing it is absolutely useless unless it results in *MORE PRAYER!*** Guilt accomplishes very little, but, at the very least, ask yourself these questions: **If you believe the Bible when it teaches that prayer is crucial, what step(s) might you take this day/week/month to improve and strengthen your prayer life? How can you implement accountability for this step? Will you do this?**

**Pray together before closing. Think of the opposite of Corrie Ten Boom’s quote – it might go something like this: “The devil howls in loud dismay when he sees a Christian stop to pray.”** (The rhyme was unintentional, but now it reminds me of the line from *Elf*: “The best way to spread Christmas Cheer, is singing loud for all to hear.” – Sorry).

## ***life group study guide***