

# *A Praying Life*

## book study



*leader guide*



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## *Welcome!*

The book *A Praying Life: Connecting with God in a Distracting World* by Paul E. Miller—helps us see prayer as a way to connect with God in real, everyday life. Prayer is often one of the most talked-about—and least practiced—parts of the Christian life. It's not about performance—it's about coming to God as we are, not as we "should" be.

This discussion guide is designed to help you and your group, engage more deeply with the book by providing a reading schedule and questions for reflection with each week.

Let's not feel pressure as we start this journey. Instead, let's come expecting God to meet us. He's inviting us to trust Him, depend on Him, and find joy in Him. Together, we'll learn what it means to live a praying life.

*Please note: All content is adapted from A Praying Life Discussion Guide by Paul E. Miller.*

*Page numbers may vary if you are using an e-book version.*

# How to Prepare

- Read chapters ahead of time. As you read, highlight or underline a couple of things that were especially helpful or meaningful to you.
- Work through the discussion questions.
- Familiarize yourself with the questions from the leaders notes. All questions you are to ask are in **bold type**. Find a way to easily reference these questions while leading.
- Use of a flip chart is recommended as it allows you to review previous lessons. Whenever possible, write out charts and questions beforehand.
- Plan on each study taking no more than 90 minutes. This includes prayer.
- Remember, these are guidelines. Adapt for your group and your leadership style. You may not get through all the material—that is ok. Or you may finish early at times—also ok.

# How to Lead

Leading a study in prayer is an adventure, led by the Spirit. As a leader, what matters most is loving people in your group and pointing them to Jesus. Use this guide as your tool to lead. As you lead, take time to listen to people and enjoy them. Resist the temptation to rush ahead, finish people's sentences, or fill uncomfortable silences. At the same time, you want to avoid discussions that wander off topic. As you lead with an ear to the Spirit's convicting and comforting, you will discover the beautiful stories God is weaving in people's lives. What a privilege!

The best way to keep in tune with these stories is through prayer. At the end of each study, even if you have to cut your discussion short, devote ten minutes to prayer—practicing what you learned. During this time, you may want to have people pair up to foster more intimacy, or stay together. This is up to you. (If your group is mixed gender, we encourage you to split up according to the same gender.) At the end of each discussion section are suggestions for prayer. Pick one or two that are best for your group. Follow the Spirit's lead. If it is not clear what you should do, give people a couple of choices.

# Including Newcomers in Prayer

So many people are hungry for God. When Jesus tells the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector praying, it's the tax collector's prayer that the Father hears. Ironically, when it comes to bringing our friends to Jesus, sometimes our prayers get in the way. The longer we pray, the more spiritual we sound—the more we can intimidate. Then, without realizing it, we miss the short quieter prayers of our friends, "God help me! I'm a mess!" It isn't complicated leading people to Jesus. It's just a matter of creating space where we pray more simply and allow our real selves to meet our real Father.

## Reading Schedule

### *Introduction*

*Chapters 1-2*

### *Week 1-Part 1*

#### *Learning to Pray like a Child*

*Chapters 3-8*

### *Week 2-Part 2*

#### *Learning to Trust Again*

*Chapters 9-11*

### *Week 3-Part 3*

#### *Learning to Ask Your Father*

*Chapters 12-18*

### *Week 4-Part 4*

#### *Living in Your Father's Story*

*Chapters 19-27*

### *Week 5-Part 5*

#### *Praying in Real Life*

*Chapters 28-34*



## Introduction

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### *Introduction (5-10 minutes)*

Welcome + nametags + hand out discussion guides + pen

Explain the following for how 5-week sessions will work:

- Read chapters ahead of time. As you read, note passages that were especially helpful or meaningful to you.
- Work through the discussion questions from the schedule.
- Each week we will set aside time to pray.

### *Prayer Guidelines*

- No gossip. Sadly, we can be notorious for disguising our gossip through prayer requests. People need to know they are in a safe place.
- Limit your prayer to what you can say in a breath. This way our prayers feel more like conversation and less like monologues.

## *Ice Breaker – (10 minutes)*

### *Chapter 1: “What Good Does It Do?”*

Read chapters 1 & 2 out loud (you determine how you want this to look. You can read, take turns by chapters, ask for a volunteer etc.)

Have each person take time to write their answer to the questions from Chapters 1 & 2.

Start by asking participants, **“What are your frustrations with prayer?”** Invite people to be candid; this is not time for Sunday school answers. Write everyone’s answer on the flip chart.

Invite people, **“Talk about a time when God specifically answered a prayer. What happened?”**

### *Chapter 2: Where We Are Headed*

Ask, **“Which aspect of ‘the praying life’ section spoke to you most? Why?”** Encourage people to be brief—you just want to get a sense of what impacted them.

Explain, **“We’ll get to unpack some aspects of a praying life but probably not all. Let’s look at the first aspect. How is prayer like having a meal with good friends?”** (pp. 7-8)

End by discussing questions from Chapter 2 discussion guide.

- 1. Describe the differences between an isolated prayer life and a prayer-intertwined life (p. 9).**
- 2. How does a praying life affect a busy life (pp. 11–12)?**

### *Prayer Suggestion (10 minutes)*

Thank God for one aspect of a praying life from chapter 2.



# Part One: Learning to Pray Like a Child

Ask, **"What are some words that describe children —how they behave, talk, play, look?"**

## Chapter 3: Become Like a Little Child

Discuss question 1.

Write – the "Coming Messy" chart on your flip chart, and fill it in with people's own observations, using their own words.

- 1. Describe the differences between coming to God messy and coming put together – using the chart below (pp. 19-20).**

	Coming Messy	Coming Put Together
What does it look like?		
How does God respond?		
What's hard about it?		

Continue discussion with questions 2 & 3.

- 2. Why is it so important to come to God just as you are (pp. 20-22)? Why can this be so hard for us?**
- 3. How does the knowledge that you can come to Jesus, distracted, weary, and cynical (like Nathaniel) impact you? How is this like the gospel?**

## Chapter 4: Learn to Talk with Your Father

Discuss questions 1 & 2.

- 1. Think of a child you know. What do they ask for? How often? In what way?**



**2. In what ways are you similar to and different from that child as you talk to your Father?**

Read Luke 18:1-8, Jesus' story of why you should always pray and not give up. Ask, **What is the widow like? How is she persistent? What obstacles would she have potentially faced as a widow?**

Ask, **"What do little children believe about their parents that keeps them pestering? Do you believe this about your Father? What is it that you want to pester God about?"**

### *Chapter 5: Spending Time with Your Father*

Ask, **"Think of a time when you really wanted to get to know a person. Maybe it was your future wife, husband, an incredible mentor, a coach, etc. How did you get to know them?"**

Discuss questions 1 & 2.

- 1. Why did Jesus need to pray?**
- 2. What did Paul mean when he says, "Jesus defines himself only in relationship with his heavenly Father" (p. 33)? How would your life look differently if you did the same?**

Read together John 5:1-6. Ask, **"What do you observe about how Jesus focuses on this man? How can you tell that He is focused on him?"** Write down people's answers.

Immediately follow this up and ask, **"How does it affect you that the Father loves you with the same one-on-one attention when you pray?"**

## Chapter 6: Learning to Be Helpless

Discuss questions 1 & 2.

- 1. Why is helplessness the key to a praying life (pp. 42-43)?**
- 2. Where are you feeling helpless right now? Write down your thoughts. Talk with your Father about those things. Remember, He likes messy.**

Invite people to share anything that stood out to them from pages 44-47. Working through Paul's descriptions, contrast mature Christians with immature Christians using the chart below. How does this compare with how we typically view maturity?

	Mature Christians	Immature Christians
Their view of self		
Their view of sin		
How they relate to God		

Ask, **"If this is a new view of maturity for you, how does it encourage you?"**

## Chapter 7: Crying "Abba"—Continuously

Discuss questions 1 & 2.

- 1. Paul writes, "We don't need self-discipline to pray continuously; we just need to be poor in spirit." (p. 54) Read Matthew 5:3. What does it mean to be poor in spirit? Why does the kingdom of heaven belong to people who are poor in spirit?**
- 2. Paul writes, "Interrupting, selling and boasting are just a few of the things that draw me into continuous prayer, into continual childlike dependence on my Father. Each of us has our own list. We can let it drive us into a praying life." (p. 52) What is on your list? What sinful tendencies can drive you into continuous prayer?**

## *Chapter 8: Bending Your Heart to Your Father*

Discuss question 1.

- 1. Paul writes, "Anxiety is unable to relax in the face of chaos; continuous prayer clings to the Father in the face of chaos." (p. 58) Why can't anxiety relax? What makes prayer a much better alternative?**

Read Psalm 131. Ask, **"What connection does the Psalmist make between pride and going after things that are too great, too marvelous (also translated "difficult" or "complex")? In what ways can anxiety be a form of pride? How does the Psalmist call us back to sanity?"**

Discuss question 2.

- 2. Where are you experiencing anxiety? What is your natural response to this chaos? Read Matthew 10:29-31. How does this change your outlook to know that your Father has numbered the hairs on your head?**

### *Prayer Suggestions (10 minutes)*

Choose from the following:

- Practice coming to God messy and/or playing.
- Take time to get to know God. Right now. Read a short passage of Scripture and talk with Him about what you see there. Ask Him questions too.
- Where are you feeling helpless right now? As you share, instead of talking and giving advice, go directly to God praying for one another. Remember He likes messy.
- Explain to God your anxieties. Ask Him to help you, remembering that He is God and you are not.
- Name to God specific things that you are cynical about. Then spend time naming different attributes of God, focusing on His character.
- What areas of your life do you want to control rather than give to God? How do you think He might mess it up? Be honest with God, explaining your hang-ups, and ask Him to change you, to help you trust Him.

## Part Two: Learning to Trust Again

### Chapter 9: Understanding Cynicism

Ask, **"Have you ever felt like you're on a rough stretch of road with no end in sight, or like you've been let down just once too often? Last week we learned to call out in childlike trust to our Abba Father when we are feeling weak or helpless. This week we'll look at the alternative: to become defeated or cynical."**

Explain, **"Before we see cynicism's effects, we need to see what it is."**

Discuss question 1. Help people to describe cynicism and how it tempts, subtly corrupting.

#### 1. What is cynicism? What does it feel like?

Draw the following chart on your flip chart and write shared responses from question 2 in the first "Fruit" row. For the next row ask **"What drives us to cynicism?" [naive optimism]** **"What core beliefs are at the center of naive optimism?"** Write people's thoughts. Then ask **"What drives us to a praying life?" [faith]**

#### 2. What are some of the fruits of cynicism and how is cynicism the opposite of a praying life?

	Cynicism	A Praying Life
Fruit		
What drives us to:		
Core beliefs about God and people		

Explain, **"Let's look at Psalm 23 to understand the core beliefs that are at the center of faith. What is true about people in this psalm? What is true about God?"**

Ask, **"How is faith different than naïve optimism?"**

Cynicism Homework – (Hand out a piece of paper to each person).

Say, **"For one day, try to record every cynical thought that enters your mind. When you catch yourself pray quietly, 'Lord Jesus, save me from my cynicism. Give me eyes to see you.'"**

## *Chapter 10: Following Jesus out of Cynicism*

### *Six Cures Jesus Offers for Cynicism*

Ask, **"Which of Jesus' first four cures grabbed you – being warm but wary, learning to hope, becoming like a child, or having a thankful spirit?"**

Discuss the two most popular cures, based on their responses.

1. Be Warm but Wary

How can we keep informed and vigilant without cultivating a cynical spirit?

2. Learn to Hope Again

Paul's friend said, "Expect nothing. Then if something good happens, be thankful." How can this attitude be compelling? How does it reflect cynicism? How does it kill hope and affect our prayers?

3. Cultivate a Childlike Spirit

Paul writes of page 75, "Both the child and the cynic walk through the valley of the shadow of death. The cynic focuses on the darkness; the child focuses on the Shepherd." Read Psalm 23. How does focusing on the Shepherd lift the fog of cynicism?

4. Cultivating a Thankful Spirit

Paul writes, "Nothing undercuts cynicism more than a spirit of thankfulness. You begin to realize your whole life is a fit." (p. 77) How does thankfulness help us? How is it different from naïve optimism?

Discuss cure 5.

5. Cultivating Repentance

**How does being cynical hinder us from cultivating repentance?**

Ask, **"How is cynicism two-faced?" (pp 79-80)**

6. Developing an Eye for Jesus

Explain, **"Chapter 11 goes over cure 6."**

*Chapter 11: Developing an Eye for Jesus*

Share answers to question 1.

**1. Where do you look for Jesus? Practice looking for Jesus and write down where you see Him.**

Ask, **"How does looking for evidence of Jesus' presence cure our cynicism?"**

*Prayer Suggestions (10 minutes)*

Choose one of the following:

- Name before each other and God specific things that you are cynical about. Then spend time naming different attributes of God, focusing on His character.
- Read through Psalm 23 and thank God for how He is good to you and for how you have recently seen the presence of Jesus.





## Psalm 23

*A psalm of David.*

*The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.*

*He makes me lie down in green pastures,  
he leads me beside quiet waters,  
he refreshes my soul.*

*He guides me along the right paths  
for his name's sake.*

*Even though I walk  
through the darkest valley,*

*I will fear no evil,  
for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff,  
they comfort me.*

*You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies.*

*You anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.*

*Surely your goodness and love will follow me  
all the days of my life,  
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord  
forever.*



## Part Three: Learning to Ask Your Father

### Chapter 12: Why Asking Is So Hard

Ask, **"What did you learn about yourself & cynicism from your homework assignment?"**

Ask, **"To start off, think of a time you were filled with wonder as a child. What happened? What was it like?"**

Look at the diagram on page 93, explaining how secularism sees the world.

Read the last paragraph starting on page 97 and discuss answers to question 1.

- 1. What does the enlightenment have to do with prayer? How has this given birth to cynicism (pp. 94-95)?**

### Chapter 13: Why We Can Ask

Explain, **"On page 100, Paul writes, 'The issue of power—the ability to make a difference, to change something—is at the heart of asking.' Why does power matter so much when it comes to asking?"**

Have someone read aloud 2 Chronicles 6:14, 18-21.

On your flip chart draw the following chart. Fill in the chart with people's observations from the passage.

Infinite	Personal

Discuss answers to question 1.

1. What is appealing about this infinite yet personal God?

Chapter 14: How Personal is God?

Explain, **“Let’s talk frankly about what we perceive as spiritual and unspiritual requests. Give me some candid examples.”** Using the flip chart, write responses in your flip chart.

Spiritual Requests	Unspiritual Requests

Ask, **“Why does asking nothing of God seem spiritual? What’s wrong with this?”**

Discuss question 1.

1. Paul writes, **“If you are going to enter this divine dance we call prayer, you have to surrender your desire to be in control... You’ve got to let God take the lead.”** (p. 114) What about your life do you want to control and not give to God? How do you think He’s going to mess it up?

Chapter 15: What Do We Do With Jesus’ Extravagant Promises about Prayer?

Review the chart on page 118 and ask, **“What is dangerous about each side?”**

Ask, **“Which side do you tend towards?”**

Invite people to share answers to question 1.

- 1. What do you want God to do for you? Talk with Him about it. Remember, abiding can't begin to happen until the real you meets the real God.**

*Chapter 16: What We Don't Ask For:  
"Our Daily Bread"*

Lead the group into question 1, drawing the following chart and filling it in with people's observations.

- 1. How does someone who is abiding pray differently from someone who is not abiding? Describe how the "asking" looks different. How does each respond to Jesus as King, as Lord? To the body of Christ (pp. 128-130)?**

	Abiding Person	Not Abiding Person
How do they respond to Jesus as King?		
How do they ask God for help?		
How do they involve the body of Christ in their lives?		

It is important that people grasp what happens when we isolate praying from the rule of Jesus, from the body of Christ (His Church). Even more significantly, we want people to understand what abiding looks like as we pray and interact with the body of Christ.

*Chapter 17: What We Don't Ask For:  
"Your Kingdom Come"*

Discuss question 1.

- 1. What stages does God take the husband through as he begins to pray for his wife? How does he become the gospel for her (pp. 133-136)?**

Ask, **"What makes it hard to pray for change in ourselves?" (p.137)**

## *Chapter 18: Surrender Completely*

*"Your Will Be Done"*

Review the chart on page 143 and discuss question 1.

- 1. How are prayer and self-will at odds? What is the fruit of each (pp. 143-145)?**

*"This, then, is how you should pray:  
"Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us today 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 the evil one."*

**Matthew 6:9-13**

## *Prayer Suggestions (10 minutes)*

Choose from the following:

- What are your “science experiments”? What areas of your life have you not yet considered praying about?
- What areas of your life do you want to control rather than give to God? How do you think He might mess it up? Be honest with God, explaining your hang-ups, and ask Him to change you, to help you trust Him.
- Brainstorm for five minutes about what you would like God to do for you. Pray out of your brainstorming.
- Think of a situation in which you need wisdom. Write down the details, your questions, etc. What would it look like for you to ask God for wisdom with an abiding heart? How would you ask? Would you surrender your will? How would you involve the body of Christ?
- Privately, think of a person you would like to see change. On your own, pray for change to come. Then ask God to show you how you might be sinning like him or her. Close by giving thanks for that person.
- Pray for change to come in a particular way in our larger culture.
- Go back to the door that “hurts” the most to close. This is the door Jesus wants to close. Invite Jesus to do that, admitting to Him the silliness of insisting that this door stay open. Then invite Jesus to open the door to prayer.

## Part Four: Living in Your Father's Story



### *Chapter 19: Watching a Story Unfold*

Say, **"Last week we looked at how our self-will stands in opposition to God's work in us and in others. This week, we're going to look more deeply at how God works in others through us when we enter our Father's story."**

Discuss question 1.

- 1. On page 153, Paul writes, "Until we become convinced we can't change our child's (or any person's) heart, we will not take prayer seriously." What does prayer do that all other methods can't do?**

Say, **"At some point, we give up our ability to change others. When this happens, what is the difference between giving up while on the road of Good Asking and giving up off the Cliff of Despair?" (p. 154)**

### *Chapter 20: A Father's Love*

**Ask, "What does it look like to pray in faith? What does it not look like? (pp. 158,161)**

Discuss question 1 and share the lists of all God did through Paul's prayers.

- 1. What did God do for Emily through Paul's prayers? Make a list of all that He did.**

## *Chapter 21: Unanswered Prayer:*

### *Understanding the Patterns of Story*

Say, **"We've been talking about how God reveals the story He is telling in our lives. But what if, like Paul and Jill, we don't like our story? Yes, we can see that God is doing something, we just don't like what He's doing. We want to change a few chapters, rewrite the events, give it more or less drama, even delete some parts altogether. This week we'll be talking about life in the 'desert'—this place of pain, disappointment and lack of our own resources. We'll be asking, 'Where is God in this place? What is He up to?'"**

Say, **"Turn to page 164 in your book. Take a couple of minutes to think about your desert."**

Discuss question 1.

**1. What is your desert? Where is there a large gap between hope and reality in your life?**

Ask, **"What does God do for people in the desert?"** (pp.168-169)

## *Chapter 22: Hebrew Laments:*

### *Relearning Desert Praying*

Begin by reading some laments from Psalms.

- Psalm 6:1
- Psalm 22:1
- Psalm 28:1
- Psalm 43:2
- Psalm 79:5

**Explain and ask, "Lamenting isn't as odd as it first seems. Who do you lament to? What do you say? Don't think religiously. For instance, if you have a tough boss, who do you lament to? Or if marriage is hard at times, do you lament to a friend? The goal is to normalize lamenting."**



Discuss question 1.

- 1. How do you see your laments full of faith? Give an example of a time in your life when you fervently lamented.**

### *Chapter 23: Understanding How Laments Work*

Invite people to share their lament from question 1.

- 1. Write out a lament connecting God's past promise with your present situation, while hoping for a better future. What are some of your favorite Psalms to pray through and how do they help you in your lamenting?**

Ask, **"What breaks your heart about the culture or the world?"**

Ask, **"Who do you lament to about that?"**

### *Chapter 24: How God Places Himself in the Story*

Explain, **"Paul writes, 'When we are in the middle of the desert, we feel like God is absent. We long for God to show himself clearly, to make sense of the mess.' (p,193) Now we will look at those times when it feels like God is absent."**

Say, **"Let's first look at how God lingers at the edge."**

Discuss question 1.

- 1. Generally speaking, where is God in our stories? Why is He not a magic prayer machine (p. 196)?**

Ask, **"So, what does God grow in us through waiting?"** Record these answers on your flip chart.

Discuss question 2.

- 2. As you think about your own desert, how do you see/have you seen God lingering at the edge? In what ways do/did you perceive Him growing faith in you?**

## *Chapter 25: Praying Without a Story*

Discuss question 1.

- 1. On page 202, Paul outlines two approaches to a praying life—one believes there is no story, while the other lives in the story God is weaving. As you look at the fruits of each category, which fruits do you see manifested in your life?**

Ask, **"How are you tempted to disengage from the story?"**

Say, **"Paul writes, 'Be on the lookout for strange gifts. God loves to surprise us with babies in swaddling clothes lying in mangers.' (p. 205) Has God surprised you with strange gifts in your desert? What did He give?"**

Ask, **"How is God an artist in how He tells stories? How do you see His craftsmanship in the story He is writing for you? What patterns are emerging? How is He developing your character? (pp. 206-207)**

## *Chapter 26: Hope*

### *The End of the Story*

This week we're going to look at what happens when we live in the gospel story—in sync with our Father's world. Then, we'll look at the place of tools in helping us to pray.

Discuss question 1—helping people flush out the fruits they see in their lives.

- 1. Why can we hope when we pray? (pp. 209-210) Why can we dream big?**

Ask, **"How would you be different if you really believed you were living in your Father's story?"**

## *Chapter 27 – Living in Gospel Stories*

Discuss question 1 & 2.

- 1. Paul writes, “The gospel, the Father’s gift of His son to die in our place, is so breathtaking that since Jesus’ death, no one has been able to tell a better story. If you want to tell a really good story, you have to tell a gospel story.” (p. 219) What are the key themes in the gospel story?**
- 2. How does God retell these themes in your own life?**

Ask, **“How are we blessed when we live in a gospel story?”** (pp. 220-221)

Ask, **“How does a gospel story give meaning to suffering?”**

### *Prayer Suggestions (10 minutes)*

Choose from the following:

- Reflect on the story God is telling through someone you love. How are you coming alongside of God in this story? Are there ways you are getting in the way? Pray to Him asking for insight into this.
- Paul writes, “If a ship is off a few degrees, it is imperceptible at first, but over time it becomes a vast distance. I was praying to prevent the distance of a heart gone astray.” (p.150). Think about one of your kids or someone else close to you, who you love as Paul loved Emily. What bend in his/her heart troubles you, frazzles you? What can you pray for him/her in response to this? Privately pray for this.
- Are you in the desert right now? Share in your group (as you feel comfortable) and let your group pray for you.
- Spend some time praying for those who shared their laments and pray through the laments with them. Be sensitive to those who didn’t share but include them in your prayers.
- Reflect on what God has grown in you, by lingering at the edge. Savor Psalm 63 and thank Him for loving your soul more than life.
- How do you see God’s craftsmanship in the story He is writing for you? What patterns/themes are emerging? How is He developing your character? Take time to reflect, thanking Him for what He reveals.
- Take turns dreaming big before God. After each person dreams, pray with him or her for those dreams.

## Part Five: Praying in Real Life

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### Chapter 28: Using Prayer Tools

Lead with question 1 – record people's answers on your flip chart.

- 1. Are you someone who likes systems, or doesn't? If not, why not? If yes, how do you keep track of important dates or what you need to accomplish?**

Discuss question 2.

- 2. According to Paul, why do we need a prayer system? (pp. 228-229)**

### Chapter 29: Keeping Track of the Story

#### *Using Prayer Cards*

Share answers to question 1.

- 1. In what ways might prayer cards be more helpful than a list?**

Paul talks about using Scripture to shape his prayers for people (p. 231) Read the following Scriptures, noting the phrases used to describe what the Word of God is or what the Word of God does. Which ones give you confidence in the effectiveness of using God's Word in prayer? (Write down the following verses on flip chart leaving space for responses.) Assign each person/group a verse to read. After each person reads ask, **"What phrases are used to describe what the Word of God is or what the Word of God does?"**

- Psalm 119:105
- Isaiah 55:10-11
- Romans 10:17
- Ephesians 6:17-18
- 2 Timothy 3:16-17
- Hebrews 4:12
- 1 Peter 1:22-25

# Chapter 30: Prayer Work

Read Mark 4:26-29. Sketch the following chart, leaving only the column titles and numbers. Invite people to compare and contrast the farmer with how we pray. Ask, **"What does the farmer do first, second and third? What do we do?"**

How we usually pray	How the farmer works
We attach the problem [WORK]	He plants the seed of thoughtful praying [ASK]
We watch things fall apart [WATCH]	He watches and waits, looks for God's story [WATCH]
Resort to prayer last minute [ASK] Frustration, miss the story	Recognizes the harvest; works in partnership with God [WORK]

Discuss question 1.

- 1. What happens when we do "prayer work" backwards? What is frequently going on when we say, "Prayer doesn't work"?**

Ask, **"How did God answer Paul's prayer for Bob? How did God involve Paul in answering this prayer?"**

Ask, **"How might God be involving you in answering your prayers?"**

# Chapter 31: Listening to God

Discuss question 1.

- 1. Read John 14:16-17, 26 and John 16:7-8, 13-14. Jot down all the phrases that describe who the Spirit is or what the Spirit does. Why do we need the Word of God and the Spirit when we pray?**

On your flip chart draw a rough sketch of the chart on page 254 with just the titles "Word Only." And "Word and Spirit Together" and "Spirit Only" filled in.

Ask, **"What do we miss when we focus on "Word Only?"** list what we miss on the chart.

Read, Ephesians 6:17. Ask, **"How are the Spirit and the Word of God connected?"** List observations on the chart.

Ask, **"What happens when we divorce the Word of God from His Spirit?"** (pp. 250-251, 254) Add your results to the chart under "Spirit Only".

## *Chapter 32: Prayer Journaling:*

### *Become Aware of the Interior Journey*

Ask, **"Does anyone regularly journal?"**

To the person(s) who say yes, ask, **"Do you mind us asking you questions?"**  
**If agreeable, ask "How does it help you? What kinds of things do you journal about?"**

Discuss question 1.

### **1. How does journaling help us to see the story God is writing for us (pp. 258-259)?**

Homework – Remind people to reflect on one or two things they would like to take away from the study, and one tool they would like to try over the next month.



Chapter 33: Real-Life Praying

Discuss questions 1 and 2.

- 1. Contrast hunting for an experience with God with inviting God into your life experience.
- 2. If someone were to walk into your real-life praying, how would they describe it?

Chapter 34: Unfinished Stories

Draw the following chart:

What happened to Israel	What God did for Israel/us
1.Temple is destroyed	
2.Jerusalem is destroyed	
3.The walls are torn down	
4.The Kingdom is gone	
5.The people are deported	
6.Unbelievers brought into resettle	
7.The glory departed from Israel	





Discuss question 1.

- 1. In your own words, list what God did for Israel through their unfinished story—specifically their captivity. Which of these things might God be doing for you in your “captivity,” your unfinished story?**

### *Prayer Suggestions (10 minutes)*

Choose one:

- Praise God for ways in which your life resembles the gospel story.
- Make a prayer card. Think of a situation or someone you’d like to pray for, and find a Scripture you’d like to use in praying. Feel free to use the examples on pages 233-237 in your book.
- Are you more “Spirit Only” or “Word Only”? What does it mean for you to pray the third way? If you are more “Word Only”, be still before God. Wait for him to speak by bringing things to mind. If you lean toward “Spirit Only,” pray through one portion of Psalm 118.
- Print out a psalm of your choosing onto a page, leaving space to reflect on it through journaling. Distribute a copy to each person.
- Thank and praise God for what He has done among this group.

Notes

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