



Prayer-filled life.

Discovering ways to keep the heart and mind focused on God and find rest in him.

REVIEW

Recap on your experience of the challenge. Ask the following questions:

How did it go? Was it helpful?

If you weren't able to try the challenge, explore the question:

Where and how did you experience God last week?

STILL LYFE GOD-SPACE

For Jesus praying and talking with God was not a chore or duty. It was the joyful and loving conversation between Father and Son. We too are welcome in the presence of God as his special children. Prayer can also become for us our inner desire throughout the day.

READ

† Matthew 6. 5-15 Prayer

Jesus continued:

⁵When you pray, don't be like those show-offs who love to stand up and pray in the meeting places and on the street corners. They do this just to look good. I can assure you that they already have their reward.

⁶When you pray, go into a room alone and close the door. Pray to your Father in private. He knows what is done in private, and he will reward you.

⁷When you pray, don't talk on and on as people do who don't know God. They think God likes to hear long prayers. ⁸Don't be

like them. Your Father knows what you need before you ask.

⁹You should pray like this:

Our Father in heaven, help us to honour your name.

¹⁰Come and set up your kingdom, so that everyone on earth will obey you, as you are obeyed in heaven.

¹¹Give us our food for today.

¹²Forgive us for doing wrong, as we forgive others.

¹³Keep us from being tempted and protect us from evil.

¹⁴If you forgive others for the wrongs they do to you, your Father in heaven will forgive you. ¹⁵But if you don't forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Contemporary English Verse - CEV

"The goal of prayer is to live all of my life and speak all of my words in the joyful awareness of the presence of God. Prayer becomes real when we grasp the reality and goodness of God's constant presence with 'the real me.' Jesus lived his everyday life in conscious awareness of his Father."

John Ortberg *The Me I Want To Be*

REFLECT

Setting the scene:

- ▶ This Scripture sits in the centre of a series of teaching known as the 'Sermon on the Mount'. Gathering his disciples, Jesus addresses the issues that wreak the most havoc on society – anger, adultery, divorce, retaliation, lust. He then turns his attention to prayer, advocating simplicity, correct motivation and the centrality of the heart's desire to be with God.

- ▶ Prayer in the synagogue was led from the front, by invitation and seen as a mark of superiority. Jesus is not saying we shouldn't pray in public – but that prayer should not be to impress others.
- ▶ The Gentiles' prayers were long – by contrast the Lord's Prayers is short and pithy. Here, Jesus is speaking with God about the ordinary things of life – food, sin, temptation. But the prayer, from the start, recognises who God is and our standing before him. The last two verses remind us the condition of our hearts is most important.

- ▶ What are the 'shockers' and 'blockers' for you in this passage?
- ▶ Within the group, discuss your experiences of prayer
- ▶ In what ways is prayer both easy and difficult, a delight and a struggle?

Challenge ideas:
If you struggle to come up with your own challenge then why not try one of the following...

01 Distracted

Sometimes when we pray, we might encounter all kinds of distracting thoughts. Instead of pushing these thoughts away, allow them to become part of the conversation with God – they may well be things that God wants to address in your life. Allow these thoughts to become stepping stones to prayer rather than distractions or barriers. Allow them to help you become fully present to God in this moment. If you are feeling sleepy, bored, anxious or pre-occupied – allow these experiences to become part of the conversation.

02 Journal

Consider using a journal to begin writing down your prayers and conversations with God. Writing helps to clarify our prayers and also provides us with a reminder of the things we have prayed for.

03 Fixed hour prayer

Try incorporating this rhythm of prayer into your life this week. Morning – read Psalm 63 or Psalm 95 to prompt a time of prayer.

Noon – stop to pray the Lord's Prayer (silently or out loud)

Evening – read Psalm 4, 91 or 134 to prompt a final time of prayer.

Although this requires some discipline, it helps to remind us of a powerful and sovereign God. It may help to set a watch or phone alarm to remind you to pray and also to do this as a group exercise.

RESPOND

God-Space Challenge: This session leads us to explore prayer. As a group, try to create a challenge to help you actively deepen your prayer life this week.

GROUP PRAYER:

You might like to commit to praying for each person in the group this week as you look to deepen your individual prayer lives. Pray for each person to experience a deeper relationship with God as they spend time with God over the coming week.

Don't Forget

1. To record your experience of the challenge so that you can accurately share it with your lyfe group when you next meet. You might like to text/tweet each other throughout the experience!
2. Consider posting your created challenge on the lyfe facebook site for others to view.