

Study Series: Pray Big

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Lesson Title: “Prayer Basics” (pp. 6-18)

Session 1

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The main point of this lesson is: The believer’s prayer should reflect one’s dependency on God and priority on spiritual matters.

Focus on this goal: To help adults assess their prayer patterns for the degree to which they pray about spiritual matters rather than physical ones

Key Bible Passage: Ephesians 2:4-7; 3:7-9,14

To the Leader: This session stresses that we should make eternal matters the primary focus of our praying rather than physical matters. Exercise sensitivity to those in your group who are dealing or have recently dealt with significant physical issues, either personally or with someone they love. Though our prayers should focus on spiritual matters, they are not to exclude physical needs.

Before the Session

Write Ephesians 3:14 on a large writing surface or individual note cards so participants can read the Scripture in unison. (Step 2)

During the Session

Step 1. Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Ask participants to share one-word adjectives to describe their prayer lives.

State that although prayer is vital and biblical, many believers struggle with prayer. (If appropriate, admit your own struggles.) Our prayers might seem mechanical, self-serving, infrequent, impersonal or (read back words participants just shared).

State that the next four sessions will focus on praying big, with a specific look at how the apostle Paul prayed.

Say: If we take the author’s insights to heart, our prayer lives might be transformed from mechanical to natural, from self-serving to God-focused, from infrequent to continual, from impersonal to personal or(read back antonyms to the words shared earlier).

Step 2. Prayer Is Dependent, Part 1

State that as children reach their teen years, they long for independence from their parents. Explain that such an independent streak is often seen in our spiritual lives.

However, the apostle Paul taught by example that prayer should reflect dependence on God, rather than independence. Such humble dependence is seen in Ephesians 3:14. Guide participants to read the Scripture in unison.

Briefly discuss why it is important to come before God in prayer with a humble and dependent heart, evidenced through the bowing of the knees.

Ask: Why or why not is the posture of the physical body a prerequisite to a Christian prayer?

Stress: As we come before God with a humble and dependent heart, our prayers, the author states, reveal our priorities.

Challenge participants to discuss what their prayers reveal about their priorities (Day One, activity 3, p. 7).

Step 3. Prayer Is Dependent, Part 2

Write this equation on the board, God > humans, and ask participants what it means (God is greater than humans). State that the author explains, “Prayer reminds us who we are, and who our Father is” (p. 10).

Organize participants into small groups and challenge them to talk about what their prayers reveal about themselves and about God (Day Two, activity 2, p. 10).

Step 4. Prayer Is Spiritual (But Not Impractical), Part 1

On the board, form two columns, titled What Matters and What Matters Most. Invite learners to the board to add words under each column.

Briefly discuss why practical matters, rather than spiritual matters, often dominate our prayers. Encourage learners to share from personal experiences if their prayers have ever changed from the practical to the spiritual during a difficult experience (Day Three, activity 1, p. 11).

Call on a volunteer to read Ephesians 2:4-7 (p. 11 or a Bible). Draw attention to all that God has done for us. State that these verses inspire us to focus, not on the present, but on the eternity God has for His followers.

Lead learners to brainstorm practical tips to keep prayers focused on spiritual matters.

Step 5. Prayer Is Spiritual (But Not Impractical), Part 2

Challenge learners to find or recall prayers in the Bible that ask God to be with His people. After a brief time, call on learners to report. State that nowhere in Scripture is God asked to be with His people.

Call on a volunteer to read Matthew 28:20. State that God has already promised His eternal presence to believers, so it is redundant to ask Him to be with us. Ask: Why do we pray be with so often?

Call on a volunteer to read Matthew 6:25-33. Ask: What do these words of Jesus have to do with the spiritual aspect of prayer?Ask learners to share how the truth of Matthew 6:33 has been displayed in their lives (Day Four, activity 1, p. 13).

Step 6. Prayer Is Spiritual (But Not Impractical), Part 3

State that spiritual transformation can lead to practical change. Explain how the Ephesian believers made a huge practical change in the flames of a bonfire (Acts 19:18-20).

Invite participants to share how their spiritual transformation has led to practical change. Ask rhetorically what things in participants’ lives need to be thrown on the bonfire because they distract from their spiritual commitment (Day Five, activity 1, p. 15).

Step 7. Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

Read the final quote from Day Five (p. 16): “All that matters may be brought before God, but we must always bring before God those things that matter most.” Allow participants a few minutes to pray silently, then lead in a group prayer that all participants can begin to grasp how to focus their prayers on things that matter most.

After the Session

Pray that the individuals in your class will begin to focus their prayers as the apostle Paul focused his prayers—on things that matter most.

Ensure your prayers maintain this focus as well.

