

WHY DO WE PRAY?

by Stanley D. Gale

TO THE GROUP LEADER: This resource is designed to help you lead others to better understand one of the “Basics of the Faith” booklets published by P&R. The numbers in brackets indicate the page number in the booklet. Below each question is an answer based on what the author presents, or advice on how to discuss the question. You have the freedom to adapt the questions to best fit your group.

A good teaching technique is to distribute the questions to the group and have them write down how they would answer BEFORE reading the booklet. After reading, members can refine their answers based on their reading. As a group, members can discuss their views to affirm or modify what they wrote.

1. Why do we pray? We will be using this question as a starting point for our group study. So, before reading the booklet, how would you answer this question? (5-6)
Get a good feel for the different answers given by the group. Keep these answers in mind as you work through the study to make sure you correct any wrong understandings of prayer.
2. How do **you** define prayer? (6-7)
Bring out Dr. Gale's definition on p.7, paragraph 2, and read the 3rd paragraph. Ask the group to state this in their own words.
3. If our purpose in being is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever, how does prayer accomplish that purpose? (7-8)
When we pray we are glorifying God. When it is done properly we can enjoy an intimate and personal relationship with the true and living God, Who is also our loving and caring Father.
4. What did Jesus mean when He said we should always pray “in My name”? (8-9)
First, He did not mean this to be a magic formula. “To come in the name of Christ is to recognize our right of access and reality of redemptive relationship achieved by Him in reconciling us to God.” (8, bottom of page) Help the class to understand, if we don't use this phrase, it does not mean prayer won't be heard.
5. How much faith does it take for God to answer? (9-10)
The great news is we do not need to attain a “certain level of faith” before God answers. He expects us to grow in our faith, and He does this by meeting us where we are. When the father cries out to Jesus, “I believe; help my unbelief” (Mark 9:24) he is not saying he does not believe, but that his faith is weak. When he saw Jesus heal his son, his faith grew to a new level. This is all part of growing in faith.
6. We are also told to “pray in the Spirit.” What do you think that means? (10-11)
Two things: It means the Spirit prays for us when we are too weak or unclear what we need to pray for (Rom.8:26). Secondly, the Spirit reminds us of the Scriptures we have studied (and hopefully memorized). These help us to know and pray according to the will of God, which is not hidden but clearly revealed in His Word.
7. Prayer is to be a dialogue between our Father and us. Why, then, don't we hear God's voice more clearly? (11-13)
We seem to block out God communication with us. Be honest, what is the first thing you do when you get in your car after starting it? Do you immediately turn on the radio? At home, do you have to have something on in the background? Maybe these are times we could be listening to Him.

8. Jesus told us to pray, “Your kingdom come,” but God was already planning to bring His kingdom. So, if God already knows what He is going to do, why pray? What power does prayer really have? (13-22)
Dr. Gale brings out a number of vital points on this. Make sure you have them listed so you can go over them with the group. Also think about this: It is helpful to understand what is happening behind our world. God operates on His own level. On that level, He has **always always** known everything. And, what He knows **will** come to pass. But, we do not live or operate on His level! So, when God works with us, He does so on our level of understanding. Because of this, He can tell us to pray, because He will act on our level after we have prayed. He does not ask us to live on His level, He only asks us to understand His level is not ours, nor our ways His ways (Isaiah 55:8). So pray, knowing your prayers have the power to bring about results.
Also bring out the power that both private *and* corporate prayer is in bringing about His kingdom.

9. What benefits are there in praying together with other believers?
Corporate prayer can motivate us when we don't feel like praying. It allows others to lead us when we don't know what to pray. It also enables us to be a blessing to others in helping them pray. God blesses a community that prays.

After going through these questions, read the text and fill in the answers in preparation for class. Write down other questions you might have here...

APPLICATION

The remainder of the booklet is taken up with ways we can improve our prayer lives. (22-32) They are not there just for reading. The only way this booklet can do us any good is when we make a plan – now – to put these helpful ideas into practice. Why not take each section and make a plan: *personally*, to make changes in your life; *corporately*, as a group, to make changes in how your group prays together; and *church*, what might you, as a group, do to help improve the prayer life of your church? Again, do it now! You know all too well, if you put it off, it won't get done! And please, do not neglect the idea of fasting. This, sadly, is a lost art in the church today. We need to bring it back!

Put this into practice now, before you dismiss. As a community, you can lift each other up in prayer. Perhaps some of you may not feel comfortable praying out loud, but you might be willing to utter just one sentence, asking God to simply bless what you have learned and help you put it into practice in your life.

For Further Study

The Prayer of Jehoshaphat, Stanley D. Gale. P&R, 2007.

You Can Pray: Finding Grace to Pray Every Day, Tim Chester. P&R, 2014.

A Praying Life: Connecting with God in a Distracting World, Paul Miller. NavPress, 2009.

A Way to Pray, Matthew Henry, revised and organized, O. Palmer Robertson. Banner of Truth, 2010.

Face to Face: Praying the Scriptures for Intimate Worship, Ken Boa. Zondervan, 1997.

The Beginner's Guide to Fasting Elmer Towns. Regal Books, 2001.

Here is a blog by Dr. Gale to help you: <http://theaquilareport.com/need-words-the-case-for-corporate-prayer/>

Find these and more at www.pcabookstore.com.