

This study would not be complete if we didn't set aside a time to pray together. Here is a process that you might choose to use to allow prayers of intercession to blend trust and grace as you offer your will to God.

*Begin with praise and thanks, offering your will to God. Ask with as much faith as you have for God to address your needs and concerns. Give God some silent reflective time before you close your prayer.*

Agree together to wait patiently as you seek God's response. Do any of you sense a closed door or an affirmative response? If not, continue to ask God to show you anything that might hinder your prayers. Seek to recognize God's grace in the situation even if the answer is not what you sought.

## WRAP-UP

Spiritual practices are intended to develop our relationship with God. Our prayers are a reflection of that relationship. They are both communication and communion with Him. The more time we devote to prayer the deeper our relationship grows. But that doesn't only mean rattling off a list of requests. Prayer includes both listening and responding to God's voice. It allows us to honestly express ourselves before the searcher of our hearts, no matter what our emotion. And when we pray as Jesus modeled, we recognize who God is, repent and seek forgiveness for our sins, and bring our requests boldly before Him. God not only calls us to pray, he promises the Spirit prays in us. And so, we boldly join God through our prayer to see His will done.

## Memory Verse

*Mark 12:29-31 NIV - 29 "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' 31 The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."*

## PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: \_\_\_\_\_

Pray for your group members' needs: \_\_\_\_\_

*Challenge- In your prayer time this week meditate on Mark 12:29-31.*

## **“Prayer”** **“Practicing the Way” #3**

### INTRODUCTION

This weekend Pastor David shared his message only through live-streaming in response to the Coronal Virus. Although we did not gather in one location, we can still reflect on one message. This week we are studying the practice of prayer. Sometimes we fall into a routine of prayer as petitioning God and settle for praying through a list of needs. But we have many different expressions of prayer available to us. Prayer is both communication and communion with God. It is a vital part of our practices of our faith.

### Ice Breaker (Optional—8 min)

Do you remember the first prayer you learned as a child?

### STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

#### 1. In All Situations- Pray

There will be times in our lives when we face the unexpected. As we consider what's happening in our lives right now, or what will happen in the future, we may not know how to navigate the situations we face. For times such as these, prayer is our foundation. We need a full well of prayer to draw from.

*Philippians 4:6-7 NIV - 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

*What does Philippians suggest as an alternative to anxiety?*

Praying in every situation doesn't mean praying when something goes wrong. It was the practice of the Jews to pray morning, noon and night, reminding themselves of God's word and His promises.

*Do you have regular times set aside for prayer? What has your experience been when your well of prayer has run low, how do you recognize when you need to press in and pray more?*

*1 Thessalonians 5:17 NLT - 17 Never stop praying.*

Paul told the Thessalonians to pray continually. That sounds impossible if we think of prayer only as our speaking to Him. But if our prayer is a time of both listening and response, we can in fact remain aware of God's presence and spontaneously interact with Him. Of course, Paul was well acquainted with prayers in the Scriptures. The Psalms are themselves prayers which were sung in an expression of the psalmists' heart including thanksgiving, worship, praise, and lament.

*Do you ever pray through a psalm? Are there any you go back to often?*

## **2. Prayers of Lament**

Facing difficult times is not a unique situation. As we read through Psalm 42, we find the Psalmist speaking both to himself and to God as he wrestles with despair. Even in the midst of difficulty, he remembers who God is to him.

*Psalm 42:1-11 NLT - 1 ... As the deer longs for streams of water, so I long for you, O God. 2 I thirst for God, the living God. When can I go and stand before him? 3 Day and night I have only tears for food, while my enemies continually taunt me, saying, "Where is this God of yours?" 4 My heart is breaking as I remember how it used to be: I walked among the crowds of worshipers, leading a great procession to the house of God, singing for joy and giving thanks amid the sound of a great celebration! 5 Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad? I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again--my Savior and 6 my God! Now I am deeply discouraged, but I will remember you--even from distant Mount Hermon, the source of the Jordan, from the land of Mount Mizar. 7 I hear the tumult of the raging seas as your waves and surging tides sweep over me. 8 But each day the LORD pours his unfailing love upon me, and through each night I sing his songs, praying to God who gives me life. 9 "O God my rock," I cry, "Why have you forgotten me? Why must I wander around in grief, oppressed by my enemies?" 10 Their taunts break my bones. They scoff, "Where is this God of yours?" 11 Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad? I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again--my Savior and my God!*

In the Psalms of lament, we find there is a seeking or crying out to God, asking Him for help and ultimately trusting and praising of God.

*Are there parts of this Psalm that you can relate to? Are there any emotions you feel uncomfortable expressing to God? Try praying this psalm aloud as your own petition to God and allow Him to carry you into spontaneous prayer as you conclude it.*

## **3. The Lord's Prayer**

*Matthew 6:9-13 NIV - 9 "This, then, is how you should pray: " 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, 10 your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us today our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'*

One prayer we are all likely to know is from Matthew chapter 6. Known as the Lord's prayer, it was the example of prayer Jesus gave to His disciples. It was not meant to be repeated verbatim but was an example of the way we should pray.

This prayer has elements of recognizing our relationship to God, and His sovereignty, petitioning for our needs, asking forgiveness for our sins, repentance, and seeking God's protection.

*Which of these do you most frequently include in your prayers and which the least?*

Often our prayers include petition for the needs of others, or intercession. There are many passages which shed light on various ways intercession works.

*Share your beliefs concerning intercessory prayer. Does it change God's mind, change ours, depend only on God's sovereign will, or some combination? What experiences with petition and intercession have led you to pray as you do now?*