



Practical Prayer Course

Session One: Posture & Planning

Part of a six week group study to help start or renew a life of prayer

find this and other resources at redeemermcr.com/prayer

Prayer helps us enjoy our relationship with God, grows our own spiritual self-awareness, and is a channel to love others more. The answer doesn't lie in a book, a sermon series, or a small group course, but with the act of prayer itself. Watch the video as a group and go over any questions.

Prayer helps us enjoy our relationship with God.

Deuteronomy 4.7: What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to him?

No matter the false promises from our idols, they will never be near to us in the same way that the Lord is near to us. Prayer awakens our spiritual senses to the nearness of God.

If you have felt near to God before, what was that like? What about feeling far from him? How is your life different when you feel God's nearness?

Prayer grows our spiritual self-awareness.

Jeremiah 17:9–10a: The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind

Like a mirror, when we engage deeply in prayer, we are given images of ourselves. Sometimes good, sometimes not so much. Prayer isn't meant to grow our self-esteem, but it is meant to give us a clear picture of who we really are.

When this mirror reflects something we're not fond of, like a character flaw, the point is to bring that to Jesus so that we don't stay that way.

A good friend is someone who will be truthful even if it hurts. Share an experience of when someone was truthful about one of your flaws in your life. How did that change you?

Prayer is a channel to love others more.

James 5.16: The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

When we pray, God answers. Those prayers themselves are a way to love others well and God will work powerfully through them. But something else also happens: *we* change. As we seek God's heart, our own hearts change and we love others more.

So when we pray for others, there is this double action: the prayers themselves and our hearts. Often when we pray, God will invite us to be part of the answer of the prayers themselves.

Who are people in your life that you love? How would their lives change if you prayed for them more often? How would your own life change if you prayed for them more often?

The posture of prayer

Mark 10.14–15: When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."

Jesus teaches us that maturity is growing into a childlike nature before our good Father. How do you react to that? Is it uncomfortable, scary, to be avoided at all costs? What could becoming "like a little child" before God look like in your life?

Sometimes the mere mention of a prayer life can send us into hiding: fear, anxiety, guilt, and more can start swirling within us and hold us back. You might feel like you're not doing enough, or that you don't know what to do, or are overwhelmed. This quote from Philip Moore, the director of Acts 29 Europe is helpful: "Don't focus on your prayer life, focus on the Father."

We will talk about techniques and ways to pray, but what we're doing, the goal of it all, is to be more present to the ever present Lord of all. When we focus on the Father we find that we really are free to be little children. God is a good Father, and He loves spending time with His kids.

You don't need to clean yourself up before going to God, you can't really do that yourself anyway. This is what Jesus has already done through his death and resurrection. If you follow Him, you are united to Him, and you have free and complete access to God the Father.

The importance of planning

The priorities in our life sometimes require planning. Everything that means anything will require our time, motivation, and focus. Sometimes having some sort of goal is helpful in order to grow. We do the same thing in other areas of our life, why not for prayer?

It's one thing to have a goal, but not all goals are created equally. A helpful goal will be SMART: specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely. Some examples:

Not helpful: "I will pray more."

Not helpful: "I will pray for 2 hours every day by myself."

More helpful: "I will pray at least 3x a week for 10 minutes and get a friend to text reminders."

The more SMART our goal, the more likely we will actually do the thing we say we want to do.

What is the lowest possible goal you can aim for? It could be praying once a week for ten minutes this month. Or it could be praying through the 3/3 prayer card each day for a month. What might be yours?

If we're honest, one of the reasons we don't plan is that we're just too busy for God. We are like the third soil in Jesus' parable in Luke 8.4-15. Those who hear from God but "as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature" (verse 14). Having a plan helps keep us on track when we're easily caught up in lesser things.

Remember in all this, you are not alone! You are part of a church, the body of Christ, and we are in this together. The more you involve others, the more likely you'll actually pray more, and the more enjoyable the act of prayer will be. There are so many ways to join with others to pray together. Have your group brainstorm a handful of ideas.

Don't expect prayer to be easy, or even natural. Prayer can be difficult! So let's make it as easy as possible by working together where we can. Expect the difficulty and expect a change in our lives as we come to Him as dependent, needy, and trusting children.



redeemermcr.com