

A Praying Life by Paul Miller - Study Guide

To balance depth and reflection, this schedule paces the reading over 16 weeks. Each chapter will have a series of questions to work through, so it is encouraged to spend 1-2 days on each chapter to read and reflect prior to the meeting as a group to discuss what was read and wrestled with.

Week 1: Introduction, Chapters 1-2

Week 2: Chapters 3-4

Week 3: Chapters 5-6

Week 4: Chapters 7-8

Week 5: Chapters 9-11

Week 6: Chapters 12-14

Week 7: Chapters 15-17

Week 8: Chapters 18

Week 9: Chapters 19-21

Week 10: Chapters 22-23

Week 11: Chapters 24-25

Week 12: Chapters 26-27

Week 13: Chapters 28-30

Week 14: Chapters 31-32

Week 15: Chapters 33-34

Week 16: Appendix

WEEK 1: Introduction, Chapters 1–2

Introduction

1. Miller confesses he “stumbled into” prayer lessons rather than planning them. How does his unplanned approach invite you to trust him as a fellow learner rather than a distant authority?

2. The introduction says many “pray badly yet long to connect” with God. When have you felt that tension—desiring closeness yet unsure you’re “doing prayer right”?

3. He promises practical anecdotes from his family life. In what ways might real-life storytelling teach you more effectively than abstract theories on prayer?

4. Miller emphasizes that getting to know God is the focus, not mastering prayer techniques. How could reorienting your efforts around relationship instead of “doing prayer right” reshape your prayer habits this week (Revelation 3:20)?

5. Miller highlights how most people’s doubts about prayer remain hidden. Why is vocalizing these doubts vital for honest growth, and how might a group setting help?

6. He aims to show prayer interwoven with everyday stress and disappointment. Where might you invite God into routine or messy parts of your day?

7. If Jesus stands at the door knocking, wanting dinner-like fellowship, how do you envision letting Him into your daily “menu” of tasks and worries?

Chapter 1: “What Good Does It Do?”

1. The author writes about Kim’s muteness being perceived as evidence of a quiet God. When in your life has prayer seemed to not work? Have you ever acknowledged such raw disappointment before God? (p. 2, 1st paragraph).

2. Miller spotlights subconscious cynicism, spiritual exhaustion, & doubts that hinder us from prayer. Which resonates most with you, and why? (p. 2, 2nd paragraph)

3. What is currently frustrating you about prayer? Why?

4. Why does it seem “easier on our faith *not* to pray?” What does Miller mean by saying this? (p.3, 3rd paragraph)

5. How does American culture make it difficult for us to pray? (p. 3-4)

6. Reflect on a time when God answered a specific prayer. If none come to mind, why do you think that is?

7. Read & reflect on Mark 9:17-24. The father likely hoped that Jesus would help his son, after all, why else would he go to the disciples and then to Jesus? The father’s cry was an acknowledgment of his own spiritual deficiency. When was the last time you acknowledged your own spiritual weakness and appealed to Jesus for a stronger faith?

Chapter 2: Where We Are Headed

1. Read Revelations 3:20. Miller likens prayer to a relaxed family meal. How does that image contrast with more rigid or formal prayer styles you've encountered? (p. 8)

2. How does making prayer the center of our focus affect our daily lives? What daily activities (commuting, cleaning, making coffee, etc) could be an open door to more conversation with our Father? (p. 9)

3. How does framing life as your "Father's world" shift your perspective? (p. 10, last paragraph)

4. How does a life centered on prayer affect a "busy" life? (p. 11)

5. What feelings surface at the prospect of having an impactful, passionate prayer life?

Choose:

- a) Anxiety (I don't know what will happen.)
- b) Eagerness (Let's get going!)
- c) Amazement (Who am I to have this kind of relationship with GOD?)
- d) Indifference (I don't really care.)
- e) Arrogance (Seems useless. I can do things without it.)
- f) Isolation (God is too busy for just ME.)

Why did you choose those?

Notes

WEEK 2: Chapters 3–4

Chapter 3: Become Like a Little Child

1. Jesus champions childlike faith; read Mark 10:13-16, Matt. 11:25-30. How does God want us to become like children? (p. 17-20)

2. Why do you think we strive to “clean” ourselves up before praying, and how does that stifle authenticity? (p. 20-22)

3. Read Mark 2:13-17. Who did Jesus come for?

4. Read John 1:43-47. How does this knowledge (you can be *real* with Jesus) open new intimacy to prayer?

5. Define “*the heart of prayer?*” (p. 22-23)

6. How does letting your mind wander to life’s worries & burdens reflect the heart of prayer?

7. Take 5 minutes to come, messy, to God. Write down any words that come to mind.

Notes

Chapter 4: Learn to Talk with Your Father

1. How do children ask for things? What things do children ask for? How many times do they ask? In what ways are your requests to God similar or different? (p. 25-26)

2. After reading about the apostle Paul's distractedness while praying, how does this shift in perspective affect your preconceived notions of prayer? (p. 28, 2nd paragraph)

3. Read Luke 18:1-18. Evaluate your own prayer life based on the widow's persistence.

4. Miller says, "Children are supremely confident of their parents love & power." Does your prayer life reflect this same belief in your Father?

5. Reflect on a simple question: "If you had to talk with your Father about one pressing issue right now, what would you say?"

6. Talk with God for 5 minutes. Let your mind wander. What was it like to "play" with God?

Notes

WEEK 3: Chapters 5–6

Chapter 5: Spending Time with Your Father

1. Jesus needed to pray. Why?

2. How would life be different if you *only defined it* regarding your relationship with God? (p. 33, 3rd paragraph)

3. Knowing God has a *one-person focus*, how does this impact you?

4. Read pg. 35-36 again, write down the ways Jesus prayed.

5. How can you imitate Christ's prayer life? How do you balance scattered, child-like prayer with dedicated, intimate times with God?

6. Identify your most commonly used objection(s) and consider how you can be intentional in overcoming them? (p.37)

7. What morning/evening habit do you need to replace with prayer?

Notes

Chapter 6: Learning to Be Helpless

1. How can you relinquish the illusion of self-sufficiency to become more *helpless* and dependent on God? Pray through Psalms 142.

2. Struggles reveal our need to rely on God. Describe a time where a problem forced you to seek Him more than comfort did. Why does a posture of *helplessness* often require difficult circumstances?

3. Summarize how recognized helplessness fosters persistent prayer, while self-confidence often leads to dryness or cynicism.

4. Read 2 Cor. 12:1-10. In what area do you need that promise to encourage honest admission of inability or sin? (p. 43)

5. Where has pride hindered your spiritual growth or kingdom impact? (p. 44-47)

6. Write down where you feel helpless currently. Talk with God about these areas. Pray over each others areas in a group setting if possible.

Notes

WEEK 4: Chapters 7–8

Chapter 7: Crying “Abba”—Continuously

1. What does *poor in spirit* mean?

2. Why might short bursts of “Abba, help!” better capture the essence of unceasing prayer? (p. 53)

3. What are some things that keep us from being poor in spirit? Read Matthew 19:16-24, 23:1-14.

4. Sin can lead us to a praying life. What sinful tendencies can drive you to a spirit of never ceasing prayer? (p. 52)

5. Practice “Abba, help” prayers this week. In what areas do you anticipate a change, as a result?

Notes

Chapter 8: Bending Your Heart to Your Father

1. Read Philippians 4:4–7. Miller notes anxiety can be a catalyst for prayer instead of a barrier. Where are you experiencing anxiety? How does reinterpreting worry as an invitation to dialogue with God reshape your emotional landscape? (p. 57-58)

2. Anxiety is “a warped, unused, broken prayer link.” How does this impact you? What makes prayer the better choice?

3. Read Psalms 131. How does busyness, ambition, worry prevent you from resting childlike before God?

4. Reflect on a scenario where you tried controlling everything. Did it produce peace or deeper anxiety? In what way might surrendering illusions of control open you to peace in prayer?

5. Name a current challenge you might recast as an opportunity to watch, expecting subtle or major interventions.

6. Read Matthew 10:29-31, and reflect on your answer to question one. How does that shift your perspective?

Notes

WEEK 5: Chapters 9–11

Chapter 9: Understanding Cynicism

1. Cynicism, the author says, stems from unmet hopes or naive faith that collapses. Can you identify an instance where repeated disappointments nudged you into a skeptical stance about prayer?

2. Summarize how cynicism undermines a “praying life,” leaving us less likely to attempt heartfelt requests. How does naming cynicism’s presence help you actively resist it?

3. Reflect on how modern media or personal letdowns feed cynicism. In what ways can immersing yourself in Scripture’s record of God’s faithfulness offset that negativity?

4. Miller warns that cynics might appear “smart” or “realistic” but ultimately miss the childlike wonder that Jesus commends (Luke 10:21). Where do you see cynicism blocking your ability to marvel at small blessings?

5. Compare cynicism’s “That’s too good to be true” stance with childlike trust’s “God is that good!” Which approach do you gravitate toward, and why?

6. Mark 9:24 recurs—“I believe; help my unbelief.” How might adopting that sincere, half-struggling plea each day keep cynicism from taking root?

7. If you asked God to reveal one specific area of buried cynicism, what might He show you, and how do you plan to respond?

Chapter 10: Following Jesus out of Cynicism

1. Miller outlines cures like “be warm but wary,” “be thankful,” “cultivate childlike spirit,” “repent of cynicism,” “hope again,” and “watch for Jesus.” Which resonates most immediately for your situation? Why?

2. How does a thankful spirit help dismantle your knee-jerk cynicism when confronted with unanswered prayers or daily irritations?

3. The text frequently underscores that cynicism arises from pride—thinking we see the real truth behind everything. How can we move from a spirit of cynicism to a spirit of hope?

4. Many feel that “hoping again” might be risky. Please read the story of Abraham and Isaac (Genesis 17:15-15, 21:1-34) and what biblical truths or personal testimonies reassure you that risking hope is not naive but anchored in God’s character?

5. The author references noticing small “God sightings,” which counters the cynic’s outlook. Where this week might you intentionally record or share short glimpses of God’s kindness?

6. Consider Jesus Himself, who confidently prayed, “Father, I thank You that You have heard Me” even before Lazarus rose (John 11:41–42). How does following that example tackle cynicism’s grip?

7. One way to guard against cynicism is to adopt a daily habit like listing three reasons for gratitude each night. How might that discipline root out negative assumptions?

2. Miller encourages us to watch for Jesus' fingerprints in ordinary life. Where might hurried routine or cynicism blind you from seeing small but real divine interventions?

3. The author contrasts a "glasses off" approach—failing to notice God's presence—and a "glasses on" perspective of mindful, childlike awareness. In which daily tasks can you practice "glasses on"?

4. Consider how you might share these sightings with others—like in your small group. How does communal storytelling reinforce a collective "Eye for Jesus" that wards off cynicism?

5. Think of times Jesus recognized small faith or small steps in Scripture. Reflect on how noticing details fosters worshipful hearts.

6. If your background frames "God sightings" as too mystical, how do you differentiate legitimate recognition of providence from overreading coincidences?

7. Summarize how adopting an "Eye for Jesus" approach helps shape your daily prayer from routine or formal to vibrant and expectant.

8. On page 87, Miller references how the Apostle Paul is not overcome by evil but overcomes evil with good. How can "looking for Jesus" change our outlook on those around us?

Chapter 12: Why Asking Is So Hard

1. The text highlights fear of disappointment, secular skepticism, or pride as reasons we don't ask. Which factor most inhibits you from wholeheartedly requesting?

2. Reflect on how humility acknowledges "I need God," while pride says "I'm fine on my own." Where do you see pride sneaking in, especially regarding "minor needs"?

3. Summarize times you hesitated to ask because you felt "God already knows," or "This is too small." How does Scripture's father-child model (Matthew 7:7–11) correct that logic?

4. Miller might mention we live in a self-sufficient era that scorns dependence. In your culture or upbringing, how are you taught to avoid "bothering others," including God?

5. The chapter likely references Mark 10:46–52, where Bartimaeus cried out for healing. How does his bold, repetitive shouting challenge polite reluctance to ask God persistently?

6. If you decided to ask for both major and minor concerns—like health crises and daily struggles—how might that all-inclusive posture open new trust and conversation with God?

7. Identify one area you plan to start "actually asking" about. In your group, how could you encourage each other to keep requesting with childlike faith?

Chapter 13: Why We Can Ask

1. Miller says we can ask confidently because God is both powerful and personal, referencing John 14:13–14. Which side (powerful or personal) do you tend to forget, and how does that shape your prayers?

2. Summarize how abiding in Christ (John 15:7) moves “ask whatever you wish” away from a license for selfish demands to a fruitful synergy of desires with God’s heart.

3. Reflect on personal experiences of answered prayers that reaffirmed God’s caring nature. How can recalling them embolden you to keep asking in the present?

4. The text likely alludes to Romans 8:31–32—“He who did not spare His own Son...” Where do you sense the need to cling to that assurance, trusting God with your daily requests?

Miller’s repeated theme is that childlike hearts can approach a Father, not an aloof judge. Share ways you remind yourself that God truly delights in giving good gifts.

5. If you overcame skepticism about “Does He really want to help me?” how would that shift your willingness to pray for seemingly trivial or personal issues?

6. The chapter may highlight testimonies from Scripture or Miller’s life. Which testimony especially stirs fresh confidence to ask for bigger or more frequent requests?

Chapter 14: How Personal Is God?

1. The author references minor, everyday prayers—like for lost items or daily tasks. Why do you see a tendency to think “I shouldn’t bother God with that”?

2. In the Lord's prayer, Jesus prayed about practical needs like daily bread (Matthew 6:11, 7:7-11). Does that resonate with or challenge your approach to praying for “small stuff”?

3. Miller emphasizes that if we believe God is intimately personal, it frees us from embarrassment about daily concerns. In what aspect of your life do you most yearn for that freedom?

4. After reading the section on pajamas, milk (108-109), and parking spaces (105), what are your thoughts on praying about such “trivial” things?

5. The text likely warns against superstitious or formulaic prayers. How do you guard childlike trust from turning into “treat God as a vending machine”?

6. Reread page 111. As you finish the bottom paragraph, consider what Paul says is the loss vs gain of having a praying life. Is that worth it to you? Why?

7. When reading that suffering is a gift (page 112, 3rd paragraph), does the story of Kim’s adventure at McDonald’s resonate with you? Or are you more likely to see suffering as punishment?

8. “The only way to know how prayer works is to have complete knowledge *and control* of the past, present, and future. In other words, you can figure out how prayer works if you

WEEK 7: Chapter 15, Chapter 16, Chapter 17

Chapter 15: What Do We Do with Jesus' Extravagant Promises about Prayer?

1. Miller examines Jesus' bold statements (John 14:13-14; 15:16-17;16:23-24). What do we do with Jesus' extravagant promises about prayer?

2. Scripture implies how abiding in Christ shapes the nature of "whatever you wish" in prayer. In your experience, does deeper communion shift your desires to align more with God's will? Explain.

3. What do the scholars get right about the extravagant promises of Jesus? What do they get wrong?

4. Make a list of times you prayed for something "extravagant" but also sensed the Spirit refining your motives. Did that process leave you more surrendered or more determined?

5. Reread the section titled "Back to Jesus."

6. How does linking prayer to God's glory in John 14:13-14, 36 guard your heart from self-centeredness, ensuring your bold requests serve a kingdom purpose? (pgs 117-119)

7. If you started praying more "extravagant" prayers for major or seemingly impossible needs, what internal obstacles would you have to overcome?

Chapter 16: What We Don't Ask For: "Our Daily Bread"

1. Miller highlights how we leave certain prayers unspoken—perhaps “too big,” “too small,” or “I don’t deserve it.” Which category resonates most with your personal patterns?

2. Reflect on times you realized, “I never prayed about that.” Did fear, cynicism, or simple oversight cause you to remain silent?

3. On page 129, Miller says we shy away from naming these hidden requests because they invite God to rule over our lives. What might appear first if you compiled a short list of neglected petitions?

4. How does “We have not because we ask not” challenge your excuses for not praying about finances, relationships, or personal dreams?

5. How does the author describe wisdom and guidance in this chapter? When was the last time you asked for these?

6. Take a moment and reflect on a current situation where you feel like you lack wisdom. Write out as much as you can about the scenario, and the questions you’re wrestling with, etc. What does asking for wisdom and guidance look like for this situation? How can you involve others in asking for wisdom and guidance for you?

7. What is your house? (132)

Chapter 17: What We Don't Ask For "Your Kingdom Come"

1. Chapter 17 continues the theme, implying there's more than one dimension to "forgotten" or "ignored" requests. Which new angle or example in this chapter struck you? (pg 133)

2. Reflect on prayers you shelved after repeated disappointment. Does reading about the husband feeling like praying for his wife opening an old wound resonate with you? Why?

3. "The fatalism inherent in so much modern psychology immobilizes us. Emotional states are sacred." Do you ever feel trapped or stuck in your feelings? If so, please describe.

4. Consider how a community can challenge your reserved spirit. If a friend or small group consistently asked you, "Have you prayed about X?" might that accountability help change your day like Grammy recommended to Claire?

5. Miller suggests that childlike hearts keep knocking even if no immediate sign appears. Where do you see a need to reclaim that perseverance rather than concluding God said no prematurely?

6. Review how bridging shame or cynicism can reawaken a deeper relational dynamic with the Father. Did the author's stories of small or big breakthroughs inspire you to push beyond your comfort zone?

7. If you integrated both chapters (16 & 17) this week, consider writing a short "Unmasked Inventory." Which 2-3 neglected requests can you begin praying for daily?

WEEK 8: Chapters 18

Chapter 18: Surrender Completely

1. Miller invites us into a situation with his son, Andrew. What did self-will look like in this situation? If Paul had denied his self-will and focused on Jesus, how might he have thought and acted differently?

2. Reflect on a time this past week you tried controlling an outcome but ended in frustration. Build your own hypothetical situation about how it could have gone had you turned in a spirit of Prayer?

3. On page 141 Paul says, "The great struggle of my life is not trying to discern God's will; it is trying to discern and then disown my own." Instead of looking at life as a gift, where are you demanding that life look a certain way?

4. As you reflect on the door story on pages 142 and 143, Miller works through the different doors in our life that are open to sin (see Genesis 4:7) by taking us through Matthew 5-7.
 - a. Name the doors that Miller lists and how they are closed.

- b. For you, which doors are the hardest to close or would hurt the most to close?

- c. Are there any doors not listed (Galatians 5:19-21) that you would need the Lord to close?

- d. Choose one door that the Lord is showing you is open within your life. Take 5 minutes to pray that the Spirit would work in you to close that door.

5. Summarize in your own words the four paragraphs starting on pg 144 with "Sue Speaks on her own..."

daughter on page 150. Identify a bentness within your own heart, select verses (using Google to help if needed) regarding the sin. If you have a hard time choosing one, refer to the doors exercise in chapter 18. Once complete, commit to praying these verses over your life every day for a week. What happened as you have been praying?

2. How did Paul love his daughter Emily better because he was praying for her?

3. How old was Emily when Paul started to pray for her? How old was she when they noticed her brighten up about a new vehicle? Paul mentions that he continued to pray for her. What's the longest you have ever prayed for someone?

4. Paul mentions that his prayers for Emily exposed his own heart. As he prayed for her not to love the things of this world, he was shown that he had a form of the Love of Money within his own life. As you pray for others, have your prayers exposed an area of sin in your own heart? Please describe.

5. Look at the picture on page 154. About despair, good asking, and demanding prayers. Which of these most represents your current prayer life? Why?

6. How did Emily's low-level suffering of benchwarming grow her faith?

7. This chapter starts with Emily getting prayed over when she was six, again at fifteen, and ends with her senior year in high school. As you reflect on the story unfolding and see how God is answering the prayers of a father for his daughter, what does this chapter teach us about the longevity of prayer?

2. How did Emily’s experiences in Guatemala serve as answers to Paul’s prayers in ways he didn't initially expect?

3. Emily describes moments of disrespect toward her father rooted in deeper personal insecurities. How can our hidden insecurities influence our relationships, especially with authority figures or family members? Can you relate to Emily’s struggle?

4. Why might God delay answers to prayers that align with His heart?

5. Emily realized her father's consistent love reflected God's unconditional love for her. How did this realization reshape Emily’s perception of herself and of God?

6. Have you ever had a relationship that gave you new insight into God’s character?

7. When you think about the word “father” what words or images come to mind?

Notes

Chapter 21: Unanswered Prayer

1. Paul and Jill found themselves struggling between their hopeful prayers and the difficult reality of Kim's disabilities. Think of a time when you felt caught between hope and reality - how did you respond?

2. Paul gives three pictures of where we can go in the desert: denial, determination, and despair. Which one best describes where you go (pg. 162-164)

a. If denial, what reality are you facing?

b. If determination, in what ways are you using your self-will to close the gap?

c. If despair, how have you partake in the bread of bitterness?

3. Summarize how acknowledging God’s bigger narrative might reframe “silent” answers into “Not yet,” “I have another plan,” or “I’m working in ways you can’t see.”

4. The text suggests that not every “no” is a final denial; sometimes it’s redirection or character growth. Have you seen a “no” transform into an unexpected blessing?

5. Miller warns cynicism can reemerge when prayers remain unanswered. Which communal or personal practices might keep your heart soft and open during long waits?

6. Consider how the psalmist laments, “How long, O Lord?” yet still clings to God’s steadfast love (Psalm 13). How does adopting that biblical lament help you voice frustration but remain loyal?

7. If you decided to keep praying for a seemingly impossible or delayed request for another 6–12 months, what might that unwavering posture say to your own soul and to those observing your faith?

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2. Consider how lament fosters closeness with God by welcoming confusion, sadness, or anger into prayer. Where do you sense a need to lament in your own life?

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3. What is the difference between an honest lament and plain complaining? How does bringing pain directly to God differ from fueling bitterness on your own?

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4. Paul states “There is no such thing as a lament-free life. In fact if your life is lament-free, you aren’t loving well.” What is something that currently breaks your heart and leads you to lament?

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5. Write your own lament—naming sorrow, pleading for help, reaffirming hope— regarding what you listed in the previous question.

Notes

Chapter 23: Understanding How Laments Work

1. Compare and contrast the Greek and Jewish responses to life's chaos as described in the chapter. Which mindset tends to shape your own prayer life?

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2. Write out a lament connecting God's past promise with your present situation, while hoping for a better future.

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3. Of the three things Isaiah believed about God (that He is sovereign, that he is love, and that he keeps his covenants), which is the easiest for you to believe and which is the most difficult? How does that impact your current prayer life?

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4. When answering the question "Are Laments Disrespectful?" Paul asks the question, "What is on your heart?" How does thinking of lamenting as bearing the reality of your heart to God challenge the thought that lamenting is disrespectful?

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5. What are the 3 differences Miller provides between a complaint and a lament?

1. A lament is directed toward _____.
2. A lament _____.
3. Laments almost always circle back to _____.

6. Lamenting might feel awkward if you're used to formal or cheerful prayers. What small step, like reading a lament psalm daily, could you take to embrace it more fully?

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7. Paul gives an example of how his family comes together to lament over what is breaking their hearts. How could you share lamenting with members of your family, friends, or group this week?
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WEEK 11: Chapters 24–25

Chapter 24: How God Places Himself in the Story

1. As you read Matthew 15:21-28, why does Jesus deliberately remain ambiguous with the Canaanite woman rather than immediately answering her request? What is his response to her?

2. Why is Jesus not a magic prayer machine?

3. Discuss Jill's ongoing struggle in prayer for Kim's healing. How did Jesus' deliberate ambiguity eventually deepen her faith?

4. Why does Paul suggest Jesus often stands at the "edge" rather than the "center" of our struggles?

5. How did Jesus' approach in his encounter with Mary Magdalene illustrate the way God often engages us?

6. "Jill was profoundly changed in her twenty-year wait." Do you honestly trust God enough to love you through a waiting period like this?

7. Miller's personal stories show how noticing subtle divine involvement fosters worship and perseverance. Where do you suspect God is already at work in your life but haven't paused to acknowledge Him?

Chapter 25: Praying Without a Story

1. Joanne's story describes prayers becoming isolated from her life story. In reading through her story, was your heart broken, uneasy, or something else? Why?

2. Reflect on Paul's critique of Joanne's perspective: she saw herself primarily as "sinned against" rather than also as a "sinner." How does acknowledging both sides influence our

prayers?

3. In the chart on page 202, Paul summarizes two approaches to a praying life - one of faith trusting that God is weaving a story, and the other that has pulled away. As you look at the fruit of these approaches, which fruit do you see growing in your own life? Ask two people what fruit they see growing in your life. Discuss with you group.

4. Explain the difference between making an isolated prayer and praying within the context of a larger narrative.

5. What are the three things Paul says we need to remember to live in our Father's story:

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

6. Of these three, which is the most challenging for you? Why?

7. How was God an artist within the telling of Joseph's life? Do you see any patterns of his craftsmanship in the story of your life?

WEEK 12: Chapters 26-27

Chapter 26: Hope

1. Paul contrasts the biblical view of hope with ancient Greek concepts of tragedy and comedy. How does the gospel challenge these two views?

2. Consider Jesus' first miracle at Cana as Paul describes it—what does turning water into wine symbolize about Christian hope?

3. Paul emphasizes that their prayers for Kim’s job were “inseparable from working, planning, and good old-fashioned begging.” How does this integrated approach challenge or affirm your current understanding of what it means to pray faithfully?

4. Jill's relentless hope and boldness in asking others to pray for Kim’s job is compared to the persistent widow in Luke 18. What does her example teach us about perseverance in prayer, especially when progress is slow or uncertain?

5. Referencing the "Wonder–Desert–Reality–Time" chart, how does the journey from desert waiting to wonder reflect your own experience of prayer and persistence? Where are you on this chart in a current area of life?

6. Paul describes “the willingness to be enchanted” as essential for seeing God’s wonders. Are you willing to be enchanted? How is this willingness to be enchanted different from denial or naïve optimism?

7. The family’s prayers shifted from asking God for a job for Kim to asking for a calling. How does this shift reflect a deeper understanding of hope and God’s purpose for individuals? Is there an area of your life where God may be inviting you to pray “bigger” prayers?

8. Dream big before God right now. Record your dreams below.

3. Paul writes, “*Whenever you love, you reenact Jesus’ death.*” Why must gospel stories include suffering? How does this view challenge modern Christian comfort culture, and how does it reframe your view of hardship?

4. Paul’s idols of efficiency, order, and approval were exposed in the airport fiasco. What idols tend to surface in your life during stressful or humbling experiences? How might God be inviting you to repentance through those situations?

5. Paul contrasts modern secular slogans like “What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas” with the truth that “*all of life is covenant.*” How does recognizing invisible links in your life deepen your view of God’s presence and purpose in everyday moments?

Notes

WEEK 13: Chapters 28–30

Chapter 28: Using Prayer Tools

1. “If you forget to pray, you don’t ‘pay fo it.’” Paul suggests that our failure to track prayer like we track appointments reflects a deeper disbelief that prayer works. How does this resonate with your own experience?

2. What would change in your prayer life if you treated it with the same importance as your schedule?

3. Paul compares our spiritual weakness in prayer to Kim’s need for a speech computer, stating we are “disabled by the Fall.” How does this metaphor help you understand the value of tools like journals or prayer cards, especially during dry or unfocused seasons?

4. Some fear that using tools might quench spontaneity. How can you guard against letting a system overshadow the relational essence of prayer?

5. Just as Kim struggled for half an hour to roll over, Paul says we must be willing to work through the awkwardness of learning to pray well. What part of prayer currently feels awkward for you? How could you have persistence in that area?

6. Many people find that a structured model of prayer like ACTS is helpful but can lead to robotic, heartless prayers. How can you balance using structure in prayer without losing authenticity or relational depth with God?

7. Paul reminds us, “*Life is both holding hands and scrubbing floors.*” How does this duality help you embrace both the emotional and disciplined aspects of prayer? Can you name times when you’ve needed to lean more into one than the other?

Notes

help you “*tune your heart*” to others in pain?

4. Paul observes that the real barrier to writing out prayer cards is not time, but *unbelief*. What inner resistance do you feel at the idea of organizing prayer this way? How might it reflect deeper struggles with trust, legalism, or self-reliance?

5. Build a deck of prayer cards for each of the prompts on page 238. Add a verse or promise of God from the scripture you want to see completed in their life.

Notes

Chapter 30: Prayer Work

1. Paul realized he had loved Bob outwardly but never truly prayed for him. Describe a situation where you loved someone outwardly but didn't take the time to pray for them. How did it go? What might have changed if you prayed persistently for that person?

2. When Paul began praying for gentleness in Bob, God used suffering to soften him—and involved Paul in the process. How does this challenge your expectations of *how* God will answer prayer? What does it teach about God's ways?

3. “When I begin praying Christ into someone's life, God often permits suffering in that person's life.” What is God trying to draw out of a person by permitting suffering?

4. Paul writes, “*If Satan’s basic game plan is pride... then God’s basic game plan is humility.*” How has God used either prayer or suffering in your life to lead you toward humility? Are there areas where you resist this kind of formation?

5. Paul connects Jesus’ parable in Mark 4:26–29 to the rhythm of kingdom prayer: plant (ask), wait (watch), and harvest (work). Which of these steps is most difficult for you, and why?

6. Paul warns against reversing the prayer pattern—trying to fix things before praying. Can you think of a time when you attempted to work first, pray last, and it didn’t go well? What could have been different if you had begun with prayer?

7. Paul ends the chapter by recognizing his own flaws mirrored in Bob. How can persistent prayer for others help us become more self-aware and humble? Is there someone in your life that, like Bob, might be a mirror for your own growth?

Notes

transformation?

3. On the *Word Only / Spirit Only* chart where would you place yourself? Do you tend to be more Word Only, Spirit Only, or balance somewhere in the middle? What strengths and dangers come with your current position?

4. How does keeping both the Word and Spirit together enrich communion with God?

5. Paul warns against baptizing our desires with spiritual language (“*God told me to...*”). How can we humbly seek God’s guidance without elevating our intuition to the level of Scripture?

6. What safeguards help you discern between your desires and God’s will?

7. What distractions or habits in your life keep you from spiritually paying attention?

8. Paul writes “*Without realizing it, we can look at the windshield instead of through it*” when discussing how there is a tendency to get excited about the means of communication rather than who we are communicating with. Based on what you have learned in this study so far, how have you cultivated a listening heart for God?

Notes

4. Kim’s pacing repeatedly disrupted Paul’s prayer time, but later he realized he hadn’t thought to pray about it. Is there a recurring frustration or “pacing” in your life that you haven’t brought to God? If so, make a prayer card about it and record what the Lord does in the situation or in your heart over the course of the week.

5. Emily’s college decision is framed as the *climax* of a ten-year prayer. Does this storytelling framework (beginning → middle → climax) reshape the way you want to track or notice answered prayers in your life?

6. Paul asks, “*How would you love someone without prayer?*” How would you personally answer that question?

7. What have you experienced that shows prayer isn’t just a spiritual act, but a way of loving others?

8. On page 268, Miller writes, “*I’m not hunting for an experience with God; I’m inviting God into my life experience.*” How do you tend to approach your prayer life—more like hunting for a feeling, or like welcoming God into the mess?

9. If someone were to walk into your real-life praying, how would they describe it?

Notes

6. The method recommends starting with 3–4 daily cards, and then slowly rotating in weekly cards. If you’ve been doing more than this a day, how might this change of pace increase the chance of this being a life-long practice instead of a fling?

7. Consider how you could teach or mentor someone else using these practices—like a youth or new believer. Which practices or stories from *A Praying Life* would you highlight first?
