

Dear Child of the King,

There are a few things that I want to communicate with you as we begin.

1. **We need God.** We need to **be a people of prayer.** It is foundational to what we do both as individuals and as a congregation.
2. This congregational study and practice is an intentional opportunity to help our people make progress in their life using prayer as we have emphasized **REVERENCE** in 2026. So, let's slow down together, learn what it means to develop a praying life and put prayer into practice.
3. It is most important that we hear from God. Each lesson will begin with **The Scriptures**, which are inspired by God. We need His Word to make sense out of prayer. A Praying Life by Paul Miller is a secondary resource that can help us identify with stories of struggle and encouragement which point us to a relationship with our Creator, hope in our Savior and dependency on our good Father. Finally, I strongly encourage you to **Practice Prayer** both in your group time and outside of your group time.
4. This study also overlaps and comes on the heels of a sermon series from the book of **Nehemiah**. Words that I will keep in front of us from that series are **prayer, focus, work** and **togetherness**.

Here is the description from the back cover of A Praying Life.

PRAYER is simply you—a child of a good Father—making conversation with him a rhythm of your life.

For most of us, prayer is so hard that unless circumstances demand it, we simply do not pray. Prayerlessness is rooted in unbelief. Because of prayerlessness, our lives are often marked by fear, anxiety, joylessness, and spiritual lethargy.

If prayerlessness marks your life more often than not, A Praying Life is for you. Now with added chapters on prayers of lament and further guidance for using prayer cards. **Paul Miller introduces us to prayer that regularly and consistently hopes, trusts, and expects God to act.**

The quotes and questions in each lesson are for you to **pick and choose** what to use and not use for your conversations with your people in your group. You have The Bible, A Praying Life book, these lessons, and freedom to create and organize. **Thanks for going on this journey with us.**

Grace and peace,

Pastor Stan (with lots of help from Dr. Rick Stoodly and The Vision Team)

A PRAYING LIFE—COMMUNITY GROUP SCHEDULE **INTRODUCTION & PART 1**

Pastor's Letter.....Page 1

Schedule.....Page 2

Introduction

September 6—Introduction, Chapters 1-2.....**Pages 3-5**

A praying life recognizes our dependence on God and brings every part of life into relationship with Him.

Part 1: Learning to Pray Like a Child

September 13—Chapters 3-5.....**Pages 6-8**

A child comes because the Father welcomes them, asks because the Father cares, and takes time because the relationship matters.

September 20—Chapters 6-8.....**Pages 9-11**

A praying life recognizes our helplessness and neediness and turns to God as our Help when we are anxious.

Part 2: Learning to Trust Again

(Parts 2-3 to come in next packet)

September 27—Chapters 9-11

Part 3: Learning to Ask Your Father

October 4—Chapters 12-13

October 11—Chapters 14-15

October 18—Chapters 16-18

Prayer Cards Introduction

October 25—Chapters 28-29, Appendix

Part 4: Living in Your Father's Story

November 1—Chapters 19-21

November 8—Chapters 22-24

November 15—Chapters 25-27

Part 5: Praying in Real Life

November 22—Chapters 30-32

November 29—Chapters 33-34

Section 1: Prayer Is Relationship With God

Revelation 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.

1. What does this verse teach us about prayer and our relationship with God?

Ephesians 3:14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, 16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. 20 Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, 21 to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

2. What are the types of things Paul is praying for the church people in Ephesus?**3. What types of things prompt us to or prevent us from praying for one another?**

Lesson 1 Question to Answer: Why is prayer difficult? What is a praying life like?

Lesson 1 Summary Statement: A praying life recognizes our dependence on God and brings every part of life into relationship with Him. (Forward, Introduction & Chapters 1-2 from A Praying Life by Paul E. Miller) **Pick and choose what you use!**

Section 2: Why Is Prayer So Difficult?

A. "The most common frustration is the activity of praying itself. We last for about fifteen seconds, and then out of nowhere the days to-do list pops up and our minds are off on a tangent. We catch ourselves and, by sheer force of the will, go back to praying. Before we know it, it has happened again." (p. 2)

B. "Praying exposes how self-preoccupied we are and uncovers our doubts. It was easier on our faith *not* to pray. After only a few minutes, our prayer is in shambles. Barely out of the starting gate, we collapse on the sidelines—cynical, guilty, and hopeless." (p. 3)

C. "Most Christians feel frustrated when it comes to prayer!" (p. 4)

D. "Something is wrong with us. Our natural desire comes from Creation. We are made in the image of God. Our inability to pray comes from the Fall. Evil has marred the image." (p. 2)

E. “There is little space to be still before God... We are uncomfortable with silence.” (3)

F. “Because we can do life without God, praying seems nice but unnecessary.” (p. 4)

4. Do any of the statements above (A-F) resonate with you? Why?

2 Corinthians 6:18 “And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,” Says the Lord Almighty.

5. What does it mean that you are a son or daughter of God?

6. Do you feel like prayer doesn’t make a difference? Do you feel like God is not even there? What is going on in your heart? Does your prayer life reflect your answers to those questions?

G. “Your relationship with your heavenly Father is dysfunctional. You talk as if you have an intimate relationship but you don’t.” (p. 5)

7. Is prayer difficult for you? Why do you think it may be difficult for some?

8. How is your prayer life? Where do you want your prayer life to be? How are you developing your prayer life?

Section 3: What Is A Praying Life?

The Praying Life... Feels Like Dinner with Good Friends See Revelation 3:20 above
H. “When Jesus describes the intimacy He wants with us, He talks about joining Him for dinner... Get to know God as a Person.” (p. 8)

The Praying Life... Is Interconnected with All of Life
I. “Because prayer is all about relationship, we can’t work on prayer as an isolated part of life.” (p. 8) ... “We don’t learn to pray in isolation from the rest of our lives... it is interconnected with every part of our lives.” (p. 9)

9. Describe the differences between an “isolated prayer life” and a “prayer-intertwined life.”

The Praying Life... Becomes Aware of the Story
J. “When we put...God’s sovereignty, love, wisdom and patience (together), we have a divine story”... “You can’t have a good story without tension and conflict, without things going wrong.” (p. 10)

10. How is prayer a window into God’s story for you?

The Praying Life... Gives Birth to Hope

K. "Because my Father controls everything, I can ask and He will listen and act. Since I am His child, change is possible—and hope is born." (p. 10)

The Praying Life... Becomes Integrated

L. "If we love people and have the power to help, then we are going to be busy. Learning to pray doesn't offer us a less busy life; it offers us a less busy heart..." "...to be busy...drives us even more into a life of prayer." (p. 11)

The Praying Life... Reveals the Heart

M. "As you get to know your heavenly Father, you'll get to know your own heart as well." (p. 11)

N. "We have an allergic reaction to dependency, but this is the state of the heart most necessary for a praying life... Dependency is the heartbeat of prayer." (p. 12)

Section 4: Practice Prayer

In Community Group: Lead or delegate someone to pray through Ephesians 3:14-21.

Outside of Community Group:

Practice 1 The Week Following Community Group Lesson 1 from **September 6**

Prayer Practice 1: CONSIDER YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD IN PRAYER

- A. Slow Down and Journal: Spend some time writing your thoughts down.
- B. Spend some time this week thinking about what you would like your prayer life to look like. Pray and ask God to help you think about this.
- C. What would God like your prayer life to look like?
- D. What is going well, and what needs to be improved?
- E. What makes prayer difficult for you?
- F. What questions do you have about prayer?

Review your Experience with Prayer Practice 1 if you wish on September 13 in Community Group as you Bridge to Lesson 2

1. Were you able to practice the exercise this week? If so, describe how you felt about it.
2. What, if anything, did you learn about God or yourself through this practice?
3. Was there anything that surprised you about your prayer life as you reflected on it?

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Section 1: Jesus and Children (Come and Ask)

Mark 10:14 But when Jesus saw this, He was indignant and said to them, “Permit the children to come to Me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. 15 Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all.”

1. **Do you come to God in prayer as a child just as you are without pretense? Or do you try to fix yourself up and present yourself as you think you should be?**

Matthew 7:7 “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. 9 Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? 11 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!

2. **What do little children ask for? How often do little children ask? How do little children ask?**
3. **Are there things too trivial to ask for?**
4. **Do you actually believe God wants you to ask? Do you actually believe God wants you to ask boldly? Why?**

Lesson 2 Question to Answer: How do we talk to God? Why do we need daily time alone with God?

Lesson 2 Summary Statement: A child comes because the Father welcomes them, asks because the Father cares, and takes time because the relationship matters. (Chapters 3-5 from A Praying Life by Paul E. Miller) **Pick and choose what you use!**

A. “The disciples...just say what is on their minds, seemingly without thinking... Jesus wants us to be without pretense when we come to him in prayer. Instead, we often try to be something we aren’t. We begin by concentrating on God, but almost immediately our minds wander off in a dozen different directions. The problems of the day push out our well-intentioned resolve to be spiritual. We give ourselves a spiritual

kick in the pants and try again, but life crowds out prayer. We know that prayer isn't supposed to be like this, so we give up in despair. (p. 18)

- 5. Can you think of things the disciples said or did, seemingly without thinking?**
- 6. Do you experience your mind wandering off in a dozen different directions? What sorts of things distract you?**
- 7. Why do you think the enemy wants to distract us? Why do you think the enemy wants us to give up on prayer in despair?**
- 8. Describe the difference between coming to God messy and coming put together. What does it look like to come messy? (...put together?). How does God respond when we come messy? (...put together?). What's hard about coming messy? (...put together?)**

B. "The kingdom comes when Jesus becomes king of your life." (p. 21)

C. "So instead of being paralyzed by who you are, begin with who you are. That's how the gospel works... The point of the gospel is that we are incapable of beginning with God and His kingdom." (p. 22)

D. "Children are supremely confident of their parents' love and power. Instinctively, they trust. They believe their parents want to do them good. If you know your parent loves and protects you, it fills your world with possibility." (p. 26)

E. "Childlike faith drives this persistence... But as we get older, we get less naive and more cynical. Disappointment and broken promises are the norm instead of hoping and dreaming." (p. 27)

F. "How do we structure our adult conversations? We don't. Especially when talking with old friends, the conversation bounces around from subject to subject. It has a fun, meandering, play-like quality. Why would our prayer time be any different? After all, God is a person." (p. 28)

G. "When your mind starts wandering in prayer, be like a little child. Don't worry about being organized or staying on task...Remember you are in conversation with a person." (28)

Section 2: Take The Time To Be With Jesus

Luke 5:16 But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray.

- 9. John 17 is a prayer of Jesus. Why did Jesus need to pray? What are the types of things you think Jesus prayed about? Would you want to pray about the things Jesus does?**

H. "Jesus slows down and concentrates on one person at a time. The way He loves people is the way He loves His Father.... Love incarnates by slowing down and focusing on just the beloved. We don't love in general; we love one person at a time." (34)

I. "Jesus' example teaches us that prayer is about relationship...getting close. (p. 35)

J. "If Jesus has to pull away from people and noise in order to pray, then it makes sense that we need to as well." (p. 35)

K. "Jesus' pattern of a morning prayer follows the ancient rhythm of the Hebrew writers who bent their ears to God in the morning." p. 35 (see Psalms 5:3, 59:16, 88:13, 143:8)

L. "When it comes to spending time with God, take baby steps...start slowly" (p. 38)

M. "Simple suggestions: Get to bed... Get up... Get awake... Get a quiet place... Get comfortable... Get going... Keep going... Consistency is more important than length." (p. 39)

Section 3: Practice Prayer

In Community Group: Lead or delegate someone to pray for one another's growth in developing as a people of prayer.

Outside of Community Group:

Practice 2 The Week Following Community Group Lesson 2 from **September 13**

Prayer Practice 2: MAKE ROOM FOR PRAYER

A. Spend at least 5 uninterrupted minutes with God each day this week. Be consistent. When you pray, talk with God about whatever is on your mind. Come to Him simply and honestly, like a child talking with a loving father. You don't need impressive words or a carefully organized prayer. Just come.

B. Establish a time and a place for prayer.

C. Try praying out loud.

Review your Experience with Prayer Practice 2 if you wish on September 20 in Community Group as you Bridge to Lesson 3

1. Were you able to make room for prayer this week? Describe how you felt about it.
2. What, if anything, did you learn about God or yourself through this practice?
3. What, if anything, was difficult for you about this practice? Was it hard for you to find at least 5 minutes for intentional prayer each day? Did you find it difficult to pray without pretense?

Section 1: Grounded In The Word

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 9 And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. 10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

1. **How do these verses expose our helplessness and need for God’s grace and God’s power, especially our struggles? Why is recognizing our weakness actually a good place to begin with God?**

Psalms 61:2 From the end of the earth I call to You when my heart is faint;
Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

2. **Why would “lead me to the rock that is higher than I” be a good daily prayer? When your heart is faint, what does this prayer acknowledge about you and about God?**

Philippians 4:6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

3. **What are some legitimate reasons that people experience anxiety? According to these verses, what does God invite us to do with our anxiety? How can prayer and supplication with thanksgiving lead us toward His peace?**

Lesson 3 Question to Answer: Why don’t we go to God in prayer? (What drives us to prayer?)

Lesson 3 Summary Statement: A praying life recognizes our helplessness and neediness and turns to God as our Help when we are anxious. (Chapters 6-8 from A Praying Life by Paul E. Miller) **Pick and choose what you use!**

Section 2: Helplessness and Neediness

- A. “Little children are good at helplessness.” p. 42
- B. “God wants us to come to him empty-handed, weary, and heavy-laden. Instinctively we want to get rid of our helplessness before we come to God.” p. 42
- 4. What makes admitting our helplessness so difficult for us?**
- C. “In the gospel, the Father takes us as we are because of Jesus and gives us His gift of salvation. In prayer, the Father receives us as we are because of Jesus and gives us his gift of help.” p. 43
- 5. Why is helplessness the key to a praying life?**
- D. “As we mature as Christians, we see more and more of our sinful natures, but at the same time we see more and more of Jesus. As we see our weaknesses more clearly, we begin to grasp our need for more and more grace.” p. 44

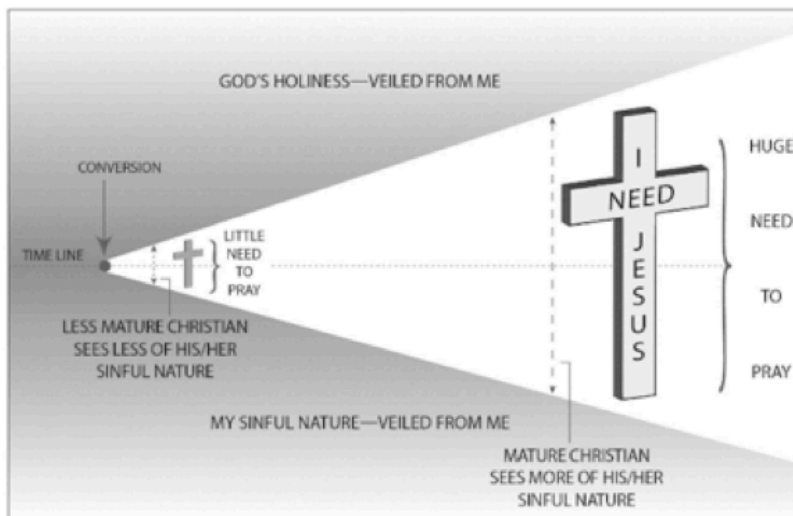


Diagram in
A Praying Life
originally from:
World Harvest Mission

- 6. Miller says that as we mature as Christians, we see more clearly both our sinful nature and the greatness of Jesus. How should seeing our weakness more clearly increase our dependence on God's grace? How might an immature Christian respond differently?**
- 7. Where are you feeling helpless right now?**

Section 3: Turning Anxiety Into Prayer

- E. “When I begin to pray, the energy of my life is directed into the life of God and not into changing people's minds.” p. 52

F. “As Christians we realize we can’t cure ourselves, so we cry out to our Father, our primary relationship.”

8. Where are you experiencing anxiety right now? What is your natural response when you feel like life is becoming chaotic or out of control?

9. How does anxiety reveal that we are trying to carry something that we were meant to bring to God?

10. “Anxiety is unable to relax in the face of chaos; continuous prayer clings to the Father in the face of chaos.” (p. 58) Why can’t anxiety relax? What does prayer do differently?

G. “We can turn our anxiety toward God. When we do that, we’ll discover that we have slipped into continuous praying.” p. 57

H. “When you stop trying to control your life and instead allow your anxieties and problems to bring you to God in prayer, you shift from worrying to watching.” p. 61

11. What would it look like for you to shift from “worrying to watching?” Where might God be inviting you to bring your anxiety to Him rather than trying to control the outcome?

Section 4: Practice Prayer

In Community Group: Lead or delegate someone to pray that we will bring our helplessness, needs, and anxieties to God rather than trying to carry them ourselves.

Outside of Community Group:

Practice 3 The Week Following Community Group Lesson 3 from **September 20**

Prayer Practice 3: HELPLESSNESS DRIVES US TO PRAYER

- A. Practice praying brief prayers throughout your day asking God to intervene in your life and the lives of others.
- B. Invite God into your life, work and play throughout the day.
- C. Treat moments of weakness, frustration, and anxiety as opportunities to go to God in prayer in order to move from worrying to watching.
- D. Ask God to intervene. Release the situation to Him.
- E. Talk with God throughout the day. Tell God what is going on, and ask Him for help.