

PRAYER: LEARNING FROM JESUS

Group Study Guide

WELCOME...

Welcome to our *Prayer: Learning from Jesus* series. In each episode we ask a key question about prayer, and explore some of Jesus' teaching on prayer to answer it. Our vision and prayer for you and your group as you watch these films is that they would inspire and equip you in your own prayer lives – we hope you pray more as a result!

We'd love to pray for you specifically as you work through these sessions, and it would also really help us to know who's running the series – so if you can, please do let us know by registering your group at burningheart.org/register.

SESSION OUTLINES...

The notes for each session give a suggested outline and timings for a one-hour session – but feel free to adapt that to your circumstances and preferences.

The outline and questions are designed to be discussion starters, rather than too proscriptive – don't worry if you only get through one or two in the time available, or even if your conversation takes you in different directions completely. What matters is that you are all engaging with God, and growing in prayer.

A LITTLE EXTRA HELP...

Did you know that you can download each film in advance of your session, so you can avoid technical glitches? Go to the 'extras' section on burningheart.org/deuteronomy for instructions.

If anyone in the group misses a week, why not send them the link so they can catch up? There are also podcast and e-book versions of each session available in the "extras" section of the website.

Don't forget that we'd also love to pray for you – just let us know who you are by registering on the link above.

DIGGING DEEPER...

If any of your group want to dig a little deeper we've got lots of resources to help – just go to the "extras" section on the website.

SKIP TO...

Episode 1 – Why Pray?

Episode 2 – What's the Point of Prayer?

Episode 3 – Why didn't God Answer?

Episode 4 – How do I pray?

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Session 1: Why Pray?

Luke 11

WELCOME...

In this first session we'll begin to explore *Why* we pray – so often our struggles in prayer come from not grasping the glories and possibilities of prayer, and why it is so amazing.

Start the session by opening in prayer, and maybe worship.

You may want to use the following prayer, or something like it:

Father, thank you for the amazing privilege of prayer. We pray for our group as we set out on this journey together. Please meet with us and speak to us as we watch the films and use them to help us grow in prayer. May we grow in understanding, grow in excitement, and grow in commitment – and most of all grow closer to you, our heavenly father. Amen.

WATCH... (20 mins)

DISCUSS... (25 mins)

- What are you hoping for from this series?
- Do you find it easy to pray to God as 'Father'?
- Has the film changed your understanding and expectations of prayer at all?

- Has anyone in the group got any testimonies of how God has answered your prayers?¹
 - What do you want to ask God for in prayer?
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PRAY... (15 mins)

- Start by praying for the things you talked about at the end of the discussion
- Then break up into smaller groups of 2 or 3 and share specific things that each of you would like to pray about in your own life.

¹ Leaders note: Some of the group may also have experiences of God seeming *not* to answer their prayers, and so this may be a painful topic. Please do flag up that we will grapple with unanswered prayer in Episode 3. For now, affirm the validity of their questions and struggles but encourage them not to give up hope in prayer!

PRAYER: LEARNING FROM JESUS

Session 2: What's the point of Prayer?

John 14 and 15

WELCOME...

In this second session we will explore how we understand prayer and what the purpose of prayer really is.

Start the session by opening in prayer, and maybe worship.

You may want to use the following prayer, or something like it:

Father God, please meet with us and speak to us as we watch the films. We pray that you would deepen our understanding of prayer, helping us to grasp your plans and purposes for it. And we pray also that you would inspire and encourage us to pray more and more in line with your will. Amen.

WATCH... (20 mins)

DISCUSS... (25 mins)

- What are your expectations when you pray? Has the film challenged or changed them in any way?
- How do you feel about the idea that surrender and obedience are a key part of prayer? Will that change how you pray?

- What does it actually look like for our prayers to be rooted in our relationship with God?
 - How can we make sure that we “remain in me (Jesus), and my words remain in you?” (John 15v7)
 - Looking ahead to the next session (if time...) – does what we’ve discussed today impact how you see unanswered prayer?
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PRAY... (15 mins)

- Ask one of the group to read John 14v6-15v8, while the rest of the group sit, listen and pray (they may want to close their eyes). Leave a time of silence at the end of the reading, for people to continue to pray.
- Spend some time praying as a group for God to help you listen to him and surrender to him in your prayers
- Then break up into smaller groups of 2 or 3 and share specific things that each of you would like to pray about in your own life.

PRAYER: LEARNING FROM JESUS

Session 3: Why didn't God answer?

WELCOME...

For many of us, one of our greatest struggles in prayer is when it seems as though God hasn't answered our prayer – and we don't know why not. This session explores that theme.

This can often be a painful and difficult subject for many, and it might be helpful to acknowledge and pray about that at the start.

You may want to use this prayer:

Father, as we explore unanswered prayer, we want to be honest that many of us find this topic hard. We don't understand why you haven't answered prayers we prayed and longed for, and why you sometimes seem to allow us to struggle and suffer. We lift up our disappointments to you now...

(leaders - you may want to leave a short space here for people to lift their specific struggles to God)

We ask that you would meet us, speak to us, and help us in our struggles as we watch the film. Amen.

WATCH... (20 mins)

PRAY...

Rather than jump straight into discussion after the film, we would encourage you to pray and wait on God instead – we haven't set an amount of time to do this, but suggest you take as long as you all need. If you don't have time for anything else in this session, then that's fine!

How you pray is up to you – but here are some suggestions you may find helpful...

- At the end of the film simply pray for the Holy Spirit to meet with you all, and then leave a couple of minutes of silence for people to pray and meet with God.²
- Ask the group if there are any particular examples of seemingly unanswered prayer in their lives. Each time someone shares, take some time to pray with and for them.³

DISCUSS...

- How do you feel about unanswered prayer?
- Did you find anything in the film particularly helpful?
- Did you find anything in the film challenging? In what ways?

² You could use the words: "Holy Spirit please meet with each of us now, come and minister to us and show us your presence...Come Holy Spirit."

³ If you are unsure how to pray for them, we would simply encourage you to let the group pray as they want – just say 'we're going to pray for X now...' and see what happens!

- What have you found helpful in seasons of struggle or doubt?
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PRAY (again!)...

- Ask the group what prayers they have prayed for a long time, but still not seen answered. Pray for those things to happen!
- Break up into smaller groups of 2 or 3 and share specific things that each of you would like to pray about in your own life.

PRAYER: LEARNING FROM JESUS

Session 4: How do I pray?

Matthew 6v5-13

WELCOME...

In this final session we will explore some of the practicalities of prayer, asking How? When? and What for?, and sharing some top tips.

Start the session by opening in prayer, and maybe worship.

You may want to use the following prayer, or something like it:

Father God, please meet with us and speak to us as we watch and discuss this final film. We pray we would all pick up new and helpful ways of praying, and learn more about how we pray. Most of all, we pray that we what we look at today would help each of us to grow in our personal prayer. Amen.

WATCH... (20 mins)

DISCUSS... (25 mins)

- What do you find hardest about praying? Was there anything in the film that you think might help?
- What difference does it make that we are told to pray to God as "Father"?

- What are your top tips in prayer? What do you find most helpful?
 - What type of prayer (worship, intercession, confession, thanksgiving) do you find easiest? What do you find hardest?
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PRAY... (15 mins)

- David talked about how God helps us in our prayers – ask one of the group to pray out loud that God would help all of you in your prayers. Then leave some silence for people to pray in their hearts for their own prayer lives.
- David also talked about how much we can learn from praying with other people – take some time to do that now! You may want to just have a time of open prayer, or to share some prayer points first.
- Pray through the Lord's Prayer together – start by praying the actual words all together, and then pray through the prayer line by line.⁴

⁴The leader might want to lead this time of prayer by speaking out each line, and then leaving space for others to pray in response to it, before moving on to the next line.

TWO FINAL QUESTIONS...

We hope and pray that this series has been a blessing to you, and that it has drawn you closer to God and deepened your relationship with him. If it has, we want to ask you and your group two final questions:

- would you consider giving towards the costs of future series?
- can you please pray for us?

GIVE...

BurningHeart.org/give

All our materials are available free of charge, so that money is not a barrier to anyone engaging with God through them – but that also means that we are reliant on donations for our funding.

If you would like to give towards our ministry, we would be grateful for any amount – whether 5 pence or £5million! The Bible is very clear that what matters in our giving is how generous we are with what we have, and not how much we give in absolute terms (see Mark 12v41-44). We will not know how generous you are actually being – but God will!

We would also encourage you to prioritise your own church when planning your giving. Please don't stop your giving to them to give to us!

PRAY...

We believe in prayer! As James tells us, "the prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective." (James 5v16). Please can you pray for us and for our ministry? Pray that God would use our resources to speak to people and meet with them. Pray that God would inspire us as we look to make more resources. And pray that God would provide all that we need to resource what he has called us to do.