

## LIFE GROUP Discussion Guide

Northend Church

### THE HEART OF JESUS: First Things First — Prayer

Matthew 21:12-13

A NOTE TO LEADERS: These questions are to guide your conversation. Don't be rigid about getting through every last one. Be sure to spend time on the application part.

**TODAY** includes an exercise in prayer. Be sensitive to people in your group who are not comfortable with prayer, but still encourage them to join in and take the step. Don't push it though.

#### **ADD AN EMPTY CHAIR IN THE GROUP**

#### **OPEN:**

What have you seen God do through prayer? Share a prayer story if you have one. Has God always answered your prayers the way you wanted?

#### **DIG:**

- 1) Take a moment and reflect on the sermon this week. What spoke to you? What challenged you? Why?
- 2) Read Matthew 21:12-13  
*12 Jesus entered the temple area and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. 13 "It is written," he said to them, "My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it a den of robbers."*
- 3) Why was Jesus so angry? See also Isaiah 56:7. What was the point people were missing?
- 4) Why is prayer central to the heart of God? How can religiosity — just following religious forms — get in the way of intimacy with God?
- 5) Discuss these things Mike said in his message.  
*Prayer eats at the secular heart of society. How so?*  
*Prayer shows us our need for complete dependence on God. How is this true in your life? Maybe it's not. What keeps it from being so?*
- 6) What are your thoughts on this, "God will do what it takes to get your attention"? How has he been trying to get your attention?
- 7) God is longing to have an encounter with you. Mike mentioned four things that keep us from praying:
  1. *You don't believe it makes a difference*
  2. *You don't have the time. This says a lot about your priorities.*
  3. *You're not sure what to do...how to pray.*
  4. *Too busy doing religious things.*What is true for you? What do you need help with in your prayer walk? How can the group help support you on your prayer journey?

**APPLY:** TODAY we're going to spend some time in a prayer exercise for the whole group.

## **PRAY: Prayer exercise**

There are many ways to pray. Today we're going to look at one way you can pray that you can do individually and as a group.

### **Praying with Scripture:**

When in a group, someone needs to lead the parts giving cues to whoever is reading the scripture. Take your time. The first part is preparation to hear and receive from the Holy Spirit.

**PREPARATION:** clearly and slowly (don't rush this. *Leave room for silence*).

Leader: With everyone's eyes closed, then say, "Get comfortable and sit in a posture to receive from the Holy Spirit (pause). Notice the sounds around you. Let them fall into the background. Take any thoughts captive that may be distracting you (pause). Focus on your breathing. Take a long slow full breath in through your nose, hold it for a few seconds and let it out through your mouth. Hold for a few seconds. Repeat this again (pause). Settle your breathing and relax. Ask the Holy Spirit to join you in prayer and give guidance.

### **BEGIN:**

***Assign a few people to read the passage in each section. Read slowly and intentionally***

#### INVITATION

"Praise be to God, who has not rejected my prayer or withheld his love from me!" (Ps. 66:20)

Quiet and Waiting

*Share Prayers of Praise - even one line*

#### BIBLE SONG: Psalm 106:1-5

Praise the LORD. Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever. Who can proclaim the mighty acts of the LORD or fully declare his praise? Blessed are those who act justly, who always do what is right. Remember me, LORD, when you show favour to your people, come to my aid when you save them, that I may enjoy the prosperity of your chosen ones, that I may share in the joy of your nation and join your inheritance in giving praise.

Quiet and Waiting

*Share prayers from what speaks to you in the psalm — one line or more if you wish*

#### BIBLE READING: Lamentations 3:19-26

I remember my affliction and my wandering,  
the bitterness and the gall. I well remember them,  
and my soul is downcast within me.

Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope:  
Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed,  
for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning;  
great is your faithfulness.

I say to myself, "The LORD is my portion;

therefore I will wait for him.” The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him,  
to the one who seeks him; it is good to wait quietly  
for the salvation of the LORD.

Quiet

#### DWELLING

*Become aware of God’s loving presence and read again . . . what in God’s Word has caught your heart’s attention? Is there a command to be obeyed, a comfort to be savoured? Talk to God about the Scripture you’ve just read . . . yield yourself to God and enjoy his presence.*

#### FREE PRAYER

*Pray for these things and whatever else they encourage you to pray for.*

- for a love of and commitment to the communities in which God has placed us.
- for God to equip us to serve in uniquely Christian ways in the public arena.
- for those who work in arts, theatre, and the entertainment industry.
- That God will fill the empty chair.

#### CLOSING PRAYER

*Can be prayed as a group*

Faithful Savior, teach us what it means to have you as our portion, finding our deepest satisfaction in you. Show us the way to find in you our only comfort in life—whatever it brings—and in death. Lead us to hope in you and know what it is for our souls to be well in all things. Amen.

#### BLESSING

*Bless one another praying this together*

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” (Rom. 15:13)

*This is a sampling of prayers from  
Reinders, Philip F. Seeking God's Face: Praying with the Bible Through the Year. Faith Alive  
Christian Resources. Kindle Edition.*