



CHRIST **CENTRAL**



SESSION 4

Prayer

Key takeaways for new believers:

- Prayer is simply 'talking to God'
- We don't need special words, or a special formula to pray - it's part of us getting to know God more, to thank Him for what he has done and who He is, to lay requests before Him, to ask Him for forgiveness, and to receive it.
- God also wants to 'speak' to us, so part of prayer is listening to Him too.

Part 1

worship

community

- Review the story from session 3 on identity. How did it go learning the Prodigal Son story? Who did you tell it to? What did they think? Is there anything of more significance to you than it has been before? If this story is true, how does it affect your ongoing relationship with Jesus?
- Listen to or sing worship songs. Examples:
 - How great the Father's love for us – Stuart Townsend
 - Beautiful One – Tim Hughes
- Allow participants time to discuss any pastoral / spiritual issues on their minds



Part 2 (story)

identity

worship

mission

Jesus teaches about prayer and forgiveness (Matthew 5:1, 6: 5-14)

Transition: As in any relationship, a big part of it is communication. Today we are looking at how to talk with God and what that might look like.

Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. He told them, 'when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray *where* they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

"And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as *some* do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then like this:

"Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy,
Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today the food we need, and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For if you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Questions for discussion

identity

worship

1. What do you like about this story?
2. What bothered you about this story?
3. What does this story show you about God?
4. What does this story show you about people?



CHRIST CENTRAL

Part 3 (practice / takeaways)

identity

mission

5. What does this story mean for your life? How will you live your life differently having learned this story?
6. How will you remember this story?
7. Is there anyone you would like to tell this story to?

Pray for each other, and practice talking to God out loud, together as a group.

Pray through any pastoral or spiritual issues that may have been raised

Encourage participants to meditate on the following Bible verses:

- Matthew 7:7-8 (Ask, Seek, Knock)
- 1 John 1:9 (Confess our sins)
- James 5:13-16 (Pray when you're unwell or in distress)
- 2 Chronicles 7:14 (If my people would pray)
- Phillippians 4:6-7 (Don't be anxious, pray)
- Psalms 51:10-14 and 86:5-7. Prayer of David for help and forgiveness/restoration
- John 17:20-26

To take away

To simplify the language of 'The Lord's Prayer', into your own words. Feel free to express yourself to God.



CHRIST CENTRAL

Notes for Leaders

As you tell the story and go through the 7 questions, some of these additional questions or topics might come up in conversation.

I find it difficult to pray, I don't feel comfortable praying.

- That's ok, In the Bible, Jesus made a point of teaching us how to pray. This indicates that we all can benefit from learning and don't automatically know how to pray.

Do I have to pray with my eyes closed or kneeling down?

- Prayer can include several positions, on bended knee, with eyes closed and hands folded. It can be with eyes open, sat in traffic or walking down the street.

If God wants us to pray in 'a room' why do we pray in church or sometimes in public?

- There is a place for public prayer. Jesus prayed both publicly and privately. When Jesus mentioned the religious leaders' prayer style, he was referring to their motives and intentions of their hearts.
- When you pray in a public setting, focus on talking directly to God and not how you're coming across to others.
- Praying together can be a great encouragement to those around you.

Is there a right and wrong way to pray (even in private)?

- "Repeating the same words over and over like a magic incantation does not mean God will listen to you any more than if you simply had a one-line prayer. We can never pray too much if our prayers are honest and sincere".
- Do we have to pray aloud? No, not all the time. Sometimes the only private place you may have to pray is in your head. However, there are times when speaking out loud is very effective for you and helpful to the person being prayed for. Just remember your focus is on God – He does the rest.
- Praying aloud can help us focus on what we are saying, rather than our mind wandering elsewhere!
- It's not wrong to come to God many times with the same request. Jesus encourages persistent prayer. But He condemns the shallow repetition of words that aren't offered with a sincere heart.
- Some find it useful to keep a prayer diary – this includes prayers and the outcome which isn't always what we expect. God knows what we need.

Jesus talked about forgiving others in 'the Lord's prayer. "Forgive our sins, just as we have forgiven those who did wrong to us".

- What do you think about when you hear the word 'forgiveness'? Do you find it easy or hard to forgive – why?
- Is there someone you still need help to forgive?
- It's easy to ask God for blessings, even to bless others but it is not as easy to forgive. However, Jesus makes it clear that it is vital that we acknowledge the need for forgiveness of others and ourselves.
- If we refuse to forgive others, God will also refuse to forgive us. Why? Because when we don't forgive others, we are denying our common ground as sinners in need of God's forgiveness.



CHRIST **CENTRAL**

God's forgiveness of sin is not the direct result of our forgiving others, but it is based on our realising what forgiveness means. Whenever we ask God to forgive us for sin, we should ask, Have I forgiven the people of have wronged me?