



Leader's Note

The Art of Prayer

Prayer is an invitation to explore the “awesome” heart of God. Our need is not so much for definitions of prayer or terminology for prayer or arguments about Prayer, though all of these have their place. What we need is a love relationship: an enduring, continuing, growing love relationship with the great God of the universe. Love is the syntax of prayer. To be effective pray-ers, we need to be effective lovers. In “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” Samuel Coleridge declares, “He prayeth well that loveth well.”

Work as if you were to live a hundred years, pray as if you were to die tomorrow.

~ *Benjamin Franklin*

Groanings which cannot be uttered are often prayers which cannot be refused.

~ *Spurgeon*



Learning Session

Read this paraphrase of Matthew 6:5-13

When you come before God, don't turn it into a theatrical production. Like these people making a regular show out of their prayers, hoping for recognition! That is all the recognition they will get? Here's what I want you to do: Find a quiet, secluded place so you won't be tempted to perform for people. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense his grace.

Then He will reward you for what you do in secret.

Don't go on and on, the world is full of so-called prayer warriors who are prayer-ignorant. They're full of formulas and programs and advice, peddling techniques for getting what you want from God. Don't fall for that nonsense. This is your Father you are dealing with, and he knows better than you what you need.

Get your people to break up into small groups. Point them also to 1 Thess 5:16-17 and get them to discuss the following questions:

- How's your prayer life lately?
- Is your primary experience of prayer one of joy and peace or frustration and guilt? Why?
- How often do you feel like you are inconveniencing God when you pray? Why?
- What helps you to draw near to God in Prayer?
- Share a story on an answered prayer.

Gather together for feedback and see what everyone has to say. Highlight the following comments as they come up:

- God wants to spend time with us because he likes us.
- Things that help us to pray
- Stress that our self-perception (of being unwanted sinners) will resist prayer. Remember that we are never an inconvenience to God. A good father always has open arms for a child who wants to draw near, even a naughty one!
- God always answers, just be prepared for Him to do it His way and in His time.

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