

A-Z of Prayer Course

Week 4 of 6 weeks

Before You Start

This 6-week course will take us on a whistle-stop journey through many aspects of prayer. We'll be guided by Matthew's simple book, *A-Z of Prayer*. You will get most out of this course if you've read the relevant chapters before-hand. However those who haven't will still be able to engage with the material.

Each weekly session is designed to take 70 minutes (ie. 1 hour and 10 minutes), so do make time for this. This allows 10 minutes for discussion on each section, which is not long. So the leader should be mindful of this in leading, prayerfully considering when it's right to move on, or whether it's important to stay a little longer on a particular section.

Week 4 - Conversing in Prayer

This week we'll spend time considering conversing with God in prayer.

Preparation

Before you meet, read chapters M, N, O, P and Q of *A-Z of Prayer*.

Begin (10 mins)

Ensure that everyone is welcomed. Spend a few moments talking about being stretched in prayer. In the same way that we stretch a muscle for it to get stronger, so the Lord wants to do this with our praying. However that can feel like hard work - rather like when we work out a muscle and it aches afterwards! So ask one or two to share how they are being stretched in prayer.

After this read Ephesians 3:20-21 and thank God he is the God of 'immeasurably more' and pray that each of us would grow through this session.

Discussion (50 mins - ie. about 10 minutes on each)

1. *M is for Morning*

Last week we read Psalm 5:3 and saw how each day David would 'lay (his) requests before' God in prayer. What time of day did he do this? Why do you think was? What are the benefits of giving time to prayer first thing? How can we encourage each other to pray in this way (as well as being prayerful in the day)?

2. *N is for Night*

Read the last phrase of Psalm 127:2 and note the alternative translation (in the NIV) which reads: 'for while they sleep he provides for those he loves.' This tells us that God is at work in us as we sleep at night. Talk about this, perhaps with someone sharing an experience of God meeting with them recently at nighttime. Then talk about praying and worshipping in the night. What do you make of the idea that our spirit may well be praying, whilst we're asleep?

3. *O is for Opportunity*

Read Colossians 4:2-4. St Paul wants a door of opportunity to open, so what does he ask the Colossians to do? Share a few examples of doors of opportunity opening, through prayer. As well as praying for doors to open, allowing people to encounter Christ, we can pray for God to open doors into all sorts of people and situations in the world. Ask everyone to consider a closed door that they'd like God to open (ready to bring before the Lord in the time of prayer at the end).

4. *P is for Prophetic*

Prophetic prayer is about hearing *from* God as we prayer. We hear as we prayerfully read Scripture and also through words, prophecies and dreams. In the light of Acts 2:17-18 and 1 Corinthians 14:1, what should we be desiring, and what should be our expectation of prophetic

prayer? Ask someone to share a story of how the Lord spoke to them helpfully in prayer, with a resulting good outcome.

5. *Q is for Quiet*

Praying quiet prayers is not about talking to God in our minds; it's about not consciously speaking at all yet nevertheless communicating with the Lord. You might like to talk briefly about how God does this *to us* in lots of ways. Read Isaiah 30:15 and Psalm 46:10 and talk about how we can be quiet before God and yet still be communicating with him. Why do think some find quietness so uncomfortable? Recognise that some in the group might find this difficult. See if there's someone who can speak about how they've grown in this practice of quiet prayer.

Pray (10 mins)

End by thanking God for the gift of prayer - that we can talk with him, and he with us. Then pick those things listed at the end of *Opportunity*, and turn them into prayers. Then break into pairs (so you're in a small and safe group to practice) and then spend some time intentionally listening to God for the other person. Before you pray, gently lay a hand on them (making sure they're content for you to do so) and then ask the Lord what he wants to say through you to them. The word should 'strengthen, encourage and comfort' (1 Cor 14:3). When something comes, give the Lord the benefit of the doubt. End by encouraging each other to keep listening and, if silent prayer is a new form of prayer, to try to make time in the coming week to explore it.