

# A-Z of Prayer Course

Week 5 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 5 - Becoming Prayerful People

This week we'll be looking at more aspects of prayer, especially focussing on becoming more prayerful throughout the day.

### Preparation

Before you meet, read chapters R, S, T, U and V of *A-Z of Prayer*.

### Begin (10 mins)

Ensure that everyone is welcomed. Ask if anyone has been listening more in prayer, since last time. Also ask whether anyone has made time for Quiet Prayer and if so, to share their experience.

After this read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 and ask the Lord to teach us what it means to be practicing what it says - ie. to be continually praying, rejoicing and giving thanks.

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

#### 1. *R is for Relentless*

Read Luke 18:1-8. Luke explains why Jesus tells this story (in v1). Talk about persistent, relentless praying. Ask if anyone has a story of answered prayer, after praying for a long time. Go into groups of three, and briefly share one thing each of you is praying about on a long-term basis. Pray a short prayer for each other, standing together for these things. Encourage each other to keep going!

#### 2. *S is for Sad*

Sad prayers are often called prayers of lament. Some cultures are much better and more open about praying sad prayers than others. Why might this be? Look at the chorus to Psalms 42 and 43 (ie. 42:6,11; 43:5). Read it out loud. Encourage the group that it's ok to pray prayers like this. God wants us to tell him not just about the good times and the bad. Read the final paragraph on p.144 of *A-Z of Prayer* (about the cross) and remind everyone that Jesus's death shows that God understands our pain and hears our sad prayers.

#### 3. *T is for Tongues*

Tongues is a God-given, unlearned prayer language. Read Acts 10:44-48 to discover how the first non-Jewish people became followers of Jesus. Like at Pentecost (in Acts 2), as God poured his Spirit into them, so praise came out. Talk about this, and how tongues is a language of love and adoration. For those who have questions about this gift, discuss whether many of these were answered in the chapter in the book. Reassure anyone who does not pray in tongues that they're not a second-class believer. Encourage everyone to do what 1 Corinthians 14:1 says - which is to 'eagerly desire' *all* the gifts of the Spirit - including tongues, but especially prophecy.

#### 4. *U is for Unanswered*

God hears all our prayers and always responds, but not always in the way we ask. That's why it can be rightly said there's no such thing as unanswered prayer. Yet we all know that it often feels like some of our prayers go unanswered. For some of us this is profoundly painful. Now read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 which describes a distressing situation - a 'thorn in the flesh' - which God did not take away from Paul, despite him praying three times. What does that tell us about prayer? How do we ensure, when our prayers seem unanswered, that our hearts don't get bitter towards God? Talk about the place of trust and how we can help each other to do this.

#### 5. *V is for Vision*

Visionary prayers are *big-picture* prayers - praying not so much for detailed things, but broader matters, in our lives, families, churches, towns, regions and nations. Ask one or two to share when they last prayed a prayer like this. Sometimes God gives vision in prayer, for us to pray into and then respond to in acts of service. Share a few examples of characters in the bible to whom this happened. End this section by reading 1 Peter 2:9 and talking about the authority God has given us to pray, as his 'chosen', 'royal', 'holy' and 'priestly' people.

### **Pray (10 mins)**

Now turn to prayer. Give thanks for the authority we've been given in Christ. If someone has struggled with one or more aspects of prayer in this session, encourage them to receive prayer. Gently lay hands on them. Ask the Spirit to come. Encourage them to trust God. Stand with them and alongside them. If anyone would like to speak in tongues, ask the Holy Spirit to release this gift in them and out of them. Most of all, ensure everyone is encouraged to keep going. Prayer is a lifestyle to be practiced daily. For those who find it hard to be prayerful in the day: ask the Lord to help them to begin to talk with God in the midst of their day, and for it to become an increasingly natural part of their spirituality.