

**Group discussion** *Each number below includes questions that relate to the scripture. I offer a few answers, but your perspective may be better. The point is to discuss, not to get 100% agreement. Rule of thumb: the fewer questions you ask, the better. Save time for “the big question.”*

1. What do you think it means to pray?

Why is it important that disciples of Jesus pray?

Name one of the most significant times of prayer in your life.

What happened and what did you learn about prayer?

Read Matthew 6:5-15 aloud.

2. Jesus teaches us how to pray in our text today. He begins by critiquing two popular kinds of praying (5, 7-8). In your own words, describe the problem Jesus had with each of these two groups?

Is Jesus saying that we can never pray in public? What is the deeper thing he is saying then?

Is Jesus saying that we can never have long prayers? What is the deeper thing he is saying then? *See Bible Notes.*

Of these two critiques which is the most tempting for you in your own prayer life? Why?

3. Jesus holds up another approach to prayer for his disciples (6). Describe the approach he gives to his followers. What does he say to do?

What is the deeper point of Jesus' instruction here?

How is prayer changed when you are in a private setting as Jesus describes?

What kinds of virtues do you think might be produced in a person who prayed this way over a long period of time?

Have you ever experienced this kind of intimate experience with God through prayer? Please share.

4. Jesus follows his “how-to” instruction with a “what-to” approach. Read this prayer again out loud. What piece of Jesus' instruction here in this prayer grabs you most? Why?

What does Jesus include that surprises you?

What does he not include that surprises you?

*Hint: Think about the prayers you pray or hear prayed often.*

What kind of person would be created if they regularly prayed the Lord's Prayer?

What would their life and prayer life look like?

5. What do we learn about the character of God from this prayer?

How do you think these characteristics might change our posture towards God when we pray?

Are there concrete things you can do when you pray to help you remember these characteristics of God? What might you do?

6. What do we learn about what it means to be a disciple from the instruction and model prayer of Jesus?

What does Jesus say are to be our priorities?

What would a community of disciples (aka a church) look like who were shaped by this prayer?

† **The million-dollar question** *If you ask only one question, let this be it. Allow at least 20 minutes. Go around the circle and give each person an opportunity to answer. It's okay if they pass, but at least they get a chance to respond.*

Where can you commit to praying everyday this Lord's Prayer until the next LIFE Group meeting? When you get back together make sure to report the experience to the group.

## Resources

### **Bible notes**

Jesus' second critique of prayer is often difficult to understand. The word translated "babbling" in the NIV is helpfully translated "vain repetition" in the KJV (6:7). In other words, Jesus is not critiquing long prayers as much as he is the attitude that if you just get the words right then God will actually listen to you. This is a superficial understanding of prayer and misses the point of God as a father wanting to communicate with his children.

One helpful structure to view this model prayer Jesus gives is to view it in three parts. First, an address of God (9b). Second, three God-requests (9c-10). Third, four human-requests (11-13). This ordering is helpful as we decide what is most important for Jesus in our prayer life.

**Kid-friendly activity.** *An activity designed to help kids and adults grow in faith together. Do this first, then dismiss the kids so the adults can talk.*

### "Praying By Drawing" Activity

Prep: Collect crayons and paper (and other drawing devices).

Delivery 1: Today we are going to learn from Jesus about what it means to pray. But first a question: what do you think it means to pray? Why is prayer important?

Read: Matthew 6:5-15

Delivery 2: Jesus teaches us many things about prayer in this text. What are some of the things that we learn about prayer from Jesus? (As the kids name things, begin making a list. Once they are done listing things, you might want to fill in some details if they missed something).

Delivery 3: As a way to remember these lessons we are going to draw Jesus' instruction. So pick one thing we learned from Jesus and draw that lesson on the paper in front of you.

Give the kids plenty of time to draw their lesson. You might even want to write on the bottom of their paper the lesson (or specific verse) they drew.

Close by having each child show their drawing and telling which lesson they picked. Then say the Lord's Prayer to conclude.



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## **LIFE Group Guide**

### **Matthew 6:5-15 – The Heart of Living Righteousness: Praying**

By Wilson McCoy (wilson.mccoy@gmail.com)

**The theme: Prayer is at the heart of what it means to follow Jesus. Prayer is an intimate time of communication and relation with the Father. A life of prayer flows out of a heart that has been changed by the righteousness Jesus calls for in his Sermon on the Mount—a righteousness that transforms us from the inside out.**

This LIFE Group Bonus Guide is focusing on Jesus' instructions on prayer. As Kevin recently said in his sermon, "prayer is a declaration of dependence on God." Prayer pours forth from disciples who realize that only through God's grace have they been saved and who desperately want to be in deeper relationship with him. Prayer is a significant avenue for such deepening.

**Leadership tip:** As has been said many times before, prayer is at the heart of a successful LIFE Group. Not only should every LG Leader constantly lift their members up in prayer through the week, but they also should make space in every meeting to take requests and speak to the Father together. Make sure this week you spend plenty of time in prayer. In fact, you might try saying the Lord's Prayer (Matt 5:9-15) together as a way to start or close your discussion time.

**Relate** *Use a few to introduce the theme, check everyone's spiritual pulse, and "break the ice." No right or wrong answers – maybe goofy but not wrong! Look for opportunities to affirm and encourage through these questions.*

- ❖ It's April...and this means storms are in the air. Tell one of you best stormy memories.
- ❖ If you could take three items with you on a desert island, what would they be? (Pretend you basic necessities are there).
- ❖ Where is the best place you have ever taken a vacation?