



Spiritual Disciplines: Prayer Part One

iFOLLOW

Walking with Jesus

The iFollow Discipleship Series

About the iFollow Discipleship Series Pastor's Edition

Categories

The iFollow Discipleship Series is designed to be used in congregations to assist people in their pursuit of God. This assumes that individuals are in unique places in their journey and there is no perfect set of lessons that everyone must complete to become a disciple—in fact discipleship is an eternal journey. Therefore the iFollow curriculum is a menu of milestones that an individual, small group, or even an entire church can choose from. The lessons can be placed in three general categories: **Meeting with Jesus** (does not assume a commitment to Jesus Christ); **Walking with Jesus** (assumes an acceptance of Jesus Christ); and **Working with Jesus** (assumes a desire to serve Jesus Christ).

Components

Each lesson has a presenter's manuscript which can be read word for word, but will be stronger if the presenter puts it in his/her own words and uses personal illustrations. The graphic slides can be played directly from the Pastor's DVD or customized and played from a computer. There are also several group activities and discussion questions to choose from as well as printable student handouts.

Usage

The lessons are designed to be used in small groups, pastor's Bible classes, prayer meetings, seminars, retreats, training sessions, discussion groups, and some lessons may be appropriate sermon outlines.

Credits

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The Spiritual Discipline of Prayer Part One

This presentation is designed for people who have decided to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Learning Objectives

1. Find what you truly think and feel about prayer
2. Learn four major categories of prayer
3. Study Bible examples of prayer
4. Take the opportunity to practice prayer in a new and deeper way
5. Learn to connect your heart with God's through prayer

Content Outline

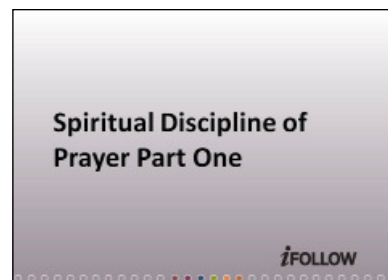
1. What is prayer and what do we really feel and think about it?
2. Kinds of Prayer
3. Bible examples of prayer
4. Prayer from the heart
5. The prayer to end all prayers
6. Come and eat

Background Material for the Presenter

"Everybody knows that." Ever talk or think that way? When we do, it's a way to acknowledge a "given." Baseball, apple pie and motherhood are "givens" in America, just like hockey night in Canada.

In Christianity, prayer is a given. Everybody knows that prayer ... How would you finish that sentence? What is it every Christian **knows** about prayer? More specifically, what do you know, and therefore **think** and **feel** about prayer?

What you think and feel about prayer makes a mighty big difference. It's the difference between a doctrine and a dynamic, a belief and being. It's the difference



between a given and grace. A doctrine, a belief, or a “given” is not enough. There must also be a dynamic. It takes being; it takes grace.

Baseball, apple pie, and motherhood aren’t necessarily great just because they’re given. Neither is prayer. But when prayer becomes a dynamic that involves your being and gets you actively involved in the grace of God—then it’s great.

How might you discover whether prayer is great for you? Where would you look to discover what you feel about prayer? In the Bible? In your heart? In your being? Would you sort through your thoughts? If so, how would you do that?

The mention of prayer sends some people back—often back quite a few years—to a time when they were in a life-threatening situation, and they prayed and their life was spared. Some people recall a time when they prayed for someone else, and it came out just as they hoped and prayed it would.

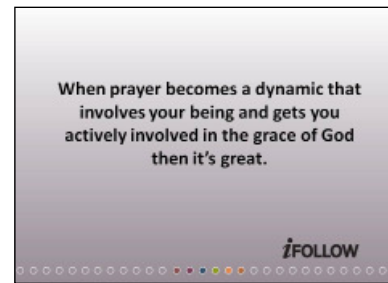
For years I had heard and read about an outstandingly courageous and decorated veteran. Finally, there came a day when I got to hear him in person. As I listened I heard about his past. It was glory retold. But the fire was gone—the fire that lights the life of people of any age—but especially the youngest and the oldest. Neither the glory nor the decorated veteran seemed very present at all. It was depressing.

Hearing prayer stories can be like hearing that decorated veteran. Once upon a time we may have experienced a wonder-filled, dramatic answer to prayer. But if the fire is out, there’s no point in retelling yesterday’s glory.

In order to discover what you think and feel about prayer, come into the present. Be present to yourself, to others, and most of all to God. When you are present in the present, then you can let the past and the future add fuel to the brightly burning present. What you actually think and feel about prayer begins right here, right now, with today’s hope, fear, grief and joy; and most of all with today’s God, the One who is always I Am. What do you think, what do you feel when you hear the word prayer? That’s what this presentation intends to help you explore.

Kinds of Prayer

It was once said that if you only ever said one prayer in



your life—“Thank you”—it would be enough. The person who said this was making a point about how incalculably, incredibly much we owe God, just for creating us, creating this world, blessing us in numberless ways daily. Of course there are some other helpful kinds of prayers, but it’s surprising how few categories they can fit into. Here are four that include most prayers, from Bible times until today.

“Thank You!”—It’s true that this should be prayer number one, and the one we use the most, yet it often is neglected in favor of “Gimme,” which isn’t even a valid category. Praise, which is actually different from thanksgiving, can still be included in this category. Praise is recognition of God’s innate greatness and goodness and the favor God shows us, though we don’t merit it. Thanksgiving is recognition of the specific acts that show God’s greatness. Neither receives nearly the acknowledgment it ought to from us.

“I’m Sorry!”—This should probably be number two on our prayer lists, used nearly as often as Thank You. In fact, it can be closely followed by a Thank You—for forgiveness and grace. It’s a daily necessity in most fumbling human lives.

“Yes, I will.”—This is a prayer of obedience, a prayer of willingness and consecration. It sometimes comes in the form of “Send Me,” but may not be a sending away; in fact it probably isn’t. It’s usually a sending into your ordinary day, your ordinary life, your ordinary family, your ordinary job. “Yes, Lord, I will. Send me.” But the minute after this prayer, you’ll likely need the fourth and last category . . .

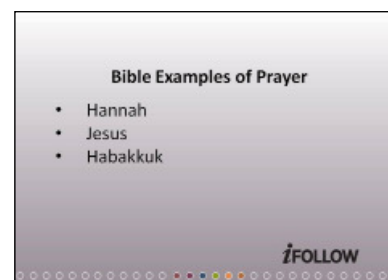
“Help!!”—This is, in fact, by far the most-used of all prayers, and in one sense, that’s OK. We’re frail and faulty, and we get confused a lot. God is happy to come to our rescue, and we couldn’t begin to count the times He has, most of them completely unknown to us. The problem is, we get it confused with that false “Gimme” category above, as in “Help me get this job, house, car, mink coat, winning score ...” and it goes downhill from there.

Valid uses of help prayers are in any kind of difficult or desperate situation, small or large, and right after saying “I will,” and discovering the shocking limitations of your ability to do whatever it was God asked you to do and you so blithely promised.

Bible Examples of Prayer

We’ll study some examples of prayers in the Bible and see which of the four categories they fit into.

Hannah—Samuel is one of the most famous Old Testament prophets. Two fairly long books tell the story of his



life, and of the first kings of Israel and Judah,—kings that Samuel anointed before God for their positions. Yet, humanly speaking, Samuel wasn't supposed to exist.

The first book, 1 Samuel, begins with the familiar story of Hannah, the beloved but childless wife, who begs God for a son. To her eyes, her situation seems impossible. She is without honor in her society, in the eyes of the rival second wife, and in her own eyes. It is important to note that Hannah is not without honor in the eyes of her husband, who loves her. Still, he wanted children enough to take a second wife. So Hannah has taken her desperate case to the God of hosts, to the tabernacle at Shiloh. Her prayer is recorded in verses 11-16.

“O Lord Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head.”

In which category is this prayer? There are two, actually. It's obviously a heartfelt Help prayer, but it also includes “I will.” We humans do this frequently: “If only you will [fill in the blank], I promise to [fill in some unrealistic promise, often including “I'll never ask for your help again.”] Silly! If God believed you, he certainly wouldn't say yes, because He wants you to come back and ask for help again!

But Hannah, we know, was praying from the bottom of her heart, and she did follow through. And so we have two books of the Old Testament named after her son, and filled with stories of the mighty deeds of the Lord of hosts he and his mother served. She also prayed a Thank You so beautiful that it's been preserved for millennia, (2:1-10) and was imitated in some ways by Mary, the mother of Jesus, in her song of thanks and praise.

What if God's answer had not been yes? Obviously, the Old Testament, not to mention Hebrew history, would have been drastically different, but what do you think Hannah's response would have been? Would she have given up her faith? Would you?

Jesus—Matthew 26, Mark 14, and Luke 22 all record Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane. This is the greatest and most important “Help!” and “I Will” of all time. It certainly took more time and probably included a lot more words than we have recorded, but it had basically only two pieces:

“Help! Save me!”

“Your will, not mine.” Which means, “I Will.”

And he did.

And he didn't have to.

What if he hadn't?

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This time we're looking at infinitely more than a change in history. Human history wouldn't have even continued. Wouldn't have begun, in fact, if God had not been a God of love, a God with a Plan. Without that prayer on the bloody, sweaty ground of Gethsemane, we wouldn't be having this discussion of prayer.

Habakkuk—Habakkuk's complaints (Hab. 1:2-4 and 1:12-2:1) and the Lord's answers (Hab 1:5-11 and 2:2-19) get into deep and far-reaching issues. Individual happiness, national welfare, the honor and glory of God are all involved. Which of our four categories can we find here? They are all here, in some form. It's certainly a cry for Help, it includes praise and recognition of God's greatness, which comes under the Thank You category, recognition of the sinfulness of the people, though it doesn't specifically state an apology, and ends with an "I Will."

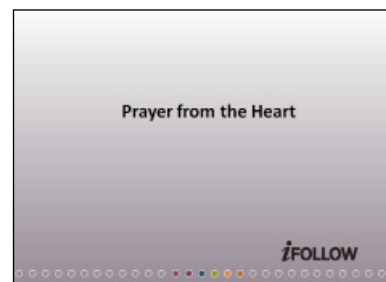
"I will take my stand to watch," Habakkuk says, "and station myself on the tower, and look forth to see what he will say to me, and what I will answer concerning my complaint." (2:1) This brings us to the most important factor of prayer that we need to consider: attitude.

Prayer from the Heart

The prayers from the Bible, which we've been looking at, show us the attitude that God loves to see. Hannah may have had anger and petty feelings towards Peninah, irritation or anger with Elkanah, and perhaps guilt and shame as well. She was human, so she probably did. But, while she told God the truth, those were not the central emotions in her heart when she came to Him for help. She was looking out of her situation by faith, and reaching up to grasp God's hand. She was praying for what she wanted, not for what she didn't want.

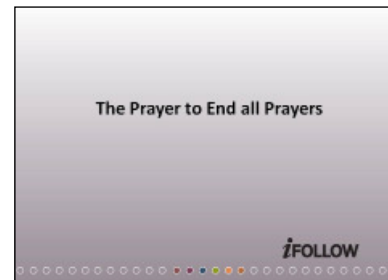
Jesus was definitely grappling with fear and desperation none of us will ever taste. What if he couldn't come back? The second death was permanent. What if this was truly the end? He showed his emotions honestly to his Father, but the central ingredient, the vital one, was faith. "Your will be done." He came out of the garden with the battle won. The rest was just getting it over with. In fact, after that, his attention appears to have been more on Pilate, the women in the road, his disciples, his mother, the dying thief, and even the centurion than on himself or his feelings.

And Habakkuk? First he takes his stand. He waits on God, watching for the answer he knows will come. And God does answer. All of chapter 2 is his answer, and it ends with a call to silence. "The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him."



Silence could be a category all its own, but any of the four can be prayed in contemplative silence, even “Help.” Habakkuk’s silence must have been productive, because all of chapter 3 is a song, “To the choirmaster, with stringed instruments.” And the climax is in verses 17-19. If you read attentively, you will recognize these fig trees, vines, flocks and fields as reminders of the great Covenant Promises in Deuteronomy 28. Habakkuk is saying, “Even if the very covenant of God appears to fail, “yet I will rejoice!” That’s amazing. That only comes from the heart.

The Prayer to End All Prayers



In Revelation 4 we are given an awesome and awe-inspiring vision of worship as it is in heaven. Artists have tried (and failed) to give any conception of what John saw. His words, too, fail. We can't imagine it. But there are some words there that we do understand.

“You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”(vs. 11)

This is the greatest prayer there is. It's a Thank You, but it includes at its heart the recognition that we are unworthy and often fail (I'm Sorry), that we need Help, and that all we Will or can do will come from Him who sits at the control center of the universe, seen and unseen. It's completely unbelievable that this Being could possibly want to talk with you and me. But He does! He said so.

“Come, let us reason together,” He said. (Is. 1:18)

“If you lack wisdom, ask,” He said. (James 1:5)

And, believe it or not, just a few chapters later, in Revelation 19, we're invited to that great heavenly worship, and to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. But only if we know Him. The way we get to know Him is by responding to His invitation now, here, today.

Come and Eat



“Come and eat.” It's possible to respond to words like this by only noticing our own appetite and the food on

the table. We can “come and eat” without responding to the speaker’s tone of voice, atmosphere, or heart. But if we do that, we can miss a lot about ourselves as well as the speaker. The way “Come and eat” is said may be alerting us to thoughtfulness, or thoughtlessness, that needs or deserves attention. By tuning in to the heart of the speaker we can begin to hear the extraordinary in the ordinary—“Come and eat” may be expressing nurturing love that is as life-giving as it is routine!

The Bible is a collection of God’s words to us through prophets, priests, and poets. We choose whether or not to tune into the heart of God through these words. Some people choose not to enter the mind and heart of God. These people seem to think it’s better to just quote the words God said, or the Bible writer said, and then discuss those words. Apparently they don’t think it’s possible, right, or safe to approach and enter the mind and heart of God.

Others are downright relaxed about entering the heart of God. It’s as if some are trying to defend holiness by staying away; others seem quite sure holy ground was meant for picnics.

Somewhere between those two extremes, or perhaps by accepting them together as a necessary paradox, we can and must approach and enter the mind and heart of God. It’s not enough to multiply words about the Word. The Author engages us, and awaits our response. It’s unthinkable that God is a defenseless Child awaiting a parent’s profound love; a passionate Lover awaiting union with a spouse; a wise Parent awaiting a child’s adoration; a faithful Friend awaiting the joys of communication with a friend. But God is that Child, Lover, Parent, and Friend. And prayer is love’s response. Prayer is love’s response to Love. And we can hardly respond to Love if we don’t enter the heart of the Lover.

We can’t fully know the mind and heart of God. What we can know of the mind and heart of God is not transferable to others. But we can know that the mind and heart of God are laid bare for each of us, and we are drawn, allured, enticed, even begged to respond. Divine love made vulnerable—it’s unthinkable and true.

In order to approach and enter what God thinks and feels about prayer, we need to see again, hear again—to some degree know again in our minds and hearts—this vulnerability of Divine Love.

Another way to say it is: God started it. When kids are fighting and called to account, each is likely to point to the other and say, “She started it.” “He started it.” In the case of Divine Love, which includes wrestling if not fighting, there is no question. God started it. Being really clear about this is an important foundation for all that prayer is and all it can become for us.

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Handouts in this Package

1. A Composite Psalm Prayer
2. Biblical Examples of Prayer
3. An Experiential Worksheet on Prayer
4. Personal Prayer Experiences 1
5. Personal Prayer Experiences 2
6. Adventist Church Standards on Bible Study and Prayer

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Additional Resources

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Discussion Questions

1. What are some of the thoughts and feelings you had about prayer when you began this seminar? Are they any different now?
2. How much time do you spend in prayer? How much time would you like to spend?
3. Which of the Biblical prayers do you most identify with? Why?
4. Which of your five senses are most active during your most common prayer time? Do you plan to involve more of them?
5. Which of the four major categories of prayer do you use most often? How will you incorporate more of them?
6. Here is a quote from the presentation materials: "It's unthinkable that God is a defenseless Child awaiting a parent's profound love; a passionate Lover awaiting union with a spouse; a wise Parent awaiting a child's adoration; a faithful Friend awaiting the joys of communication with a friend. But God is that Child, Lover, Parent and Friend. ... Divine love made vulnerable; it's unthinkable and true." What is your reaction to this quote?

Group Activity

Purpose: To learn creative ways to pray.

Preparation: Both of these activities are best done with the whole group, unless there are more than 20 present, in which case divide accordingly. Chairs should be arranged in a circle if practicable. For the first, you will need a clipboard and pen to pass with paper. . At the top of the paper write: "The heart of God is a place where..."

Assignment: Pass the clipboard with paper and pen and the first line showing. The first person in the circle completes the sentence and begins to fan fold the paper so only the top line ("The heart of God is a place where...") shows. The next person in the group completes that line, and fan folds again, keeping only the top line showing. The paper goes on around the circle so each person completes the same sentence without reading what others have written. After each has written a line, the group offers the whole page as a prayer/meditation by having one group member read each completed line followed by a pause. During the reading and the pauses, the group is quietly attentive to God and how God may use each thought to help you listen your way into the mind and heart of God.

Debrief: Share feelings and reactions to this way of praying.

Time: Allow 10 minutes for the paper to make its way around, then 10 for praying it contemplatively. Allow 10 more for sharing.

Activity Two

Purpose: To learn creative ways to pray.

Preparation: For this activity, a flipchart or board and markers will be helpful. On the board, write these four words or phrases: Worship, Soul Expression, Willingness, and Silence.

Assignment: Tell the group, "Think of worship, soul expression, willingness, and silence creating prayer harmony like soprano, alto, tenor, and bass create musical harmony. We are going to have a prayer choir or a prayer orchestra." Divide the group into four sections, allowing them to choose which of the four "parts" they would like to pray. Explain that the ones who choose silence can simply introduce a minute of

silence with a prayer like: "We pause in silence together to know again that You are in Your holy temple, and we are in Your presence."

Then have each one say a short prayer in that “part.” You have the choice of having the “parts” sit together, which will take an extra minute or two to arrange, or having the parts scattered in the circle, wherever each one is sitting. This will have the effect of mixing the parts as the prayer moves around the circle.

Debrief: Share reactions and emotions.

Time: Allow a few extra minutes if placing parts together. Otherwise, this should only take 15 minutes or so, plus 10 for sharing. Do not be rushed.

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Group
Activities

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Handout 1

A Composite Psalm Prayer

To welcome God's presence the group can pray this composite Psalm together. It includes elements of worship, soul expression, willingness, and quietness that are introduced in this presentation.

Ascribe to the Lord, O mighty ones, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name; worship the Lord in the splendor of His holiness. (Ps. 29:1, 2)

The Lord reigns, He is robed in majesty; the Lord is robed in majesty and is armed with strength. Mightier than the thunder of the great waters, mightier than the breakers of the sea—the Lord in high is mighty. (Ps. 93:1, 4)

As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? (Ps. 42:1, 2)

My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. (Ps. 84:2)

My heart is not proud, O Lord, my eyes are not haughty; I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me. But I have stilled and quieted my soul; like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me O Israel, put Your hope in the Lord both now and forevermore. (Ps. 131)

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HANDOUT

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Handout 2

Biblical Examples of Prayer

1. Read 1 Samuel 1:10-16. Which of the following do you think best describes Hannah's praying as it is quoted and described here?
 - A. Prayer based on Hannah's deep, yet unpredictable feelings
 - B. Prayer claiming God's promises
 - C. Prayer from the center of Hannah's whole being
 - D. Prayer of peaceful, serene trust
 - E. Other ...
2. In a short sentence or two, describe "heart prayer" or "soul prayer" as it is revealed in this passage from 1 Samuel.
3. Which of the following do you think mattered most:
 - A. Hannah's influence
 - B. How Hannah prayed
 - C. What Hannah wanted
 - D. Whether or not Hannah received what she asked for
 - E. Other ...
4. Take five minutes to write as many answers as you can in response to this question: What enabled Hannah to pour out her soul to the Lord the way she did? What texts in 1 Samuel and the rest of the Bible offer possible answers to this question? Use a concordance if you have one. What enables you to express a heart/soul prayer like Hannah did?
5. Read Matthew 26:39.
6. True or False: In Gethsemane, all Jesus' being, all His going, all He ever thought, felt, or taught were on the line.
7. "Not as I will, but as You will." Circle a number to indicate how this prayer affected each of the following: (1 = minimized, decreased or limited and 5 = maximized, increased or extended) If you should decide to circle more than one number on a line, briefly explain why you did.

Jesus' influence	1	2	3	4	5
His power	1	2	3	4	5

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His hopes	1	2	3	4	5
His vision	1	2	3	4	5

8. Read Habakkuk 2:20. Habakkuk's complaints (Hab 1:2-4 and 1:12-2:1) and the Lord's answers (Hab 1:5-11 and 2:2-19) get into deep and far-reaching issues. Individual happiness, national welfare, the honor and glory of God are all involved. Then comes the call to the prayer of silence. Ponder the ways silence enables us to be present to the Lord in His holy temple.

9. Read Rev. 4:11. What is the focus of the prayer here?

10. "You are worthy to receive glory and honor and power." Write a sentence-or-two prayer with this same focus/message, using words that are natural and reverent for you.

11. "The hopes and fears of all the years are met in Thee tonight" is true of prayer as well as Bethlehem! It's especially true of the prayer, "Not as I will. But as You will." List some hopes and fears that meet in this prayer for you.

12. Is silence your friend? How does/could the prayer of silence affect your experience of individual happiness, national welfare, and the honor and glory of God?

13. What other thoughts and feelings about prayer are prompted for you by the Scriptures given?

Handout 3

An Experiential Worksheet on Prayer

The first words of the first book of the Bible say: “In the beginning God...” (Genesis 1:1). The story of creation follows. In the beginning of all creation, God. Each prayer is also a creation prefaced by “In the beginning God...”

1. Take some quiet time to prayerfully notice what a huge difference it makes that God is in the beginning of each kind of prayer. For each kind of prayer (listed below), ask: What would this kind of prayer be like if God had not started it? For each kind of prayer, fill in these blanks: The fact that God has started it, makes this kind of prayer _____, and keeps it from being _____.

(A sample of each of these kinds of prayer can be found in the text given in the parentheses.) [Brackets indicate a closely-related text that isn't itself a prayer.]

Note: If you wish, decide in which of the four categories, (Thank You, I'm Sorry, I Will, Help!) you would put the following types of prayer.

Worship

(Revelation 4:11. John 9 climaxed in verse 38)

Willingness

(Matthew 1:38; Matthew 26:39)

Silence

(Habakkuk 2:20; Psalm 131)

Petition

(1 Samuel 1:10-16; Proverbs 30:7, 8)

Listening

(1 Samuel 3:10; Isaiah 50:4, 5)

Intercession (one form of petition)

(Job 42:7-10; John 17)

Gratitude

(1 Chronicles 16:8-36; Luke 17:15-16)

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Desire/Longing for God

(Psalm 73:25; Revelation 22:20)

Confession

(Ezra 9:6, 15); (1 John 1:9)

2. God also comes first in the following kinds of prayer. For each of these, ask: What would this kind of prayer be like if God did not come first? For each fill in these blanks: The fact that God comes first makes this kind of prayer _____ and keeps it from being _____.

Abandonment

(Psalm 22:1; Matthew 27:46)

Anger

(Jonah 4:1-9)

Complaint

(Habakkuk 1:2-4; Psalm 142)

Despair

(1 Kings 19:4; Psalm 102:1-11)

Distress/Weakness

(Psalm 77:1-9)

Fear

(Psalm 55:1-11; Mark 4:38)

Lament

[2 Samuel 18:33-19:4] (Lamentations 2:20a)

Vengeance

(Psalm 58; Psalm 109:6-20; Psalm 140:9-11)

3. With an uncontrived reverence come closer still to the mind and heart of God, and how God thinks and feels about prayer. Be like Mary who listened her way into the mind and heart of Jesus (Luke 10:39). Listen that way to God. Take one kind of prayer at a time, and ask God what it's like to receive this prayer. See if you can become aware of how the prayer touches and engages God's love. Let the vast enormity of God's love, and the exquisite detail of it become real to you. Listen your way into

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the mind and heart of the prayer-inspiring, prayer-receiving God who communes with us.

4. Select one of the kinds of prayer. You might choose one that is closest to what you're feeling right now; or one that for some reason you want to experience. Read Scripture samples of this kind of prayer.
5. Silently express your prayer to God. It may be good to write it. Your prayer may be short, or as long as time allows. Give yourself a couple minutes to notice what additional thoughts or feelings the prayer prompts in you. Offer these additional thoughts and feelings to God also.
6. After having quiet time to express your chosen form of prayer to God, think about any or all of the following:
 - A. In your prayer, were you able to express what you in fact think and feel?
 - B. If not, do you have a sense of what prevented you from being more "real" with God?
 - C. Maybe you chose a kind of prayer that you want to learn, but haven't yet. What was that like for you?

The point of this exercise is to reflect on the application of a specific kind of prayer in your experience—right now.

7. Now that you have your own experience of prayer, and not just a Biblical prayer as a reference point, ask this question: What would this prayer of mine be like if God did not come first? Also, fill in these blanks: The fact that God comes first makes this prayer of mine _____ and keeps it from being _____.

Handout 4

Personal Prayer Exercise 1

Personal Reflection

This coming week pray about prayer. Once the disciples asked, “Teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1). Find your own way of asking God to do the same for you. In the process, you might express to God just how you’re feeling about prayer right now.

My Appointment with God

1. How did your quiet times with God go this last week?
2. What are your specific plans for this coming week?

Friends in Christ

Have a spiritual friend ask you four times: “What do you think and feel about prayer?” First have the friend emphasize “do”, next “you”, next “think”, and then “feel”. Ask your friend to do active listening that enables you to find and express more than you could if your friend didn’t listen actively and well. Together with your spiritual friend, find a way to give the content of what you discuss to God.

Additional Activities

1. Consider meeting once a week outside of the group with a spiritual friend. Use the “Friends in Christ” notes above as the basis for your time together.
2. Read and reflect on one of the following.
 - A. “The most powerful sentence of Heschel is: ‘Faith is the beginning of compassion, of compassion for God. It is when bursting with God’s sights that we are touched by the awareness that beyond all absurdity there is meaning, truth, and love.’” (Postema, p. 142)
 - B. “An analysis of prophetic utterances shows that the fundamental experience of the prophet is a fellowship with the feelings of God, a sympathy with the divine pathos, a communion with the divine consciousness which comes about through the prophet’s reflection of, or participation in, the divine pathos. The typical prophetic state of mind is one of being taken up into the heart of the divine pathos.” (Heschel, Vol. 1, p. 26)

Handout 5

Personal Prayer Exercise 2

Personal Reflection

“Near to your heart, God.” Say this to God, and gently notice whatever you think or feel as/after you do. Then offer the same prayer, “Near to your heart, God” again, and again notice whatever you think or feel as/after you do. (Note: Keep in mind that “heart” means far more than sentiment; it means the central part of a person’s whole being.)

My Appointment with God

1. How did your quiet times with God go this last week?
2. What are your specific plans for this coming week?

Friends in Christ

Have a spiritual friend ask you the following questions: “What does God think and feel about prayer?” How do you feel about approaching and entering the mind and heart of God? In what way(s) are you open (or closed) to finding out more about God’s thoughts and feelings about prayer?

Additional Activities

1. Read and reflect on the following: Earlier in the chapter, he writes about the divine pathos: “The style of legal, objective utterance is alien to the prophet. He dwells upon God’s inner motives, not only upon His historical decisions. He discloses a divine pathos, not just a divine judgment. The pages of the prophetic writings are filled with echoes of divine love and disappointment, mercy and indignation. The God of Israel is never impersonal.

“This divine pathos is the key to inspired prophecy. God is involved in the life of man. A personal relationship binds Him to Israel; there is an interweaving of the divine in the affairs of the nation. The divine commandments are not mere recommendations for man, but express divine concern, which, realized or repudiated, is of personal importance to Him. The reaction of the divine self (Amos 6:8; Jer. 5:9; 51:14), its manifestations in the form of love, mercy, disappointment or anger convey the profound intensity of the divine inwardness.

“From the descriptions later in this book of the part pathos plays in the lives and messages of the great prophets, we will discover its meaning as a conception and as an object of experience. The fundamental experience of the prophet is a fellowship with the feelings of God.” (Heschel, Vol. 2, pp. 24-25)

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Handout 6

Bible Study and Prayer

Spiritual life is maintained by spiritual food. The habit of devotional Bible study and prayer must be maintained if we are to perfect holiness. In a time when a great flood of reading matter pours forth from printing presses everywhere, when the very ether is filled with thousands of voices, pleading for a hearing, it is incumbent upon us to close our eyes and our ears to much of that which is seeking entrance to our minds, and devote ourselves to God's book—the Book of all books, the Book of Life. If we cease to be the people of the Book, we are lost, and our mission has failed. Only as we daily talk to God in prayer and listen to His voice speaking to us from the Bible can we hope to live the life that is “hid with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3), or finish His work.

Prayer is a two-way conversation in which believers listen to God and talk to Him. “Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 93.

“Through sincere prayer we are brought into connection with the mind of the Infinite,” but “without unceasing prayer and diligent watching we are in danger of growing careless and of deviating from the right path.”—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 97, 95.

The home is the cornerstone of the church, and a Christian home is a house of prayer. “Fathers and mothers,” says the Spirit of Prophecy, “however pressing your business, do not fail to gather your family around God's altar. ... Those who would live patient, loving, cheerful lives must pray.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 393.

Statement from Chapter 13 of the *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, “Standards of Christian Living,” the official description of the minimum spiritual disciplines of the denomination.

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